

Grandmother's
Wisdom **Chef's**
Wisdom

The K.I.S.S. Method Gourmet

Chef Shevek M Barnhart

Contents

Dedication & Acknowledgments, 1

Preface, 3

- The Wisdom of Grandmothers & Chefs, 3
- Motivation for Simplification, 4
- Our Guiding Philosophy, 5
- Are Recipes Sacrosanct?, 5
- A Quick Word about Health & Nutrition, 6

Introduction, 7

- Cooking Methods, 7
- Equipment, 7
- Ingredient Overview, 7
- The Philosophy Behind Why & Where I Purchase My Ingredients, 7
- Specific Cuts of Meat & Poultry, 8
- Dairy Products, 9
- Oils & Fats, 10
- Herbs, Spices & Seasonings, 10
- Sweeteners, 12
- Flour, 12
- Wines versus Cooking Wines, 13
- Specialty & Scratch Items, 13
- Vegetables & Fruits as Starch?, 14
- Last Thoughts, 14

Vegetables & Salads, 15

- Artichoke Hearts with Lemon-Mint Dressing, 16
- Lebanese Beet Salad, 17
- Moroccan Date & Orange Salad, 18
- Grilled Stuffed Portobello Mushroom, 19
- Balsamic Vinaigrette, 20
- Blood Orange & Poppy Seed Dressing, 21
- Cabrales Blue Cheese Dressing, 22

Soups, 23

- Gazpacho, 24
- Chilled Blueberry Merlot Soup, 25
- Cream of Portobello, 26
- Green Chile Chicken & Rice, 27
- Crab & Roasted Corn Bisque, 28

Cheese & Eggs, 29

- Cabrales Blue Cheese & Blood Oranges, 30
- Feta-Stuffed Roasted Pepper with Preserved Lemon Sauce, 31
- Grilled Herbed Feta Cheese, 32
- Menemen, 33
- Eggs in Brandied Cream Sauce, 34

Phyllo, Crepes & Savory Pastries, 35

- Shaping Phyllo Dough for Briouats, 36
- Bride's Fingers, 37
- Spanakopitta, 38
- Cheese Cigars, 39
- Crêpes for Savory Dishes, 40
- Spanish Chorizo & Date Crêpe, 41
- Moroccan Chicken Crêpe with Apples, 42

Pasta, 43

- The Ultimate Four Cheese Lasagne, 44
- Cappellini in Wild Mushroom Cream, 45
- Cappellini with Chicken & Fresh Basil, 46
- Pheasant Sausage with Cavatappi, 47
- Shrimp Farfalle with Artichokes & Tomato, 48

Poultry, 49

- Blood Orange Chicken, 50
- Chicken Marsala, 51
- Chicken & Fig Tagine, 52
- Tunisian BBQ Chicken, 53
- Duck with Mandarin Oranges, 54

Seafood, 55

- Antipasto di Pesce, 56
- Paella, 57
- Zarzuela, 58
- Grilled Mahi Mahi with Blackberry Balsamic Sauce, 59
- Grilled Shrimp with Lavender & Mint, 60

Meats, 61

- Beef Tips Cabrales, 62
- Veal with Strawberries & Basil with Blackberry-Basil Sauce, 63
- Grilled Lamb Tenderloin with a Spicy Harissa, Roasted Pepper, Walnut, Pomegranate Relish, 64
- Puerco al Salamanca, 65
- Portobello Mushroom-Liver Pâté, 66

Desserts, 67

- Carrot Cake, 68
- Cherry Clafouti, 69
- Mascarpone Cheesecake, 70
- Aztec Mousse, 71
- White Chocolate Amaretto Mousse, 72

Breads, 73

- Whole Wheat Baguettes, 74
- Pita Bread, 75
- Our Gluten Free Bread, 76

Starches, 77

- Baked or Fried Polenta, 78
- Provençal Spiced Poached Apples, 79

Sauces, 81

- Herbed Garlic Butter, 82
- Marinara Sauce, 83
- Crème Fraîche, 84
- Lemon Crème Fraîche, 85
- Mayonnaise in a Food Processor, 86
- Harissa Aioli, 87
- Preserved Lemon Sauce, 88
- Roasted Red Pepper Pesto, 89
- Tzatziki à la Shevek, 90

Miscellaneous Recipes, 91

- Beef Broth or Stock, 92
- Chicken Broth or Stock, 93
- Vegetable Broth or Stock, 94
- Reductions: Chicken, Beef & Vegetable, 95
- Preserved Lemons, 96
- Chive Shmeer, 97
- Harissa, 98
- Pine Nut Gunk, 99
- Seafood Paste, 100
- Moroccan Blackening Spices, 101
- Salamanca Spice Mix, 102
- Zarzuela Spices, 103

Appendix: The Proper Handling of Raw Chicken & All Poultry, 105

Appendix: Barbecue Safety, 107

Index, 109

Dedication & Acknowledgments

This book is my way of honoring the important people in my life and those who helped make it happen:

First and foremost, my Nana Esther Soslowsky (my mother's mother) who gave me unconditional love, taught me many life skills including how to cook at age 5 and who helped shape me into the man I am today. For Grandma Julia, my Aunt Carmela's mother who, when I was 7 years old, also allowed me into her kitchen and showed me love as if I was her actual grandchild.

To my parents Robert and Phyllis Hertzendorf and my brother Keith. My mom for feeding us what today we know were very healthy meals and for either putting up with or ignoring my taking over her kitchen many weekends to cook strange combinations for my brother Keith—who was a willing guinea pig, thanks bro—and myself. And to my dad who taught me how to be a man who shows those in need love and caring, as well as teaching me how to play fair.

To those who urged me to teach classes, came and turned me into a reasonably good teacher. A special shout out and a thank you to Peggy Hutchinson, Sunny Yates, Becky Nell Young and the late Paget Engen who, with good humor and love, edited my poor spelling, mistyped words and numbers, half finished sentences and twisted logic until it made some sense—and they continued taking classes despite all of that. And also for all the patrons of my restaurants who have urged me to write a cookbook because they enjoyed my food so much, thank you all.

To my staff over the years who gave me great feedback and stepped up as I needed them to, including helping out with cooking classes. A special acknowledgment to my last sous-chef, Cody Foster, who made me better at what I do. Thanks, Cody.

Last, but definitely not least, to my dear husband Amberwind MJ Barnhart who for more than 24 years has put up with all my craziness, the restaurant industry in general, my highly emotional outbursts from time to time—especially if I'm hungry and tired—defends me and always steps up when I have needs, including doing the final editing and typesetting of this long term project, all of which would have taken me twenty times longer. All my love, sweetest man.

Preface

The Wisdom of Grandmothers & Chefs

I owe many people for my skills as a chef, but none more than the many grandmothers in my life who taught me from an early age. Not all grandmas are great cooks. Those who are bring generations of experience and knowledge passed down from their mothers and grandmothers. Most of the best chefs I've known found their love of food and cooking at their grandmothers' tables. For all the grandmothers and mothers in my life—from my own, to my friends' and cousins' relatives who taught me—I'm grateful. This cookbook is as much theirs as it is mine.

I've always loved to eat—from comfort food to ethnic cuisine and everything in between. When there was money, my dad took us out to eat. Even when money was tight, we would go to Nathan's Famous in Coney Island for hot dogs, burgers, fantastic fries and custard ice cream at least once a month. When we ate in Chinatown in Manhattan, the restaurants always had few non-Asians in the dining room. It was real Chinese food, not the dumbed-down dishes served to tourists.

At home, my mom cooked about 9 dishes in rotation. They were good, and when I look back at how we ate, I am amazed at how healthful it was—especially compared to today's typical American diet. Depending on the season, we started every meal with either some fresh fruit or a glass of tomato juice. Then we had a salad with a scratch dressing—Russian dressing, the only kind my mother knew how to make. We then had a main course. Being a Jewish family—though my parents aren't religious—we never had dairy with meat. There was meat, fish, poultry, or cheese as the protein, always with a starch and vegetable. Sometimes on Sunday nights we had a scrambled egg dish—Sunday mornings was bagels, lox, cream cheese, cheese and white fish all served with sliced tomato. We finished dinner with fruit in season or, in the dead of winter, Jell-O with fruit cocktail. An occasional treat was a chocolate pudding.

But that wasn't the food that thrilled me. Restaurant food was always great. It didn't matter the type of cuisine. And Nathan's was the only "fast food" we ever ate. No, the food that I most looked forward to was what I ate in other people's homes.

My Nana (my mother's mother) was an excellent cook. An Orthodox Russian Jew, she cooked, baked, ground her own meat and even kept live fish in the bathtub to make gefilte fish (a traditional fish patty made from multiple breeds of fish) with. Her home always smelled wonderful. She shopped for only two to three days' worth of food so that everything would be fresh. Near the apartment in Brooklyn, NY, where I lived there was a fenced field where I went with her to pick out a live chicken. We watched while it was killed according to kosher law and then dipped in boiling water. I would then help her pluck the feathers off of our future meal. She picked out every fruit and vegetable individually to ensure freshness. She taught me how to cook, starting at the age of 5. She also taught me how to sew, knit and play card games. Essentially, she helped form the person I am today.

All of the eastern European Jewish dishes I cook are hers, though over the years I have adjusted the seasoning of some to suit my personal taste. There are several that I've taught in cooking classes—in addition to serving them in the restaurant.

My next-favorite place to eat was at my Aunt Carmella's house. Her mom was Grandma Julia—she wasn't my real grandmother, but she was my grandma in every other way. Born in Naples, Italy, she started teaching me how to cook when I was about age 7—once my mother convinced her that my Nana had taught me my way around a kitchen. Grandma Julia was an excellent cook and a very loving person—though she used to jokingly call herself an "IAW" (Italian American Warden). The majority of the Italian recipes that I use to this day came from her. This cookbook includes some of those recipes.

My neighborhood was made up mostly of Jews and Italians. The majority of the Jews were eastern European like my family, but there were some from Greece, Syria, Morocco and Israel. The Italians were from all over Italy and Sicily. All my friends' grandmothers—and many of their mothers—were born in “the old country.” Most of them were great cooks and I wouldn't leave them alone until they taught me my favorite dishes.

Grandmothers are some of the best cooks in the world. Even when I lived in various Mediterranean countries, many of the best chefs that I got to work with were taught by their grandmothers. Some of the restaurants still had mama or grandma in the kitchen. Any chef worth his salt understands the great wealth of tradition and knowledge that many grandmothers hold when it comes to food and culture. And every bit of the best of modern cuisines is built on these traditions. If it wasn't for grandmothers, I wouldn't be half the chef that I am today. And for that I am grateful.

Motivation for Simplification

I have long had difficulty finding skilled labor for the style and complexity of food I've been serving. Part of this difficulty has stemmed from my choice to work in small towns out of “quality of life” concerns; another part is that cooking shows have increased the “cachet” of cheffing as a profession. This has led to the cultural construct of the “wealthy celebrity chef,” to increased marketability (and therefore costs) of culinary schools and, in my regrettable experience, to a decline in the skills of many of their graduates. Consequently, I've had to re-imagine classic recipes in a streamlined fashion—without sacrificing taste or texture. It became necessary to hone traditional, often daunting, multi-step recipes down to a few easy steps with fast and consistent results. This has led to years of trial and error as I developed methods and means to create traditional flavors and textures, using all the original ingredients but streamlining the time and number of steps (creating, in some cases, completely new methods of achieving the same results) and developing parts of recipes that can be made ahead of time (for the home cook, this can mean something as simple as freezing ingredients in ice cube trays in usable portions).

Some principles of streamlining dishes I actually learned from grandmothers. For instance, tagines are dishes traditionally cooked in a tagine—a clay pot. They are part of the native cuisines of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. But, at least among many Sephardic Jews (those Jews from Spain, Greece, Turkey, the Middle East and North Africa) the tagine pot isn't always used. I took this knowledge and created tagines with traditional flavors and textures that can be cooked in minutes rather than hours. Every person from North Africa that has eaten in my restaurant has loved my tagines and said that they were a taste of home. This is true of every other dish I've streamlined, no matter the cuisine. I always used a grandmother's twist on tradition and applied it to other dishes as it made sense—as long as the tastes and texture were preserved.

How do I know I was successful? By the number of visitors to my former restaurant over the years that are well-traveled or who grew up with the cuisines—and sometimes the exact dishes—volunteering that my food is as good as anything they have tasted. Many have exclaimed that Shevek & Co. Restaurant had some of the best, or even the best, food they had ever had. (We had a surprisingly large number of foreign guests at the restaurant, considering that Silver City is such a small town—population 11,500, off the beaten track, and only in the last decade getting a positive reputation as an arts destination and even more recently as a town for great dining.)

The benefits derived from the need to create these simplified methods are fourfold. First, the experience level of my average employees was less important; as long as they were willing to learn, they could do most of my extensive menu. Second, I could maintain a large menu (average of 36 items) and easily change it seasonally (up to 6 times per year in Silver City, NM); this helped keep my staff, my guests—and me—from becoming bored. Third, I could start teaching the cooking classes that my guests had repeatedly requested—and the students need not be so concerned with their experience level. Fourth, since the classes forced me to reduce the portion sizes of my recipes to suit the home cook, I now get to create this cookbook. (There is actually a fifth benefit: my

students—from novices to gourmet home cooks—have become enthusiastic beta-testers and first editors for all of these recipes—for which, as they know, I am very grateful!)

At Shevek & Co. Restaurant, we did the foods of practically every nation that has shoreline on the Mediterranean. I lived and illegally worked in quite a few of these countries way back in the early 1970s when I was 18 and 19 years old. In one case, during part of my time in Lebanon, I learned Turkish cooking alongside Lebanese, as the chef I worked for was a Turk living in Lebanon. I was also very lucky to grow up in an ethnically diverse neighborhood in Brooklyn where nearly everyone’s parents and/or grandparents were born “in the old country.” This one was Italian, that one an Eastern European Jew, another Greek and still another Moroccan. There were Israelis, Syrians and Puerto Ricans. I made a nuisance of myself until I was allowed into their kitchens and taught my favorite dishes. The fact that my own Nana had been teaching me how to cook since I was five years old made it easier for me to convince all these women to allow a young boy at their stoves. So, for the countries I never made it to—and even some of those I did—I often had learned their cuisines from many of the best cooks in the world: grandmothers!

Our Guiding Philosophy

When we started the restaurant, the philosophical underpinnings were multi-fold, but really very simple:

- To serve quality food, made to order from scratch—made with quality ingredients—and to have our menu reflect the season. This included buying as much locally-grown, organic, sustainably-, humanely-raised and GMO-free products as were available
- To prepare food in the healthiest manner possible (while avoiding the flavorlessness American diners have come to associate with “healthful” food), while giving our guests complete portion control over the food they eat
- To educate our guests in the fine art of dining. Our attempts to achieve this included giving our guests plenty of time to consume their meal at their leisure. (We did not have the philosophy of “turn and burn,” as the food service industry calls it, in my restaurant.) I grew up with relatives and neighbors who ate slowly and spent hours at the table, eating, drinking and conversing. In fact, we asked people not to dine at the restaurant unless they have at least an hour and a half for their meal—and to refrain from taking calls on their cell phones while in the dining room and, if possible, to just turn them off.
- To educate our wait staff to be knowledgeable about the food and drink we served and to present themselves in a professional manner—and to educate all of our staff, including dishwashers, to understand the food well enough so that if they were in the dining room and were asked a question by a guest, they could answer it accurately or know whom to go to for the answer.
- To run a Green business (we were members of the Southwest New Mexico Green Chamber of Commerce) by purchasing Energy Star products, recycling, reusing when possible and reducing our carbon footprint.

We haven’t always achieved our goals, but we have always worked hard on getting better at what we did.

Are Recipes Sacrosanct?

NO! “Linda” is one of my non-cook students; she has a history of feeling inept in the kitchen and hating cooking. After the first few classes she would e-mail me about how she had made, at home, one of the recipes she had learned and that it had come out just like at the restaurant. She may still not enjoy cooking, but she no longer dreads it because she feels more competent at it.

Once she found a typo. It was her favorite dish—Chicken Marsala—and I had typed in half of the amount of Marsala wine that should have been in the recipe. More importantly, after learning the Blood Orange Chicken recipe she e-mailed asking me if it was all right that she had almost tripled the amount of the shallots in the dish. She loves shallots. My answer to her then—and to you now—is, “Yes.” If you like more shallots, garlic, black pepper or any other spice or herb in a recipe, add more. Or cut back the heat in spicy recipes by reducing the heat-producing spices. I strongly recommend that you do not change the salt in a recipe (I include just enough to bring out the other flavors); let each diner modify their own plate.

NOTE: I strongly recommend that, the first time you try a recipe, you cook it as written so you know the baseline flavors, before experimenting. There are suggestions about ways to adjust recipes within the recipes themselves, as well as in the various points in Chapter 2.

A Quick Word about Health & Nutrition

Nutritional Science is one of the youngest sciences. That’s why one day you are told that eggs are bad for you because they raise your cholesterol, and the next day they are okay because they raise your “good cholesterol” but not the “bad.” Scientists knew about Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids for nearly two decades before they began to figure out how they react in the human body and, therefore, where they should fit into the human diet. It took even longer for them to realize that the typical American diet is too high in Omega 6 in ratio to Omega 3—the consequences of which can include a greatly increased risk of heart-attack and stroke.

On top of the confusing nutritional information on TV, online, etc., we are all harming ourselves by treating food as fuel. If food is not to be savored and enjoyed, then fast food will suffice. The problem is that, if you see food as fuel, it doesn’t matter to you that you are consuming at midday as many calories and fats in ten minutes as the typical traditional European does in an hour or two. The human body wasn’t designed to process all that food in such a brief span. If food is fuel, you can eat at your desk, in your car, or walking down the street. Yes I know that daily life in a country and century that believes that speed is more important than quality often makes dining difficult. However, if you dine at even just one meal a day, you’ll be healthier and much better off than you are now. Try to plan out your breakfast and lunch if dinner is the only time you can dine. That way, even if your meal is rushed, you can at least have something healthful and delicious. The recipes in this cookbook will make this easier to do. (If you are dining out, know where you are going to eat, learn their menu, and what will satisfy your needs in the time you have.)

I, along with many others, came to conclude that eating the so-called Mediterranean Diet—as conceived before World War II—in moderate portion sizes, consumed at a leisurely pace, in a pleasant atmosphere—including pleasant company and conversation—is the healthiest way to eat. European and American medical studies back these concepts up. This means we can enjoy extremely decadent but low-sugar desserts (as are in this cookbook) as well as many of your favorite meats by choosing leaner cuts. You can eat real cheeses (no “cheese foods”) from pastured cows without worry. There is no restriction if one prepares the food with real ingredients—in other words, with little to no convenience/boxed foods—in small portion sizes with a glass of wine, beer or spirits drunk always in moderation. ALWAYS talk to your doctor if you are going to actually diet. But for most of us, all we need to do is cut down our portion sizes, eat slowly, consume more scratch food in healthy proportions of protein, fats, carbohydrates, etc.—as in the Mediterranean Diet—and in an atmosphere conducive to good digestion. (Avoid eating while working or with the TV on; use the dining room or kitchen table.) If you also stop eating at least two hours before bedtime you will lessen the chance of bedtime heartburn and acid reflux. All this is easier than it sounds if you “wanna.” But you “gotta wanna” change your eating patterns.

So use these recipes for the sheer pleasure of their tastes, smells and textures and enjoy the side effect of a healthier diet. The recipes are also designed to give you more portion control as well. Enjoy!

Introduction

Cooking Methods

You will discover that many of my cooking methods don't follow traditional advice. And though I despise eating quickly, teaching you how to cook in as quick and efficient a fashion possible is the goal of this book. Therefore, each recipe has been designed for optimal flavor, aroma and texture while still being easy to create.

Sautéing, boiling, grilling, baking, blending and simply chilling are the most-used methods. Also, the freezing of certain ingredients in easily-used portions is highly recommended as a way of making these recipes easy. Often the recipes include ways of preparing for delicious, fast and easy dinner parties: how to store each recipe, what are the best items to prepare ahead of time, and the best reheating method for each dish.

Equipment

Most households these days have all the equipment you need. These include large and small pots, frying/sauté pans, cookie sheets, baking pans, a blender and/or food processor, ice cube trays, a cutting board, paring and chef's knives (hopefully sharp), mixing bowls, a vegetable peeler and various other utensils—rubber scraper, spatula, wooden and metal spoons, strainer or sieve, etc.

The only piece of equipment you might want to buy is a pressure cooker—and that only if you want to make your own stocks/broths using the easier of the two methods. Otherwise, you just need a large enough pot.

Ingredient Overview

You will find that most of the ingredients in this cookbook are easy to find. In several cases I have a recipe for creating your own gourmet products, such as preserved lemons and Moroccan harissa spicy paste. With the range of products available online today, you can get whatever you need even in the most remote regions—though, if you have a gourmet market or one of the better supermarket chains where you live or work, you won't need to do more than possibly add an extra shopping destination. In this chapter I will talk about the what and the why of my ingredient choices.

In a couple of my recipes I had to come up with a substitute for an ingredient only available either in commercial sizes or to food service establishments—yeah, there are still a few out there. In each case, the recipe lets you know that there was a substitution. I wouldn't consider a substitute ingredient acceptable unless neither the restaurant's staff nor my students could taste the difference in the finished dishes presented side by side.

The Philosophy Behind Why & Where I Purchase My Ingredients

In our town we have a thriving Farmers' Market on Saturday mornings from May through October. We are lucky that, in an area known mostly for chile peppers and cattle, we have as many local growers doing sustainable and organic agriculture as we do. This includes some great fruit growers and vegetable growers and those raising chickens, sheep, goats and cattle humanely and fed only their natural diet. Some are in the nearby towns or counties, but they have all found a thriving market in our small town. A few are growing in greenhouses, which allowed me to purchase some

local organics year round. A majority of my growers delivered their great products directly to the restaurant's back door.

I supplemented all of this via my main corporate food service company, which in recent years not only added more commercial organics, but took on a growing list of local growers—a growing trend among the large corporations that I tried to support with my purchases. With this in mind, when we bought veal, it was always pasture-raised milk-fed veal, though this came from outside our area. The duck we purchased was also from outside our area, but was either wild-caught or humanely raised, depending upon current prices. Most of our sausages came from Europe or small artisanal producers and not only met our criteria for sustainability, but were progressively nitrite and nitrate free.

For seafood, I always used the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch List as the basis of what I purchased. I chose a mix of “friendly” but locally less-well-known seafood, less expensive cuts, and inexpensive but high-quality fish and seafood that were popular locally and nationwide.

NOTES: The following always trump any of my purchase decisions:

- Whether organic or not, strictly grass-fed pastured beef, goat and lamb are the healthiest. It was—and is—my first choice, even more so than local, when purchasing for the restaurant or my home.
- Pigs and chickens fed on their traditional diets are always the best. This means that chickens eat bugs and grass and little grain. Pigs get to root and eat a varied diet with little grain.
- Heirloom breeds are also a factor in my decision-making as a way of helping maintain genetic diversity in our food chain.
- A local fruit and vegetable grower is preferable if they are not using chemicals on their land—though they need not be certified organic.

All of the above are still taken into consideration when purchasing for our new restaurant, “Burgers & Brownies & Beers, Oh My!”

Specific Cuts of Meat & Poultry

We never bought meat from CAPO—feedlot, grain-fed—or caged, restricted-movement sources. These animals have often been treated cruelly and give unhealthful meat. Sometimes economics gives one no choice, so just restrict the amount of red meat in your diet—fish and poultry are better for you overall. We cut all our own steaks and pork from “Choice” rated whole tenderloins. We did this not only for the tenderness of the cut of meat, but because it helped keep down cost and makes our dishes more affordable in a small-town market. If the animals have eaten only their traditional diet, consuming fattier cuts or meats with higher marbling will not be harmful when enjoyed in healthful proportions.

I determine the quality of the meats I'm using by cooking them very well-done—if the steak or pork is still tender and moist, I know that the meat is of a higher quality and has been handled appropriately. The quality of the dish you are eating is actually determined by how the meat was handled after butchering, how old it is, and whether it has been aged—not whether it is organic, local, conventionally raised, or even if it is labeled “Prime”—though these factors are very important to me as well. It is the cooking technique and the spicing that take a less-expensive piece of meat and turn it into a gourmet feast. These recipes will allow you to achieve just that. Never buy ground beef fattier than 90% lean to 10% fat unless it is grass fed/grass finished—unless you're using it for burgers and you're not adding olive oil or some other healthful fat; too lean a burger is dry and unpleasant. 81%/19% is great for burgers, and chuck has a perfect flavor.

Veal is naturally lean and tender. I only serve humanely-raised, milk-fed veal both because of the superior taste and texture and because I believe in treating animals with respect. Lamb tends to

be the fattiest of the meats we serve, but grass-fed lamb is high in important Omega 3 fatty acids. If you're worried about fats, try a loin cut trimmed of excess fat. Besides which, most traditional Mediterranean cuisines include lamb as part of a healthful diet. Goat is another flavorful and healthful alternative to lamb and chicken.

All of the duck and most of our chicken dishes use boneless breast meat, but that is because Americans have been convinced that white meat is more healthful. The reality is that there is little to no nutritional difference between dark and white/light meat in chicken—though there is in duck and turkey. In chicken soups, which should be hearty, flavorful and inexpensive, we always use the chicken's natural ratio of white and dark meat for peak flavor. The Tunisian Barbecued Chicken recipe uses the drumsticks because they cook up nicely and are—*de rigueur* in barbecue—fun finger food. We also served goat ribs (instead of the drumsticks) in the Tunisian sauce; they are great fun to eat with the fingers, too.

For scratch meat and poultry broths, removing the solid fat from the top of the finished, chilled broth will easily achieve a significant fat reduction in spite of the cuts of poultry or beef used. I save some of this fat when it comes from appropriately-raised animals for other uses; e.g., for the fat in a pâté. In all meat and poultry broths, we want to use inexpensive cuts that include bones. Never use ground beef to make a broth since there are often less-expensive options that will add more flavor.

The eggs we served were almost always from truly-free-range chickens that live outside eating bugs and grass—their normal diet. Our second best option—when eggs become scarcer in winter months—is from chickens fed organic feed including flax seed. As with the meat of the chicken, the eggs are richer in healthier fats and more Omega 3 fatty acids when the laying hens have roamed free, eating their normal diet, or when they have been given a flax-enriched organic diet.

Dairy Products

On the day that I was writing this chapter, a European Union study was released. The scientists tested 22 brands of organic milk sold in supermarkets and noted that the organic milk had lower levels of saturated fats and more beneficial fatty acids. Is this true of US brands? Without a study, who knows? But a cow fed on organic grain means fewer chemicals in the environment. Even better, cows fed only on grass means the healthiest milk possible. With supermarkets—including Walmart—now selling organic milk, there are many cheaper alternatives available. But if you are willing to pay for milk from pastured cows versus those fed organic feed, studies show that the ratio of Omega 6 to Omega 3 fatty acids will exactly match the healthy proportion the human body needs, and so the fats you consume will not have any negative impact on your overall health. **FATS DON'T MAKE YOU FAT—SIMPLE CARBOHYDRATES DO:** white flour, white rice, white potatoes, white pasta, white bread, etc.—it's a theme.

When a recipe asks for cream or half and half, I suggest, as always, making it as written the first time, unless the recipe includes a tip as to how to make it with a lower-fat product for those trying to cut the fats in their diet. I have never tried “fat free” half and half since it is mostly chemicals; therefore I can't tell you, my dear reader, how it will be if added to any of my recipes. Soy, rice and almond milks can be higher in carbohydrates and sugar than actual milk and do not cook like the real thing; this will greatly affect the flavor and texture of a recipe—sometimes making it inedible. In addition, white rice and most soy should be avoided as part of a healthy diet—the exception being cheese-like, fermented soy products such as tofu and tempeh.

Real cheese and butter, when consumed in moderation and as only one component of a healthy diet, are now known to be healthier than “cheese foods” and margarines. Stick to the real thing—it tastes better, cooks better, and is more healthful. Also, real cheeses are also easier to digest than cheese foods since the lactose in the milk has been significantly reduced—sometimes to nil—by bacteria that consume lactose as their nutrition of choice. A cheese's distinctive flavor can often be attributed to which of these particular bacteria—and there are thousands of them—consumed the milk.

Oils & Fats

The most predominant oil we use is extra-virgin olive oil. Because of my personal preference for flavor and quality, we even sautéed in extra-virgin olive oil, which is what I recommend in ALL my recipes. If you are trying to save money, virgin olive oil is still, as far as I'm concerned, acceptable for sautéing. "Pumice," generic or ungraded olive oil, has "off" flavors and is of such low quality that these are always to be avoided. Never use anything but extra virgin for salad dressings or any other applications in which the oil will not be heated. A British study showed that those who survive a first heart attack and consume at least 4 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil each day not only significantly reduce their risk of another heart attack but also their risk of stroke—especially when compared to these risk rates for those on the traditional no- to low-fat heart diet. Other European studies show that consuming that minimum amount reduces one's overall mortality rate and adds important chemicals to one's health when bitter greens such as kale and spinach are sautéed in olive oil.

Clarified butter (or ghee) was our second-most-used oil/fat and is used to sauté dishes where the flavor is desirable; though if you are avoiding animal fats, you can choose canola or olive oil as is appropriate for the dish's taste. Then again, you can blend ghee with oil to get some of the flavor while lowering the saturated fats in butter oil. Some of our guests who cannot consume whole butter, milk or cheese can tolerate ghee since the butter solids to which they are allergic have been removed.

Canola oil and corn oil, for their lack of taste, good Omega 3 and monounsaturated fat content, is used only when we are frying a piece of fish or other item in a significant amount of oil. You can find GMO-free canola, but you have to look for it. We use a canola-corn based oil at Burgers & Brownies & Beers, Oh My! for deep-frying.

Finally, we use specialty oils such as white and black truffle-infused oils and various nut oils. Our list of nut oils includes walnut, almond, pistachio, hazelnut and sesame; these are used to enhance the flavor and healthfulness of a dish. We never use peanut oil which is derived from a legume, a nut many people are allergic to.

For flavor and texture we will use, as appropriate for the pâté, rendered duck or chicken fat, whole butter or the fat skimmed from our scratch broths.

We buy only unsalted butter and use it where appropriate, including with the bread we serve and, especially, in baking. For pie dough, biscuits, etc., new studies show that lard—which makes a fantastic crust—is not so unhealthful as hydrogenated oils, trans fats and margarine.

Soybean, safflower, sunflower, cottonseed and generic "vegetable" oils are banned from my kitchen. They are all inexpensive but too high in Omega 6 to fit into a healthful diet. Soybean oil has an estrogen-like compound that studies suggest is one of the many causes of larger waistlines, particularly among men.

Herbs, Spices & Seasonings

Sea salt is the IN thing right now, but that's not why I call for it in certain recipes. Most of the sea salts I've seen readily available to consumers are coarse-grain. Coarse sea salt, which can be interchanged with kosher salt in my recipes, dissolves and melts at a different speed than regular table salt. That's the real reason that I call for a coarse salt—plus, it is traditional to the specific dish because of its qualities. All my recipes are low salt, and I make up for the difference by using herbs and spices with great abandon. But please, never eliminate the salt entirely. In fact, once again, the European long term studies are way ahead of us and show that a diet that has moderate amounts of salt doesn't have the unhealthful effects that doctors and nutritional scientists had assumed it did.

For black pepper, I usually don't care if it's fresh-ground as long as the pepper isn't very old. Black pepper doesn't age as quickly as most herbs and spices and will flavor foods even as it ages—as will salt. But there are those times when fresh-ground black makes a difference because it is fresher and it also allows one to control the coarseness of the grind.

There are three questions I am most frequently asked about herbs and spices. The first is: “What is the difference between a spice and an herb?” Herbs are the flowers or leaves of any plant. Spices come from all other parts of the plant, i.e., seed, bark and root—cinnamon is the bark of a tree; coriander and pepper are seeds; garlic is a bulb. Some plants yield both. The coriander plant gives us the spice coriander seed (used in baking, Indian, Middle-eastern and other cuisines) while the leaves are an herb often called cilantro (used in Mexican, Asian and other cuisines.)

The second question is: “Can I substitute dry for fresh herbs (or vice versa) and how do I do so?” The answer to the first part of the question is simple: “YES!” The second is a little harder. In general, because the drying of herbs concentrates the flavor while reducing the herb's bulk, one should use half as much dried herb as fresh. The reverse is also true: double the fresh herb in any recipe that calls for dried.

This brings us to the third question: “How long can I keep spices, and how do I store them properly?” The above rule, regarding how much dried herbs and spices to use, collapses if the herbs or spices in your cupboard are more than a few months old or have been allowed to sit without being covered tightly, or have been left exposed to sunlight or heat. Mistreated spices and dried herbs lose their potency. One can find oneself doubling, tripling or more to get the same flavor. My recommendation is never to buy more than what you think you will use in six (or, better, even fewer) months! In this way, the flavoring in your dishes will be consistent each time. Date your jars and toss out herbs when they get too old. Better yet, put your herbs and spices, sealed well in labeled glass jars or tightly sealed plastic bags, in the freezer. You will increase their life by at least double.

NOTES:

- All herbs in my recipes are dry unless otherwise noted.
- Onion powder and garlic powder are NEVER a substitute for the real thing. Also, salt can be a major component in both, depending on the brand.

If you garden and dry your own herbs, or buy bulk fresh herbs from a food stand or a co-op, you can chop, freeze and bag your herbs instead of drying. If you do dry them, treat them as you would jarred herbs. Either way, the proper use of herbs and spices is the difference between a good dish and a great dish.

For those who have read this far, I now present you with an “Easter Egg,” just like you can find on computer games or DVDs. In my classes I teach every one of my students that I put a dash of ground nutmeg in everything I cook—tomato sauce, breads, soups, salad dressings, desserts, etc. Yes, everything! I had a teacher, whose name I'm sad to say I don't remember, who taught our first real kitchen class back in 1977 at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park—the only campus at the time—who insisted on this. He also believed you should put a dash of Tabasco sauce in everything, but I found its flavor could be intrusive in some dishes. But I fully agree that just a bit of nutmeg seems to pull together the flavors in everything you cook and that, as he said, it enhances a dish in subtle but important ways. Try it by adding a small pinch to your favorite dishes; don't say anything to those you usually cook for, but see if they start noticing a difference. Almost everyone I've ever challenged this way has made this practice part of the way they cook.

Once again, I ask that you make each recipe at least once as written for the spicing levels, and then play with the recipe to personalize the taste after knowing the way the flavors work together to create the dish—though don't forget to add the nutmeg.

Sweeteners

There are a handful of things that white sugar is appropriate for. The texture, particularly in baking, will not come from honey, maple syrup or sugar substitutes. They all have their place, including in baking, and we use all of them (except sugar substitutes) in the restaurant as appropriate for the flavor desired. The key is to use as little of each as necessary to achieve the desired effect. I prefer to use turbinado sugar (which rarely dries out or clumps) over brown sugar (which usually does, no matter what you do). Though they are equivalent in many ways, turbinado is more expensive because it is the “in” thing. Both are cane sugars that have molasses, which gives them their color. Turbinado and demerara sugars are from the beginning processes of the cane where the molasses is yet to be extracted, though demerara is lighter in color. Today’s brown sugar is white sugar, fully processed, with molasses added back into it. If a recipe calls for dark brown sugar, one can always add a dash of molasses to turbinado or light brown sugar to achieve the same result.

Flour

Whole grains, such as stone-ground whole-wheat flour, are extremely healthful when one component of a balanced diet. With that said, in this day and age there seem to be a lot of people who are avoiding gluten (a protein found in several grains) for various reasons. I’m not going to go into a spiel about true sufferers of celiac and Crohn’s disease and those allergic to wheat or other gluten-bearing grains versus those self-diagnosed and following the gluten free fad because it is just that: a fad. But if you’re avoiding gluten—for whatever reason—any of my recipes, except for baked goods and crêpes, can be made without flour, but the sauces will not be as thick without it. I largely avoid thickening with a roux (flour cooked in butter)—especially soups. Lightly flouring meats and poultry, on the other hand, not only helps to thicken the sauce, but first and foremost, helps keep the meat from sticking as you sauté it. Most of my sauces are thickened by reducing the liquid through simmering or boiling. The flour speeds up this process and adds an extra bit of thickness and, as great chef Escoffier said “...is absolutely necessary to give the mellowness and velviness to the sauce.” If you are going to eliminate the flour from any of these dishes, remove the meat/poultry/seafood while thickening the sauces to prevent overcooking. Please, do not substitute corn starch if you’re leaving out the flour in a sauce—it changes the flavor as well as the texture and is most likely (unless labeled to the contrary) made from GMO corn.

Whole wheat flour in the US is mostly a joke—it is enriched white flour with some bran thrown back in. Unless you are using real stone ground whole wheat you are not getting flour as it should be. Stone grinding leaves the Omega 3 and other fatty acids in the flour. This can make the flour go rancid very quickly; always keep it refrigerated in a sealed container. I find that you can substitute whole wheat in the following ways:

- It can be used to flour meats for sautéing, but it has a little less thickening power than white flour.
- When substituting flour in cakes and other baked good recipes, for the best texture and flavor, replace from half up to no more than two-thirds of the white flour with whole-wheat. Replacing half will give you a texture closer to the original. Replacing all of the white flour with whole wheat usually ends up with a very dry and chewy texture in the product—though in bread this can create a desirable peasant loaf.
- I have never made a crêpe worth eating with more than half whole wheat flour.

Whole wheat and stone ground flour will add a hint of nuttiness to a recipe, though it will be stronger with the latter. Once again, experiment and have fun trying different levels of whole wheat, but do the recipe as written the first time to get a feel for its flavors and textures.

Wines versus Cooking Wines

Any chef will tell you that if you use truly inferior ingredients the result, no matter the skill of the cook, will not be all that it could be. This is particularly true when it comes to so-called “cooking wines” and “cooking sherry.” One stereotype of professional cooks is that they will drink anything that isn’t strictly monitored. Given this, during Prohibition, in an effort to prevent wines for cooking (legal) from becoming wines for drinking (illegal), salt was added and the result sold as “cooking wine.” Too many cooking wines are made from wines that are about to “turn” into vinegar. The flavor they impart to your dishes will have the beginnings of that vinegary tang and bite that, in most cases, is undesirable. The better brands start with a decent wine or sherry and add salt. Personally, I never use cooking wines. Even a boxed wine or the cheapest bottled varietals will give you a much better result.

Many recipes call for just a red or white wine. What should you use? Personally, I like and recommend in my recipes a merlot for the red and a no-more-than-lightly-oaky chardonnay for the white. But what brand should I buy? For most dishes, a good inexpensive table wine is sufficient. My rule is: if I wouldn’t drink it, it’s not worth putting into my food. When available, a 1.5 liter bottle of wine is more cost effective. Since it is a cooking- rather than a drinking-wine, just cork well and lay it down in the refrigerator. If a recipe calls for specific varietals or regional wines, I use exactly what it requires.

When it comes to sherry, unless otherwise specified, I use a cream sherry. Dry sherries (or *fino* in Spanish) are, well, too dry unless of course, it is appropriate to that given recipe—in which case I specify dry or *fino*. I even have a couple of recipes where I blend the two to get the flavor profile I prefer.

Obviously, when the wine or sherry is the predominant taste component in a sauce, don’t stint on quality. After all, great ingredients make for great flavors!

Specialty & Scratch Items

In this book you will find recipes for Preserved Lemons, Crème Fraîche and Harissa (a Moroccan spicy hot paste). All are available in specialty stores or online. Making your own is less expensive, but requires planning ahead of time. In the case of Preserved Lemons, you need to make them a month before using. Make specialty items or not, as you desire, though I prefer my Harissa over any store-bought brand I’ve ever tried. (As a side note—Crème Fraîche is also known as Coddled Cream in Britain and as Queso Fresca in Mexico.)

There are also recipes for broths and stocks. If you use the non-traditional Method 2 to make them, you will find that they are easy to do. If you are buying store-bought, use only reduced-sodium/reduced-fat broths. Full-salt varieties will require reducing the salt in the recipe. The “reductions” that are the base for many of the sauces in this book (and at the restaurant) can only be made from scratch, whether you use store-bought or your own broth. The fact that they can be frozen in a standard portion size ice cube trays makes them quick and simple to use. Never use a bouillon cube, the flavor is atrocious and it has hidden gluten and way too much salt. There are now beef and chicken pastes to make broths and stocks available in your local supermarket. I find them too salty, and I find the flavors of the available brands almost artificial. I recommend against them in favor of a good canned/boxed broth.

My spice blends are my version of traditional blends—you will not find them available in any store, nor have I seen them online. These are quick and simple and you will need to blend your own. Again, please don’t adjust these until you’ve tried them as-is.

Same for “Pine Nut Gunk” and Seafood paste. Pine Nut Gunk takes moments in a food processor, though I learned how to make it with a mortar and pestle. Seafood paste is available in a commercial form for food service businesses—called seafood base or soup base—but as of this

writing, I have not found it available in supermarkets or gourmet food stores. It is relatively quick and easy to make and can also be made ahead of time and frozen in easily-used portions. I also like the flavor of mine better than the commercially-available ones—plus it freezes quite nicely.

Vegetables & Fruits as Starch?

Yes! In America it is mostly meat and potatoes, maybe a side vegetable and often bread or rolls on the table. A diet high in simple carbohydrates is what's really making us fat! Fruits and most vegetables are complex carbohydrates and we should all try to consume at least three portions of each a day. Remember—all things in moderation, including moderation itself! At Shevek & Co. Restaurant, we often served steamed or sautéed vegetables in place of rice or potatoes. At Burgers & Brownies & Beers, Oh My!, we offer very nutritious sweetpotato fries and baked sweetpotato. Fruits, as the berries in Veal with Strawberries & Basil, also can replace the traditional starches—as did the Provençal Apples served under many of our crêpes. Polenta, which is higher in fiber than potatoes or white rice, is also served with appropriate dishes. And, these days, when we do serve rice, it is strictly brown rice.

We didn't eliminate pastas, including couscous, but we did serve them in smaller portion sizes than typical American restaurants. I used toasted Israeli or Middle Eastern couscous, since most brands have a slightly better protein to carbohydrate ratio, and added some red quinoa to the couscous to increase the protein, fiber and eye appeal. (We also provided brown rice pasta for those avoiding gluten.) We brought our scratch bread made from stone ground whole wheat flour or our brown rice-based gluten free bread to table with real unsalted butter or, if requested, with extra-virgin olive oil. There were a couple of items, such as the Zarzuela, that we served with a slice of baguette for wiping up the sauce. And we served thin-sliced crostini, made from our scratch stone ground whole wheat baguette, for spreading pâtés on. Then again, eating in moderation does NOT mean “never” for any food, but rather “occasionally.”

Last Thoughts

Cooking should be fun! That's one reason why my classes have been so popular—we have fun joking around, cooking (and eating) good food made using recipes that are easy to follow—but that can seem complicated to the uninitiated.

Make sure you decorate your plates by either making them look like you chose to place everything exactly where you put it on the plate or by trying to be artistic in your placement. Studies show that food just plopped on a plate never tastes as good as that which has been placed with intent—whether it is just nicely piled or placed like a work of art.

But mostly, just have fun with the recipes in this book! I know I do.

Vegetables & Salads

Artichoke Hearts with Lemon-Mint Dressing

This simple, easy and extremely tasty salad will be as much of a hit at your home as it is in the restaurant. The flavors are common to the entire Mediterranean region and will go with nearly any cuisine, including Mexican, Caribbean or by the side of a barbecued steak.

This is best after the artichokes have had a couple of hours to marinate.

2 can (14oz)	artichoke hearts, drained
1/3 cup	extra-virgin olive oil
1/3 cup	fresh lemon juice
1/3 cup	fresh spearmint leaves, chopped
1 Tbs	garlic, minced
1/2 tsp	salt
6 ounces	mixed greens

Procedure

- Soak the drained artichoke hearts in a half gallon of cool water for 10 minutes. Drain and then rinse them off.
- Mix the oil, juice, mint, garlic and salt in a bowl. Add the artichokes and marinate for at least 2 hours.
- Place the artichokes on a bed of greens. Garnish with mint. Serve.

Yield: 4-6 portions

Lebanese Beet Salad

Rated moderately difficult because you have to cook and peel the fresh beets. Delicious and worth the time

This is a traditional salad that has convinced many a person who believes they hated beets otherwise. It tastes best the next day, but will still get rave reviews after only 2 hours of marinating.

Pomegranate molasses or paste can be found in specialty food shops. Or else you can reduce 1½ cups of pomegranate juice to 1/3 cup.

2 lbs	fresh beets, trimmed
1/2 cup	fresh parsley, chopped
1/3 cup	pomegranate molasses/paste
3 Tbs	extra-virgin olive oil
2 Tbs	onion, small dice
1 Tbs	fresh lemon juice
2 tsp	fresh mint leaves, chopped
2 tsp	garlic, minced
1/4 tsp	salt
As needed	salad greens
As needed	fresh mint leaves

Procedure

- Boil the beets until a pointed knife easily pierces to the center of the largest beet—approximately 40 minutes, depending on the width of the beets. Drain and cool until comfortable to handle.
- Peel the beets by scraping with a paring knife. Cut into 1” cubes.
- In a bowl whisk all the other ingredients together. Add the beets and toss.
- Allow to marinate at room temperature for 2 hours. Serve then or refrigerate and serve the next day.
- Serve over greens and garnish with some fresh mint.

Yield: approximately 2 lbs

Moroccan Date & Orange Salad

There are several steps to this recipe, which is what makes it moderately difficult; though no one step is particularly hard. Worth every moment.

Mildly sweet and tart, the notes of the toasted almonds and orange water makes this salad a cooling and refreshing summer treat. My take on a classic, try it as a light and healthy dessert.

Orange water can be found in specialty food stores and is wonderful over ice cream, in custards and for making baklava.

2 cans (15 oz)	mandarin oranges in light syrup, drained
2 each	carrots peeled and large grated or julienned
1/2 cup	almonds, slivered and toasted
10 large	dates, pitted and sliced
2 Tbs	fresh lemon juice
1/2 Tbs	orange water
1/2 rd tsp	sugar
1/4 tsp	salt
As needed	salad greens
As needed	lemon zest, grated

Procedure

- Mix the juice, orange water, sugar and salt in a bowl.
- Add all the other ingredients except the greens and stir. Marinate for at least 2 hours.
- Serve over a bed of greens. Garnish with fresh lemon zest.

Yield: 4- 6 portions

Grilled Stuffed Portobello Mushroom

Rated moderately difficult because you must start the day ahead.

Loved by vegetarians and meaties alike, this has been one of our best sellers since we introduced it. Portobellos are meaty in flavor and the marinade only enhances this perception. The cheese filling makes it rich on the tongue. The sauce brings all the flavors together in unexpected ways.

4 each Portobello mushrooms, destemmed and washed

Marinade

1/2 cup cream sherry
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 Tbs balsamic vinegar
2 Tbs garlic, minced
1 tsp basil

Filling

1/2 cup Chive Shmeer—*see Miscellaneous*
2 Tbs fresh basil chopped
1 tsp garlic, minced
1 cup Roasted Red Pepper Pesto—*see Sauces*
As needed scallions or chives, chopped
As needed parsley, fresh, chopped
Salad greens or spinach

Procedure

- Combine all of the Marinade ingredients in a small sauce pot and warm until just simmering. Put the portobellos into the marinade. Place a plate or bowl on top of the mushrooms to keep them from floating.
- When cool, refrigerate overnight.
- Make the Chive Shmeer; add the basil and garlic. Refrigerate until needed.
- Make the Pesto and chill until needed.
- **TO COOK:** You can grill the mushrooms, cook them in the broiler or in a non-stick pan with a little olive oil. Cook gill side down first for 1½ minutes. Turn over and cook 1 minute more.
- Fill the cap with a quarter of the cream cheese mix. Transfer to a non-stick pan. Cover the mushroom and let the cheese melt by steaming the caps with a little water.
- Place each mushroom on a bed of greens or spinach. Top with a quarter of the Pesto.
- Garnish with fresh chopped scallions and parsley.

Yield: 4 portions

Balsamic Vinaigrette

My other half was eating lots of salads and using a chemical bath of dressing known as most bottled brands. Balsamic, at that time, was his favorite. I created this to take the place of bottled dressing.

It's not only great on salads, but it is the secret ingredient in the Antipasto di Pesce. Fast, easy and delicious, there is no excuse not to make your own dressing.

2/3 cup	extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 cup	balsamic vinegar
1½ Tbs	fresh parsley, chopped
1 rd Tbs	garlic, minced
2 tsp	fresh lemon juice
1/2 Tbs	oregano
1 tsp	molasses
1 tsp	black pepper
1/2 tsp	basil
1/2 tsp	marjoram
1/2 tsp	salt
1/8 tsp	chervil

Procedure

- Put all the ingredients into a blender and blend until emulsified.
- Refrigerate. Will last up to 3 months.

Yield: approximately 1½ cups

Blood Orange & Poppy Seed Dressing

This recipe has evolved over the last 15 years, as have the salads it has been used with. I started out using nothing but regular orange juice and raspberry vinegar in the recipe, a tasty option that is still viable (substitute vinegar for the blood orange juice.)

Various versions of this dressing have been used on a spinach salad with mandarin oranges and walnuts, the same salad with grilled duck breast added, and now, the Duck with Mandarin Oranges recipe—see Poultry.

The poppy seeds can be omitted, and sometimes are, depending upon what I am dressing.

1/2 cup	extra-virgin olive oil
2 Tbs	blood orange juice
2 Tbs	orange juice
1/4 tsp	salt
1/4 tsp	black pepper

Optional

2 Tbs	poppy seeds
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Procedure

- Put all the ingredients into a blender EXCEPT the poppy seeds. Blend until emulsified. If desired, add the poppy seeds and blend for mere moments; NO MORE than 2 seconds! Over blending of the poppy seeds will make the dressing bitter.

Yield: approximately 7 ounces

Cabrales Blue Cheese Dressing

I was attempting to create the ultimate blue cheese dressing, thick, richly flavored, and chock full of blue cheese. This recipe did the trick! It started using just inexpensive blue cheese and received rave reviews. I changed it as we added Cabrales, a Spanish blue, to our menu. The reviews only got better. Try it with your favorite blue cheese.

1 cup	Mayonnaise— <i>see Sauces</i>
1/2 cup	sour cream
1/2 cup	Cabrales blue cheese
2 Tbs	garlic, minced
2 Tbs	dill weed
1 tsp	salt
1/2 Tbs	black pepper
1/8 tsp	nutmeg

Procedure

- In a bowl, whip together the mayonnaise, sour cream and spices.
- Crumble the Cabrales. Add it to the bowl with all the other ingredients.
- Fold in the blue cheese and chill.

Yield: approximately 2 cups

Soups

Gazpacho

There are many types of gazpacho; every Spanish grandmother has her own version. This is my favorite recipe for the “classic” red gazpacho that most Americans know. I learned it in Spain in the early 70’s. Fast and easy, it can be served in place of a salad.

In Spain this type of gazpacho is often consumed almost immediately after making it. I have found that many Americans prefer it a few hours later, or the next day. It will last a good week under refrigeration.

For serving cold faster, chill the tomato juice ahead of time.

1 medium	onion, peeled and chopped
1 each	green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
1 large	tomato, cut into chunks
1 can (46 oz)	tomato juice
1/2 cup	fresh parsley, chopped
3 Tbs	garlic, minced
2 Tbs	honey
2 Tbs	red wine vinegar
2 Tbs	fresh lemon juice
2 Tbs	extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 Tbs	black pepper
2 tsp	salt
1 tsp	tarragon
1 tsp	basil
2 pinches	cumin
2 pinches	cayenne pepper
2 each	scallions, thinly sliced
1 medium	cucumber peeled, cut into quarters the long ways and then into 1/4” slices

Procedure

- Put the chunked onion, pepper and tomato into a food processor and chop until just turning liquid. Transfer to a bowl.
- Add all other ingredients, EXCEPT the scallions and cucumber and stir well.
- Add the scallions and cucumber and stir. Chill and serve.

Servings: 9

Yield: 2 1/4 quarts

Chilled Blueberry Merlot Soup

I fell in love with chilled fruit soups when traveling through southern Europe in the early 70's. When I went through the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY back in the late 70's we were taught a couple of chilled soup recipes, like Vichyssoise, but many had fallen out of fashion in the U.S.A. Years later, I threw a dinner party in the heat of summer. It was time to introduce my friends to some favorite flavors via chilled fruit soups. This recipe is the result of recreating those tastes.

Though it makes a great soup course on a hot summer day, it can also be served as a light refreshing dessert or as a palate cleanser.

4 cups	orange juice
2 2/3 cups	Merlot wine
1 cup	blueberries
1½ cup	half-and-half
3 Tbs	honey
1 Tbs	fresh lemon juice
2 tsp	cinnamon
1 pinch	nutmeg
1 cup	blueberries

Procedure

- Combine all ingredients EXCEPT 1 cup of blueberries in a blender and blend until smooth.
- Add the last cup of blueberries. Chill at least 2 hours. Serve.
- NOTE: If using frozen blueberries, defrost them in the refrigerator.

Servings: 8

Yield: 64.2 ounces

Cream of Portobello

In Albuquerque, NM each year there is a fundraiser for the Road Runner Food Bank, called the Souper Bowl, on the weekend of Super Bowl Sunday. Most of the best chefs and restaurants compete in it. In 1999 I won first prize with this recipe!

There is a myth that one needs to wipe mushrooms with a damp cloth and never clean them under running water or in a bowl of cold water. This has been proven wrong! There are also chefs who scrape out the gills of portobellos. I don't. I not only like the flavor that leaving the gills on imparts to the soup, but also the hint of an almost purple-brown tint the soup has.

This soup tastes best after it's rested for at least an hour, otherwise the sherry can give it a raw alcohol flavor.

3/4 lb	portobello mushrooms, coarsely chopped
5½ ounces	button mushrooms coarsely chopped
3 3" to 4.5"	potatoes, scrubbed and diced
5 tsp	garlic, minced
2 tsp	basil
1 quart	half-and-half
1¼ cup	cream sherry
3 Tbs	turbinado or brown sugar, packed
2 tsp	salt
2 tsp	black pepper
1/2 tsp	nutmeg

Procedure

- Add both types of mushrooms, potatoes, garlic and basil to a stock pot. Add enough water to cover. Bring to a boil and then simmer for 1 hour. BE AWARE: mushrooms float, so be sure that the water is just covering them.
- Cool. Blend until smooth, adding water, if necessary, to allow the blender to do its job.
- Add to a pot with all the remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil and then simmer 5 minutes more. Serve hot.

Servings: 8

Yield: 78 ounces

Green Chile Chicken & Rice

When Amberwind and I first moved to New Mexico he was a vegetarian and lamented the lack of a version of green chile stew that he could eat. I first created a vegetarian version of this recipe. It went over quite well, even with the local Hispanics. But when we opened our little gourmet deli in the North Valley in Albuquerque our regulars asked for a more traditional version. What they got was this, a blending of my Nana's Jewish chicken soup and my vegetarian stew. It was so popular that it immediately become a standard in my repertoire! Not bad for a Jewish "Anglo" from Brooklyn, NY.

Between the Jewish chicken soup base and the healing powers of green chile this makes a great cold and flu season staple.

Make this soup as spicy as you like. Choose mild to hot chiles, according to your own taste.

1 quart	Chicken Broth—see <i>Miscellaneous</i>
1 lb	chicken, skinned, meat cut into 1/2-inch cubes
1/2 med	onions, diced
1/2 cup	carrots peeled and thinly sliced
1/3 cup	bell pepper, seeded and chopped
2 Tbs	extra-virgin olive oil
1 cup	mushrooms, quartered
1 each	tomato, diced
2 cups	green chile peppers, roasted, seeded and chopped
1/2 cup	cream sherry
2 Tbs	garlic, minced
2 Tbs	white rice, uncooked
1/2 Tbs	brown sugar
2 tsp	oregano
1 tsp	salt
1 tsp	black pepper
scant tsp	cumin

Procedure

- In a stock pot bring the chicken broth and raw chicken to a boil. Simmer for 5 minutes.
- In a separate pan sauté the onion, carrots and red pepper in the olive oil. When the onion is transparent, combine with the chicken and broth in the stock pot.
- Add all the other ingredients. Bring to a boil. Lower to a simmer and cook covered until the rice is done—approximately 10 to 15 minutes. If too thick, add a little water as needed.

Servings: 10

Crab & Roasted Corn Bisque

I feel like I first learned how to make bisque, and chowder for that matter, when I lived and cooked in Bar Harbor, Maine. This recipe, though untraditional for New England, is one of our guests' favorites.

Most people thicken bisques with a roux (flour and butter). I do it the older, pre-Victorian way via egg yolks and heavy cream. Why? Though it makes for a thinner bisque, the flavor and texture is superior. We now know that egg yolks raise your cholesterol, but does so by increasing the good HDL's. It might not be a perfect wash, but the egg yolks counteract the negative effects of the heavy cream. We now also know that white flour is unhealthy. (In fact, most whole wheat flour is nothing more than white flour with a little bran thrown back in. Neither real nor healthy.)

Let me add a quick bit of history. Before the Victorian Era most people had a cow and chickens. Thickening sauces and cream soups via egg yolks and cream was cheap and always available. White flour was very expensive; made by the slow process of sifting out the 'undesirable' fiber by hand. Only the rich could afford white flour, and therefore white bread. They also had rich persons' diseases such as gout and diabetes. With the invention of a machine that could cheaply and quickly sift and make white flour, everyone could now have white bread, and by extension, the accompanying diseases. At the same time, more and more people left farming and country life for the cities. Fewer people had cows and chickens. The modern diet and cooking methods began during this period.

Personally, I not only prefer thickening with egg yolks and cream, but I believe that in the long-run the young science of Nutrition (only around 60 years old) will prove it to be the healthier option. Butter is now considered healthier than margarine! In the countryside of France and other nations there are still those who cook using this older method. They are quite healthy. I'll take my chances.

1/2 lb	frozen corn, thawed and drained	2 tsp	turbinado or brown sugar, packed
2 Tbs	extra-virgin olive oil	2 tsp	marjoram
4 each	egg yolks lightly beaten	2 tsp	paprika
2 cups	heavy (whipping) cream	1 tsp	basil
1 can (6 oz)	tomato paste	1 tsp	oregano
3/4 cup	cream sherry	1 tsp	tarragon
2 Tbs	seafood paste—see <i>Miscellaneous</i>	1/2 tsp	salt
1/2 lb	crab meat	1 pinch	cayenne
1 rounded Tbs	garlic, minced	1 pinch	nutmeg
1 Tbs	Old Bay seasoning	3 cups	water
1 Tbs	parsley flakes		

Procedure

- Mix the corn and olive oil either in a very hot frying pan (cast iron works best) or in a 450°F oven on a cookie sheet until corn lightly colored.
- In a stock pot, beat together egg yolks and heavy cream. Beat in the tomato paste until mostly smooth.
- Add all other ingredients, EXCEPT the crab meat. Stirring frequently, warm on a medium heat until just before a simmer. Add crab and simmer for 5 to 8 minutes more.
- **NOTE:** Do NOT allow to boil.

Servings: 8

Cheese & Eggs

Cabrales Blue Cheese & Blood Oranges

This is a recipe totally from my offbeat mind. It has become a real favorite, though strictly seasonal, recipe.

Blood oranges originated in Italy and, up until recently, the best tasting ones came from there. Now, California blood oranges are almost as good. Don't be fooled by color! Some of the tastiest ones have a lighter color versus the deep red of the Moro variety—though most Moros are quite flavorful.

The hardest part of the recipe is peeling the oranges.

1 tsp	turbinado or brown sugar
1/2 cup	blood orange juice
1 ounce	Chardonnay
1/2 tsp	black pepper freshly ground
1/8 tsp	nutmeg
1 each	blood orange, peeled and sectioned
3 ounces	Cabrales blue cheese, crumbled
1½ ounces	Lillet Rouge aperitif
1/2 tsp	fresh parsley, chopped

Procedure

- In a small sauce or sauté pan place the brown sugar. Add the juice and wine. Turn on the heat and dissolve the sugar in the liquids.
- Add the pepper and nutmeg.
- When boiling add the orange sections. Cook for 30 seconds on one side and then turn each one over. Cook 30 seconds more.
- Add the Cabrales. Cook for 30 seconds.
- Pour in the Lillet. Cook for 30 seconds.
- Put into a bowl and garnish with the parsley. Serve with warm, crusty bread.

Yield: 2 portions

Feta-Stuffed Roasted Pepper with Preserved Lemon Sauce

This dish came about through a bunch of stumbling steps over the course of a day. I had a lot of roasted red bell peppers that were going to spoil if I didn't use them up. A little later, I discovered that an employee of mine had just not opened his eyes and I had purchased too much feta. My first mason jar full of preserved lemons were ready that day. Finally, we were making a fresh a batch of polenta. Everything came together in fits and starts.

This became one of the most popular lunch dishes ever—for vegetarians and meaties. When introduced as a dinner appetizer it took off as rapidly as it had at lunch.

The stuffing is Greek inspired, the sauce is Algerian influenced, and the addition of polenta gives an Italian twist to this fusion dish.

Stuffing

3/4 cup	Feta cheese crumbled
3/4 cup	Chive Shmeer- see Miscellaneous
1 each	egg yolk, beaten
1 Tbs	cooking sherry
2 tsp	turbinado or brown sugar
2 tsp	black pepper
1/2 tsp	marjoram
1/2 tsp	oregano
2 pinches	cumin, ground
1 pinch	nutmeg
3 Tbs	capers drained

Other Ingredients

8 each	red peppers, roasted and seeded
8 pieces	Grill.ed or Baked Polenta—see Starches
1 cup	Preserved Lemon Sauce—see Sauces (made without optional seafood paste)
1/2 Tbs	fresh cilantro chopped

Procedure

- Blend all the stuffing ingredients EXCEPT the capers in a food processor.
- Stir in the capers afterward to keep them from breaking apart. Chill filling for one hour
- Stuff each pepper with approximately 1½ to 2 Tbs of filling. Keep the filling in by using toothpicks to keep the peppers closed.
- Cook the peppers EITHER: by oiling them and grilling on a barbecue; by putting oil on a flat griddle; OR by putting oil in a frying pan.
- Brown each side.
- Place peppers on plates according to the size portions desired, with an appropriate amount of polenta. Top each pepper with the Preserved Lemon Sauce. Garnish with the cilantro.

Yield: 8 appetizers OR 4 entrées

Grilled Herbed Feta Cheese

This recipe was created as a way of using way too many grape leaves. It was inspired by a traditional Turkish recipe.

4 each	grape leaves, canned or jarred
4 ounces	Feta cheese, block
3 Tbs	Herb Garlic Butter— <i>see Sauces</i>
As needed	Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1/2 tsp	fresh parsley, chopped

Procedure

- Soak the grape leaves in cold water for at least 1 hour.
- Cut the Feta into two 2 inch square by 1/2 inch thick pieces.
- Cut the stems from the leaves. Place 2 leaves stem end to stem end, tightly together. Do the same with the other two leaves. This will create two leaf packets for the Feta.
- Place the Feta into the center of each leaf cluster. Pour 1½ Tbs of the butter over each piece of cheese—making sure to include garlic and herbs from the butter.
- Quickly fold the leaves over the Feta and butter.
- Cook the bundles EITHER: by oiling them and grilling on a barbecue; by putting oil on a flat griddle; OR by putting oil in a frying pan.
- Garnish with parsley. Serve with crusty, warm bread.

Yield: 2 Feta stuffed leaf packets

Menemen

In the early 1970's I lived in the Middle East. While in Lebanon, I worked with a chef from Turkey, which is a place I want to visit one day. He taught me this dish and several others.

Many Turks do not have cars and travel by bus. I'm told that every bus station in Turkey has a Menemen stand. It is a dish eaten by every social stratum. At the restaurant we serve it at dinner, though in Turkey this would be unheard of. I also love it any time of day.

This dish has a thick sauce that includes tomato with the green chile and pita bread instead of a tortilla. We sell this dish as "Turkish huevos rancheros."

1/4 cup	green chile peppers, roasted and julienned
1/3 each	green bell pepper, julienned
1 rd Tbs	shallots, minced
1½ Tbs	clarified butter or ghee
1 can (14.5 oz)	tomatoes, fire roasted diced
2 rd Tbs	fresh parsley, chopped
1/2 tsp	Red pepper flakes
1/4 tsp	paprika
1/4 tsp	salt
6 each	eggs
1 Tbs	fresh cilantro chopped
1 Tbs	fresh parsley, chopped

Procedure

- In a 10" pan sauté the shallots and both peppers in the butter until the bell peppers begin to soften.
- Add the tomatoes, parsley, pepper flakes, paprika and salt. Bring to a boil, then lower to a simmer for 10 minutes.
- When getting ready to serve, bring the sauce back to a boil.
- Push the sauce to the edges of the pan and make a well. In the center of the well add the olive oil and the water.
- Crack the eggs into the well. Cover the eggs and cook on high until the whites set up, but the yolks are still soft.
- Transfer sauce and eggs to a plate according to the amount and size of servings you want.
- Garnish with cilantro and parsley. Serve with warmed or toasted pita bread.

Yield: 6 appetizers or 2 to 3 entrées.

Eggs in Brandied Cream Sauce

Very easy, this makes a great winter dish. Whether a late evening supper, or the center of a casual winter dinner, an appetizer, a brunch or lunch dish, this is shirred eggs' more-sophisticated cousin.

Unlike shirred eggs, this can be made in a frying pan versus baking in an oven.

1/2 Tbs	turbinado or brown sugar
1 cup	heavy cream
1/4 cup	Brandy
1/2 cup	fresh mushrooms, chopped
1 rd tsp	black pepper
1/8 tsp	nutmeg
4 each	eggs
4 ounces	fresh spinach leaves, trimmed
1/2 Tbs	fresh parsley, chopped

Procedure

- In a sauté pan, dissolve the sugar in the heavy cream and brandy on low heat.
- Add the mushrooms, pepper and nutmeg. Turn on heat and bring to a boil.
- Carefully crack each egg one at a time and drop at different points around the pan. Lower heat to a low boil.
- Cook until the egg whites are firm, though the yolks should still be soft.
- Place equal portions of the spinach into either: 2 bowls, for two 2-egg servings, OR into 4 bowls, for four 1-egg servings.
- Gently place the appropriate number of eggs into each bowl. Pour sauce over the eggs. Garnish with parsley and serve immediately.

Yield: 2 to 4 portions

Phyllo, Crepes & Savory Pastries

Shaping Phyllo Dough for Briouats

Use the *CIGAR* Method for the Cheese Cigars & the Bride's Fingers.

Use the *TRIANGLE* Method for the Spanakopittas.

per recipe The appropriate filling
4 each Phyllo pastry sheets, defrosted according to package directions
As needed butter or ghee, melted

Procedure

- **TO ROLL THE CIGARS:** Lay out the phyllo sheets on a flat surface. Orient like a portrait or the paper for a letter. Cover the phyllo with a sheet of plastic wrap. Place a damp, not wet, towel on top of the plastic wrap covering the phyllo. (Phyllo dries out quickly and becomes difficult to work with—it cracks and splits.)
- Position a clean cutting board that is a little larger than the dough in the same orientation as the phyllo. If you don't have a cutting board large enough, use a clean counter or table surface. Then orient your dough in the same direction.
- Uncover the phyllo. Carefully grab 1 sheet of dough at a time. Use both hands to separate it from the rest of the sheets. Lay it on your clean surface. Immediately re-cover the rest of the dough.
- Using a pastry brush, brush the dough with melted butter or ghee. The sheet should be well coated, but not soaked.
- Using a sharp knife, cut the sheet in half from top to bottom.
- Place 2 rounded tablespoons of filling along the top or bottom of each half of the phyllo. You'll either be rolling towards yourself—at the top—OR away from yourself—the bottom. Chose what is most comfortable for you.
- Spread the filling side to side until it is about a 1/2" from the ends and about a 1/2" thick.
- Starting with one of the halves, fold over the filling to just cover.. Then pull in the sides by 1/2 inch all the way down the sheet both sides of the half sheet. Roll about half way down and brush the un-buttered roll. Continue the rest of the way down. The Briouat will look like a thin, long egg roll or burrito.
- Repeat with the second half. Put the Briouats on a cookie sheet, making sure that the loose end of the phyllo is on the bottom. Brush the entire outside, including the sides, with your butter or ghee.
- Repeat with another sheet. Continue until all of the filling is used up.
- **SHAPING TRIANGLES:** Lay out the phyllo sheets on a flat surface. Orient like a landscape or like a piece of paper where the longer sides are at the top and bottom. Cover the phyllo with a sheet of plastic wrap. Place a damp, not wet, towel on top of the plastic wrap covering the phyllo. (Phyllo dries out quickly and becomes difficult to work with—it cracks and splits.)
- Follow steps 2- 5 above.
- Starting with one of the halves, place 2 rounded tablespoons of filling in the middle of the top of that side of the phyllo sheet. Fold in half by folding the left side onto the right. Making sure that the filling stays at the top and by the fold, grab the top of the dough and turn it down to create a small triangle at the top of the sheet. Repeat this procedure exactly as if you were folding a flag. When you are done tuck any loose end under the triangle.
- Follow steps 9 & 10 above.

Bride's Fingers

This is a type of briouat. Originally a traditional Moroccan wedding food, the recipe gets its name from the fact that they would be rolled thin and long like a bride's finger. There are several kinds, all of which are ingredients wrapped in waarka dough which is similar to phyllo (or filo) dough. Briouats can be triangular or thin cigar shapes. They tend to be savory and flavorful. Most have become street food, though several, like Bride's fingers, were originally traditional dishes at feasts.

I love peasant and street food. We serve quite a bit of it in the restaurant. These dishes tend to be hearty, rich, flavorful and healthier than the dishes eaten by the aristocracy and the wealthy.

Since even I don't have enough time to make waarka or phyllo dough from scratch, and the point of this cookbook is to give you recipes that are relatively easy and fast OR that can be prepared ahead of time, we will use store bought phyllo dough for this and other recipes.

1/2 bunch	fresh cilantro, chopped
1 Tbs	garlic, minced
1/2 tsp	salt
1/8 tsp	cumin, ground
1 Tbs	fresh lemon juice
1 Tbs	extra-virgin olive oil
1 each	tomatoes, peeled, seeded and fine diced
1/2 lb	uncooked shrimp, cleaned, tailless and chopped
2 each	green chile peppers, roasted, seeded and chopped
4 each	phyllo pastry sheets defrosted according to package directions
As needed	butter or ghee, melted

Procedure

- **TO MAKE THE FILLING:** Sauté the cilantro, garlic, salt, cumin and lemon juice in the olive oil for 3 minutes. Use high heat and stir with a wooden spoon.
- Lower heat and add the tomato. Cook for 7 minutes more.
- Add the shrimp and green chiles. Cook for 3-4 minutes more. The shrimp should be pink.
- Cool for 1½ hours.
- **TO ROLL THE FINGERS:** See the Shaping Phyllo Dough for Briouats instructions and diagram in this section.
- **COOKING:** Bake Bride's Fingers in a pre-heated oven at 450°F for 20 minutes. Turn pan front to back and bake for 5 to 10 minutes more, or until nicely browned. Serve hot.
- **NOTE:** Traditionally these are fried in oil, always an option. If you chose to fry, coat the outside with beaten egg yolk to hold the Finger closed instead of using butter or ghee.

Yield: approximately 8 fingers

Spanakopitta

A classic Greek dish, this version is my favorite and was developed over the years to compensate for the lack of superb Feta cheese being available in the U.S.A. I now get a great Bulgarian all sheep's milk Feta, but still prefer the creaminess the nontraditional cream cheese adds to the recipe.

We have guests at the restaurant—a couple we consider friends—who for a long time could never remember the name of the dish. The first time that they returned after they had tried Spanakopitta he asked for some of those, “they sound like ‘Spank me Rita.’ Ever since then, the joke around the restaurant has been to call them ‘Spank me, Ritas’.

The moderate difficulty of this recipe is from working with filo dough. I personally have never understood the fear of handling phyllo, maybe its the multiple spellings. If you follow the instructions in this recipe and decide that the worst that happens is that you will throw a few sheets away as you learn, you will find yourself proficient in no time.

1 small	onion finely chopped
2 Tbs	clarified butter or ghee
6 ounces	fresh spinach leaves, trimmed
1/2 tsp	salt
1/4 tsp	basil
1/4 tsp	oregano
1/4 tsp	black pepper
1 Tbs	flour
1/2 cup	Feta cheese crumbled
2 ounces	cream cheese, softened
1 large	egg beaten
4 sheets	Phyllo pastry sheets, defrosted according to package directions
As needed	melted butter or ghee

Procedure

- Sauté the onion in the clarified butter until transparent. Add the spinach and wilt.
- Drain the excess liquid in a sieve or colander. Put the vegetables in a mixing bowl and cool to room temperature.
- Add all the herbs, spices, room temperature cheeses, flour and eggs. Stir well.
- **TO MAKE THE TRIANGLES:** Follow the instructions in Shaping Phyllo Dough for Briouats.
- Repeat with two more sheets. Continue until all of the filling is used up.
- **COOKING:** Bake Spanakopittas in a pre-heated oven at 450°F for 20 minutes. Turn pan front to back and bake for 5 to 10 minutes more or until nicely browned. Serve hot.

Yield: approximately 8

Cheese Cigars

These are another form of briouat, just like the Bride's Fingers. They are made in both cigar and triangle shapes. Either shape, they make excellent appetizers.

This is not a completely traditional recipe, but I find it quite satisfying. The cheese cigars have a fast and easy filling. Like all the other Phyllo dough recipes, the rating of moderately difficult is due to peoples' unfounded fear of working with this dough. It can't win, at least don't let it. After all, torn and hard to use sheets are easily made into Baklava!

4 sheets phyllo pastry sheets, defrosted according to package directions
As needed ghee or clarified butter
As needed sesame seeds

Filling

1/2 cup feta cheese crumbled
1/2 cup cream cheese, softened
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese grated
3 each egg yolks lightly beaten
1 Tbs dill
1 Tbs marjoram
1/2 Tbs mint, dried
1/2 Tbs oregano
1 scant tsp black pepper
1/2 tsp salt
1 pinch nutmeg

Egg Wash

1 each egg yolk, lightly beaten
1 tsp water

Procedure

- In a mixing bowl, combine all the Filling ingredients.
- **TO ROLL THE CIGARS:** See Shaping Phyllo Dough for Briouats instructions and diagrams in this section.
- Make an egg wash by beating the egg yolk and water together. Brush the top of each Cheese Cigar. Sprinkle with the sesame seeds.
- Bake your Cigars in a pre-heated oven at 450°F for 20 minutes. Turn pan front to back and bake for 5 to 10 minutes more, or until nicely browned. Serve hot.
- **NOTE:** Traditionally these are fried in oil.

Yield: approximately 8 cigars

Crêpes for Savory Dishes

This is for the ambitious and organized. Though the moderately difficult rating is due to the necessity of planning ahead, crêpe batter is pretty inexpensive and ruining a few crêpes learning how to make them is no major loss. With a little practice and a good 6" non-stick frying pan, anyone can make great crêpes.

There are several guests at the restaurant who are allergic to dairy, but can eat ghee. This crêpe recipe suits their needs just fine, while taking away nothing from the quality of the crêpe.

Though these are sugar free, non-dessert crêpes, I still use them for my Blood Orange Crêpe Suzette and other desserts.

2 large	eggs, beaten
1/4 cup	ghee or canola oil
1 cup	flour
1/4 tsp	salt
1 1/4 cup	water
As needed	ghee

Procedure

- In a bowl beat the eggs with an electric hand-mixer or use a stand mixer.
- Add the ghee or oil and beat together, steadily adding the salt and flour.
- Beat in the water until as smooth as possible. Cover batter and rest in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours.
- Mix with a whip. Then pour through a sieve, using a rubber spatula to push the batter through the sieve. Batter is ready to be cooked.
- Using a pastry brush, brush your pans with ghee, enough to coat the pan, but not to pool.
- Heat the pan until almost smoking. Heat a second pan at the same time. Pull the first pan from the heat and pour in a scant 1/4 cup of batter. Tilt the pan to swirl the batter and cover the entire bottom and an 1/8 inch up the sides. Put back on the heat for 10 to 15 seconds.
- Remove the pan you are using and the hot buttered empty pan from the heat. Using a rubber spatula, if necessary, slide the crêpe so that it flips upside down as it goes into the empty hot pan. Heat this side of the crêpe another 10 to 15 seconds.
- Flip finished crêpe onto a clean cutting board or counter to cool.

Yield: approximately 15 crêpes

Spanish Chorizo & Date Crêpe

This dish was inspired by a traditional Spanish tapa of a baked chorizo stuffed date that I particularly love. The problem was my inability to find a steady supply of chorizo from Spain versus a Mexican style chorizo. Spanish chorizo is firmer and tends to hold its shape and not crumble, more like other sausage links.

This dish was created as an alternative to the original dish. It's not only a favorite of mine, but of the guests and staff at Shevek & Co. Restaurant. The recommended sauce and bed of apples are French in influence, but they go well with the crêpe. They add a hint of natural sweetness and a gentle lemon cleansing that pulls the spicy heat of the crêpe together. Enjoy!

Filling

1/2 lb	chorizo sausage sliced in 1/4 inch pieces
12 each	dates, pitted and chopped
1 Tbs	garlic, minced
1/2 Tbs	cumin
1/2 Tbs	red pepper flakes
1 tsp	oregano
1/4 tsp	thyme
1/4 tsp	black pepper
1 pinch	nutmeg
1/4 cup	cream sherry
2 Tbs	Chardonnay wine
1 Tbs	extra-virgin olive oil

To Serve

1	crêpe
As needed	Provençal Apples— <i>see Starches</i>
As needed	Lemon Crème Fraîche— <i>see Sauces</i>
As needed	fresh lemon zest

Procedure

- Put all the filling ingredients in a large frying pan. Sauté until sausage begins to fall apart and all the liquid is absorbed.
- Roll approximately 3 tablespoons of the filling in a warm crêpe.
- Place the crêpe on a scant 1/4 cup of warm Provençal Apples.
- Top each crêpe with a tablespoon of Lemon Crème Fraîche. Then top the sauce with fresh lemon zest.

Yield: approximately 8 crepes

Moroccan Chicken Crêpe with Apples

This is another recipe where I'm blending North African and French cuisines, but with the twist of using a Cajun cooking technique.

Though the Mediterranean region has traded ingredients for millennia and the influences of the Caliphate and the Ottoman Empire has moved flavors and cooking methods around the region, I believe that the long-term influence upon French and North African cuisines due to French Colonialism, is yet to be fully realized. The Spanish have finally begun to embrace the Moorish influences upon their cuisine a mere five centuries later. Will it take that long before the French and Moroccans and Algerians FULLY acknowledge the positive consequences of their interrelationship? We'll see...

2 ounces	chicken breasts, boned and skinned
As needed	Moroccan Blackening Spices— <i>see Miscellaneous</i>
As needed	canola oil
1 each	crêpe
1/4 cup	Provençal Apples— <i>see Starches</i>
1½ Tbs	Harissa Aioli— <i>see Sauces</i>
1/8 tsp	fresh cilantro, chopped

Procedure

- Pound or butterfly the chicken breast until no more than 1/4 inch thick. Coat each side liberally with the Moroccan Blackening Spices.
- Cook the chicken by blackening, either: 1) in a hot, non-stick pan coated with a little canola oil, or 2) on a barbecue until done.
- Slice the chicken into julienned pieces.
- Wrap in a warm crêpe and place the crêpe on a bed of hot Provençal Apples.
- Top with the Harissa Aioli and sprinkle with the fresh cilantro. Serve immediately.

Yield: 1 crepe

Pasta

The Ultimate Four Cheese Lasagne

I call this moderately difficult because the first time can be scary, though after doing this recipe the first time you'll know all that you need to know to make the perfect lasagne.

You can reduce the ricotta mix by a third to a half and add your favorite cooked beef or sausages. Pepperoni is also good. I'll add ground beef to the ricotta level, but usually add all other meats to the upper cheese level.

Ricotta Filling

2 lbs part-skim ricotta cheese
2 each eggs, beaten
1/3 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
1 rd tsp oregano
1/2 tsp black pepper
1 pinch nutmeg

Other Ingredients

6 cups Marinara Sauce—*see Sauces*
1 lb part skim mozzarella cheese, shredded
1/2 lb provolone cheese, thin sliced
1 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
As needed lasagna noodles, no boil type

Procedure

- **RICOTTA FILLING:** Mix all the ingredients together with a wire whip or a rubber spatula until blended.
- **TO BUILD THE LASAGNE:** Ladle approximately 1 cup of marinara sauce on the bottom of a 9"x13" baking pan.
- **First Layer:** Cover the sauce on the bottom of the pan with the lasagne noodle sheets and then ladle another cup of marinara on top of the lasagne noodles, careful not to shift them.
- **Next,** using a rubber spatula, cover with all of the ricotta mix. Lightly sprinkle this with half of the grated Parmesan cheese.
- **Second Layer:** Ladle a cup of marinara over the cheese. Layer with enough lasagne noodles to cover and then ladle another cup of sauce over the pasta.
- **Layer the Provolone cheese over the sauce.** Cover with half of the grated mozzarella. Then cover with a cup of marinara.
- **Third Layer:** Lay lasagne noodles over the sauce and then cover well with a cup or more of marinara. Evenly cover the top with the last of the grated mozzarella and Parmesan cheeses.
- **Cover the baking pan tightly with plastic wrap.** Then carefully cover all of the plastic wrap tightly with aluminum foil. Place the baking pan on a cookie sheet to catch any drips.
- **Bake in a pre-heated 450°F oven ,for 35 minutes covered.**
- **Carefully remove the foil and plastic in one motion.** Grabbing the foil and plastic wrap at the same time with the tines of a fork works best. Spin the pan from front to back and bake uncovered 10 to 15 minutes more, until the top cheese layer is lightly browned. Remove from oven.
- **Let cool 30 minutes before slicing OR use a spoon to serve when very hot.**

Yield: approximately 12 servings

Cappellini in Wild Mushroom Cream

This was created as a way of using my wild mushroom pâté, which in a modified form is part of this recipe. That is what makes this recipe moderately difficult. The good thing is the fact that the mushroom paste can be made days ahead of time. It also freezes quite nicely.

This is a favorite of mine for cold winter nights. It hits all those comfort food notes without being anyone's childhood comfort food. Create a new tradition.

Mushroom Pâté

1/2 ounce	dried mixed wild mushrooms
1 cup	portobello mushrooms, chopped into 1/4" pieces
1/2 cup	mushrooms and stems, coarsely chopped
1 each	sun dried tomato
1/4 cup	cream sherry
2 Tbs	butter cut into small pieces
2 tsp	garlic, minced
1 Tsp	turbinado or brown sugar
1/2 rd tsp	basil
1/4 tsp	black pepper
1/8 tsp	salt
2 pinches	nutmeg
To cover	water, cool

Sauce

1/3 cup	mixed fresh mushrooms, sliced
1/2 cup	heavy cream
1/2 cup	Mushroom Pâté
2 Tbs	cooking sherry
1½ cup	angel hair or cappellini, cooked
to taste	fresh basil, chopped

Procedure

- **MUSHROOM PÂTÉ:** Place all of the ingredients into a pot. Remember, mushrooms float! Be careful not to add too much water or you'll be cooking the paste for hours.
- Bring to a boil and then reduce to a low boil and cook until all the liquid is gone. Cool and put through a food processor until a smooth paste is created.
- Boil the pasta in lightly salted water (2 quarts water to 1/2 Tbs salt).
- Put the appropriate amount of pâté, cream, fresh mushrooms and sherry into a sauce pan; stir well. Heat until just bubbling.
- Place the pasta in a bowl and pour the sauce over it. Garnish with fresh chopped basil.

Yield: 1 portion

Cappellini with Chicken & Fresh Basil

Another, "I'm bored" creation. Classic in flavor, this dish has become a light, flavorful and easy summer favorite. Just make sure you have some chicken reduction ice cubes ready ahead of time (see Miscellaneous.)

In this recipe, the chicken is poached in the herb-garlic butter and wine sauce as opposed to sautéed.

1½ cup angel hair or cappellini, cooked

Sauce

3 each sun dried tomatoes, julienned
1/4 cup cream sherry
To cover water

Other Ingredients

3 ounces chicken breasts, boned, skinned and cut into finger strips
1/3 cup roasted red peppers, cut into thin strips
1/4 cup Chicken Reduction—see Miscellaneous
2 ounces Herb Garlic Butter—see Miscellaneous
2 ounces clarified butter or ghee
2 Tbs cooking sherry
2 Tbs Chardonnay wine
1 Tbs garlic, minced
1 Tbs fresh basil, chopped
1 rd tsp marjoram
1/4 rd tsp turbinado or brown sugar
1/4 tsp black pepper
1/8 tsp salt
2 pinches nutmeg

Procedure

- **SAUCE:** In a medium sized sauté pan, poach the sun dried tomatoes in cooking sherry with enough water to cover. When done, almost all the liquid will be absorbed.
- Cook the pasta in 2 quarts of water and a 1/2 Tbs of salt.
- Add to the tomatoes all the other ingredients, EXCEPT the pasta. Bring to a boil. Lower to a high simmer and cook until the chicken is done—about 2 to 2½ minutes,
- Place the pasta into a bowl. Place the chicken over the pasta, then pour the rest of the sauce into the bowl.

Yield: 1 portion

Pheasant Sausage with Cavatappi

This is a twist on classic Chicken Cacciatore. Cacciatore means “hunter’s style” and was based on the stew pot over an open fire in the woods method of cooking. This recipe is an homage to the earlier style, where the hunters added wild gathered mushrooms and herbs to the pot.

This is an easy recipe that needs a little planning, though the sausage can be baked ahead of time and then refrigerated for a few days until needed.

Try it with turkey Italian sausage, any wild game sausage, or traditional Italian sausages.

4 ounces	pheasant sausage (1- 4 oz link)
1 Tbs	extra virgin olive oil
Tbs	shallots, minced
1/2 Tbs	garlic, minced
1/4 cup	Sweet Vermouth
1/4 cup	Merlot wine
1/3 cup	tomatoes, fire roasted diced
1/3 cup	Marinara Sauce— <i>see Sauces</i>
1/4 cup	mixed mushrooms, chopped
1 tsp	basil, chopped
1½ cup	cavatappi pasta, cooked
to taste	parsley, fresh, chopped

Procedure

- Cook the sausage approximately 20 minutes in a pre-heated oven at 350°F until done but not over cooked.
- While the sausage is baking, start boiling water to cook the pasta (1/2 Tbs salt to 2 quarts of water).
- When the sausage is cooked slice into bite sized pieces.
- Add the tomatoes, marinara, mushrooms, basil and sliced sausage to a pan and bring to a boil. Lower to a simmer and cook 1 minute more.
- Place the cooked warm pasta in a bowl. Pour the sauce mixture over it and garnish with fresh chopped parsley.

Yield: 1 portion

Shrimp Farfalle with Artichokes & Tomato

This was an, “I’m bored” recipe that has received great approval from our guests. It is simple, fast and delicious; the longest part is waiting for the pasta water to boil.

Farfalle is the Italian word for bow-tie pasta.

1½ cup	farfalle pasta, cooked
4 ounces	uncooked shrimp, cleaned and tailless (51- 60 size)
1/3 cup	canned artichoke hearts, drained and sliced into eighths
1/4 cup	fresh tomato, small diced
3 ounces	Herbed Garlic Butter— <i>see Sauces</i>
1/4 cup	Chardonnay wine
1 Tbs	fresh lemon juice
1/2 Tbs	fresh parsley, chopped
1 tsp	garlic, minced
1/4 tsp	black pepper, freshly ground
1/8 tsp	salt
1 pinch	nutmeg

Procedure

- Bring 2 quarts of water with a 1/2 Tbs of salt to a boil to cook the pasta. Cook and the drain the pasta according to the package.
- While the pasta is cooking, put all of the ingredients EXCEPT the farfalle into a sauce pan and cook until the shrimp turns pink.
- Place the pasta in a bowl and pour the sauce over it. Garnish with a little more fresh parsley.

Yield: 1 serving

Poultry

Blood Orange Chicken

Originally inspired by a traditional liver recipe from Tuscany, this has become one of the restaurant's best sellers.

Different varieties of blood oranges have different qualities, some are more flavorful and less colorful. Others are the opposite, and, of course, some are both.

I have tended to prefer to buy Italian blood oranges (their country of origin), but as time has gone by, Californian blood oranges have become more flavorful, and have been seen more frequently in my kitchen.

4 ounces	chicken breasts, boned and skinned
1 Tbs	flour
1/2 Tbs	clarified butter
1/4 cup	Chicken Reduction—see <i>Miscellaneous</i>
3 Tbs	blood orange juice
6 sections	blood orange, peeled and de-seeded
1 tsp	shallots, minced
1/2 Tbs	pine nuts, toasted

Procedure

- Trim any fat from the chicken breast. Cut at a slight angle into pinkie finger thick slices.
- Toss chicken with flour until lightly coated. Gently shake off any excess flour.
- Heat clarified butter in a non-stick sauté pan for half a minute. Carefully lay the chicken in the hot butter. Cook until the edges of all the chicken slices show white in color.
- Turn each piece of chicken over with tongs or a fork. Cook half a minute more.
- Add all other ingredients, EXCEPT the pine nuts. Cook until the sauce is thick; turning the chicken after a minute.
- Garnish with the pine nuts and serve
- **NOTE:** User a larger sauté pan and multiply the ingredients according to how many guests you have. A 10" pan will comfortably cook 4 portions.

Servings: 1

Yield: 4 ounce serving

Chicken Marsala

My cousins' grandmother was like my very own. Grandma Julia was born in Bari, Italy. She was one of the best cooks I ever knew. After I convinced her (with some help from my mother) that my own Nana Esther had been teaching me how to cook, she allowed me, though I was a boy, to assist her in the kitchen.

Some of my cooking methods break the rules, like in this recipe. But then, chefs don't always know better than grandma. Many an Italian, born and raised in Italy, have called my Marsala one of the best they have ever eaten. When told of Grandma Julia, several have said some variation of, "Ah, Bari. One of the best kept secrets in Italy. No wonder it's so good."

This recipe is so fast and easy you can practically make it to order at a dinner party!

4 ounces	chicken breasts, boned and skinned
1 Tbs	flour
1/2 Tbs	clarified butter
1/4 cup	Chicken Reduction—see <i>Miscellaneous</i>
1/3 cup	Marsala wine, sweet
1/4 cup	mushrooms, sliced

Procedure

- Trim any fat from the chicken breast. Cut at a 45° angle, into pinkie finger thick slices.
- Toss chicken with flour until lightly coated. Gently shake off any excess flour.
- Heat clarified butter in a non-stick sauté pan for half a minute. Carefully lay the chicken in the hot butter. Cook until the edges of all the chicken slices show white in color.
- Turn each piece of chicken over with tongs or a fork. Cook half a minute more.
- Add all other ingredients and cook until the sauce is thick, turning the chicken after a minute. Serve.
- **NOTE:** Use a larger sauté pan and multiply the ingredients according to how many guests you have. A 10" pan will comfortably cook 4 portions.

Servings: 1

Yield: 4 ounce portion

Chicken & Fig Tagine

I created this dish using the rules of tagines I learned from my friend Lawrence's mother. (They were a Jewish Moroccan family, and I will never forget how his mom looked almost exactly like the actress Laynie Kazan.) Though the cooking method is totally nontraditional, the results are superb, and done in a fraction of the time.

The summer I was Bar-Mitzvah'd, Lawrence's family invited me to go to Morocco with them. That was the summer of the Six Day War and my parents were afraid to let me go to an Arab country, even though I would be going with Jewish natives. It was one of my few disappointments. Little did they know that years later, when I lived in the Mediterranean region, I would live in several Arab nations including Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt. I still wanted to go to Morocco, but I was either hitch-hiking or riding the buses around the Middle East. Even as early as 1973, I was too afraid to travel through Libya. Going south through the deserts where I might get stranded wasn't a good option, either. Someday I will make it to Morocco! And Algeria and Tunisia.

Simply multiply this recipe by the amount of diners. Fast, relatively easy and flavorful, this dish will please most palates.

1 Tbs	green bell pepper, julienned
1/4 tsp	shallots, minced
1/4 tsp	garlic, minced
1 Tbs	extra-virgin olive oil
4 ounces	chicken breasts, boned and skinned
1 Tbs	flour
1/2 cup	Chicken Reduction—see <i>Miscellaneous</i>
2 Tbs	Chardonnay wine
1 tsp	fresh lemon juice
1/2 tsp	Pine Gunk—see <i>Miscellaneous</i>
1/2 Tbs	Moroccan Blackening Spices—see <i>Miscellaneous</i>
1 tsp	cinnamon
2 pinches	nutmeg
1 tsp	Preserved Lemons, rind only, diced—see <i>Miscellaneous</i>
2 each	dried Black Mission figs, stemmed and chopped

Procedure

- Either butterfly the chicken breast OR pound until approximately 3/8" thick. Dredge in flour and coat both sides.
- Sauté the pepper, shallots and garlic in the oil until the peppers are just starting to soften.
- Add chicken and cook until lightly colored on each side.
- Add the reduction, wine and lemon juice.
- Crumble in the Pine Nut Gunk. Stir to dissolve.
- Add all the other ingredients. Stir the sauce. Bring to a boil.
- Cook on a high simmer for approximately 2½ minutes more, turning the chicken after a minute. When done the sauce will be thick and almost gelatinous.

Servings: 1

Tunisian BBQ Chicken

This spicy citrus sauce is great on other poultry and pork. It can be made ahead of time and refrigerated for up to a week; though it will need to be whisked before using.

I have a particular fondness for blood oranges and their tart, sweet flavor. They taste of oranges with an almost raspberry flavor; delicious eaten as is, juiced, or cooked in dishes. Their flavor, combined with lime and the spiciness of the harissa, makes a unique and flavorful barbecue sauce that will have your guests begging for the recipe.

Most food poisoning happens at home, much of that due to chicken, and much of that caused while barbecuing. There is information on barbecue safety, and on the proper handling of chicken in the Appendix. Let's all have great, tasty, fun and healthy barbecues!

1 each lime, cut in quarters
1½ lbs chicken, cut in parts

Tunisian BBQ Sauce

1/2 cup blood orange juice
1/4 cup Harissa—see Miscellaneous
4 tsp sugar
1 Tbs flour
1 Tbs extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbs fresh lime juice
1 scant tsp garlic, minced
1 scant tsp cilantro
1/2 tsp cumin

Procedure

- Make the sauce by putting all the ingredients in a blender, EXCEPT the lime and chicken. Place the chicken and limes in a bowl and cover with the sauce and marinate using either method following.
- **METHOD 1:** Marinate chicken and lime for 4 or more hours; overnight is best.
- **METHOD 2:** Place chicken into a baking dish. Pour over sauce and bake in a pre-heated oven at 200°F for 1 hour.
- Barbecue until chicken is finished and internal temperature is 165° F. Bring sauce to a boil and keep sauce warm (145°F) until serving.
- When chicken is almost done, lightly grill the lime.
- Place cooked chicken into the hot sauce. Serve immediately.
- **NOTE:** If your barbecue is too hot, the chicken will burn on the outside before cooking on the inside—see the Appendix on Barbecue Safety for details.

Servings: 4

Duck with Mandarin Oranges

This recipe, like the dressing that tops it, has evolved over time to its present incarnation.

It makes a wonderful entrée or salad, and both variations are included here. We have dropped the salad version from our menu, which was a luncheon item back when we first started and still served lunch. (The salad version was the favorite of our dear late friend, Bob Cox.)

1½ lb	duck breast
1½ Tbs	lavender blooms
1 tsp	coarse salt
¼ cup	Orange Muscat wine
2 Tbs	extra-virgin olive oil
½ cup	canned mandarin oranges, drained
¾ cup	Blood Orange-Poppy Seed Dressing— <i>see Vegetables & Salads</i>
⅓ cup	pine nuts, toasted

Procedure

- Sprinkle the bottom of a small baking dish with the lavender and salt. Add the duck breast skin side up. Pour the wine over the duck breast and then fill the pan with enough water to cover the breasts, BUT leave the fat above the liquid. Bake in a pre-heated oven at 450°F for 45 minutes or until the breasts have an internal temperature of 165°F. Cool and gently peel off the skin. Discard skin and cooking liquid.
- **NOTE:** Duck can be cooked ahead of time. Just wrap each breast individually and keep refrigerated for up to a week. Frozen they can last up to 3 months.
- Make the Blood Orange-Poppy Seed Dressing with or without the poppy seeds, according to your personal tastes. NOTE: When I make this dish as an entrée I leave the poppy seeds out. When I serve it as a salad, I use the poppy seeds.
- Thinly slice the duck breast. In a non-stick frying pan heat the olive oil. Cook the duck until hot and lightly colored on each side.
- **ENTRÉE:** Add the mandarin oranges and quickly heat.
- **ENTRÉE** and **SALAD:** Plate and dress. Garnish with the pine nuts.

Servings: 6

Seafood

Antipasto di Pesce

Another one of my K.I.S.S. Method twists on something traditional. This is a great warm weather dish that takes very little cooking time. You can also poach the fish earlier in the day and keep it refrigerated until dinner time.

2 Tbs	cornichons, diced
2 Tbs	tomato, diced
2 Tbs	cucumber, peeled and diced
1 Tbs	capers, drained
2 Tbs	Balsamic Vinaigrette—see <i>Vegetables & Salads</i>
5 oz	mixed seafood
1/2 cup	lettuce, spring mix
1 tsp	fresh parsley, chopped

Procedure

- In a bowl, mix the cornichons, tomato, cucumber and capers. Toss with the Vinaigrette.
- Poach the fish lightly in water. Add to the bowl and mix to serve immediately.
- On a chilled plate make a bed of the spring mix. Place all the ingredients in the bowl on the lettuce. Garnish with parsley and serve.

Yield: 1 serving

Paella

We get great compliments for this nontraditional Paella. Why nontraditional? Because the Spanish make theirs very dry and the Portuguese make theirs extremely wet. We split the difference.

What many Americans don't know is that Paella is NOT strictly a seafood, chicken and sausage dish. If you're away from the shore, you probably add rabbit, goat, game birds in season or what ever other affordable and tasty ingredients are native to your region. When the less popular meats become more accepted, I will serve them in the restaurant.

There is a level of attentiveness that gives this recipe a moderately difficult rating. Otherwise, it is really rather easy.

8 ounces	chicken, cut in parts	1 can (14oz)	Chicken Broth— <i>see Miscellaneous</i>
2 Tbs	extra-virgin olive oil	3/4 cup	tomatoes, fire roasted, diced
1 small	bell pepper, seeded and medium diced	2 tsp	parsley flakes
1/2 small	onion, diced	1/2 tsp	saffron threads, packed
4 ounces	chorizo sausage, sliced in 1/4 inch pieces	1/4 tsp	black pepper
2 tsp	garlic, minced	1/8 tsp	salt
2/3 cup	rice, uncooked	8 ounces	mixed seafood
		1 Tbs	fresh parsley, chopped

Procedure

- In a 5 quart or larger pot with a tight lid, heat the olive oil. Brown the chicken pieces in the oil. Remove when the skin is crisp. If only using skinless chicken, remove when each side is nicely colored.
- **OPTIONAL:** If you made scratch broth and saved the chicken meat for salad or soup you can use it in this recipe. DO NOT use gizzards unless you really love them. If using pre-cooked chicken add it when you add the broth, later in the recipe.
- Add the chorizo, onions and peppers and cook until the onions are transparent.
- Add the garlic and cook one minute more.
- Add the cooked chicken, broth, rice and spices to the pot. Bring to a boil.
- Add mixed seafood. Lower to a simmer. Cover tightly and cook for 12 minutes.
- Uncover and stir. Re-cover and cook 3 minutes more.
- Turn off and ignore for 30 minutes. Serve garnished with fresh chopped parsley
- **OPTIONAL:** Cook without the seafood a day or two before. See Next Day variation.
- **NEXT DAY VARIATION:** Poach your seafood in boiling water with 1 Tbs of Turmeric. The Paella has enough saffron that the coloring of the seafood by the turmeric will not mean a loss of flavor. Microwave the rice mixture, by the plate if you prefer, or warm in a casserole dish in the oven. Top with the cooked fish and serve. Garnish with fresh chopped parsley.

Yield: approximately 4- 6 Servings

Zarzuela

This version of a peasant dish. Popular among fisher-folk in Spain, this delicious stew is named after a medieval indigenous Spanish Musical Theater. The spicy and colorful nature of the dish was the reason it was named after the theatrical tradition.

Though we often use shrimp, bay scallops, clams, lobster or calamari in Zarzuela, the fishing families would often put in the most abundant fish caught, or those still unsold by the end of the day. Use any fish you prefer.

One of the spiciest dishes on our menu, you can calm it some by using less of the spice mix. We like it 4 Chiles hot!

2 tsp	shallots, minced
2 tsp	garlic, minced
2 each	bay leaf
1 Tbs	extra-virgin olive oil
2 tsp	flour
5 ounces	mixed seafood
2/3 cup	canned roasted diced tomatoes
3 Tbs	Zarzuela Spice Mix—see <i>Miscellaneous</i>
1/2 cup	Vegetable Reduction—see <i>Miscellaneous</i>
2 Tbs	Chardonnay wine
scant 1/2 tsp	Seafood Paste—see <i>Miscellaneous</i>
2 Tbs	brandy
1/4 tsp	fresh cilantro chopped
1/4 tsp	fresh parsley, chopped

Procedure

- In a shallow pan sauté the shallots, garlic and bay leaf in the oil for 1 minute.
- Remove the bay leaf and stir in the flour to make a roux. Cook for half a minute.
- Return the bay leaf to the pan and add all the other ingredients, up to the brandy. Bring to a boil and lower to a high simmer.
- When the sauce is thickened, turn the flame up high and remove the pan from the heat. Pour the brandy into the side of the pan furthest away from you. On a tilt, bring the pan back to the flame (use a barbecue lighter with an electric stove) and start the brandy flambéing. Shake the pan lightly.
- When the brandy is burned off, pour into a bowl and serve.
- Garnish with the cilantro and parsley.

Yield: 1 portion

Grilled Mahi Mahi with Blackberry Balsamic Sauce

This is another one of those weird combinations I came up with out of boredom and a need to use up an ingredient; in this case blackberries. It sells well from Spring through Fall. Though the fish has sometimes changed for different seasons, mahi mahi has always been our guests' favorite with this sauce. We've successfully served it on several grilled fishes. Try it on tuna steaks, ono or wahoo fillet and salmon.

Rated moderately difficult because one needs to watch the balsamic vinegar as you reduce it.

4 ounces	mahi mahi
1/2 Tbs	extra-virgin olive oil
1/4 tsp	lavender blooms
to taste	salt
to taste	black pepper, freshly ground

Sauce:

1/2 cup	balsamic vinegar
1 1/2 cup	blackberries (fresh or frozen)
1/2 tsp	black pepper
1 scant tsp	salt

Procedure

- **SAUCE:** Cook the blackberries and balsamic vinegar together until it is all reduced to 1 cup.
- Put through a sieve with a rubber spatula to remove the seeds.
- Cool and add the salt and pepper.
- Refrigerate until needed. Take out 1 hour before using.
- Coat the mahi mahi with the oil. Sprinkle with the lavender, salt and pepper.
- Grill or put into a hot non-stick pan. Cook approximately 3 minutes per side. Fish will feel firm to the touch.
- Place fish on plate and drizzle with sauce.

Yield: 1 serving

Grilled Shrimp with Lavender & Mint

This is another recipe from the strange neighborhood that is my brain. The flavors work well together; make it as spicy as you or your guests like by how much Harissa you blend in to the dish as you eat it. This is always a great seller in Spring, Summer and Fall.

It is rated moderately difficult because you either have to make or buy Harissa and Crème Fraîche. You will need to make Preserved Lemon Sauce, the version with the Seafood Paste added. It takes 10 minutes to make. We serve it on a bed of cous cous, so that is another item you will need to cook, it takes about the same 10 minutes as the sauce. Just follow the directions on the box!

6 large	uncooked shrimp, cleaned & butterflied, equal to 5 ounces in weight.
1½ Tbs	extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbs	lavender blooms
1/8 tsp	salt, kosher or sea
1/3 cup	cous cous
1/3 cup	Preserved Lemon Sauce— <i>see Sauces</i> (use version with the Seafood Paste)
1½ Tbs	Crème Fraîche— <i>see Miscellaneous</i>
1 tsp	Harissa— <i>see Miscellaneous</i>
1/2 tsp	fresh mint leaves, chopped

Procedure

- Start your cous cous and begin the Preserved Lemon Sauce. When near done, begin cooking the shrimp.
- Put oil in a non-stick pan that has a lid. Sprinkle the oil with the lavender and salt. Heat the pan on high for 1 minute.
- Cook the shrimp in the oil, placing each one on the lavender with the butterflied side spread open and down. Cover and cook the shrimp 1 minute.
- Turn the shrimp and cook on the other side for 1 minute, replacing the lid.
- Turn the shrimp again and cook 1 minute more, covered.
- Place the hot cous cous in a pile on the middle of the plate. Arrange the shrimp around the edges.
- Pour the lemon sauce on the shrimp and the extra on the cous cous.
- Put a small dollop of Crème Fraîche on each shrimp.
- Place the Harissa on the cous cous in the middle of the plate.
- Sprinkle the shrimp with the fresh mint. Serve.

Yield: 1 serving

Meats

Beef Tips Cabrales

I love blue cheese and beef. Many others do too, otherwise fast food outlets would not be selling burgers with blue cheese.

I created this recipe to use up the bits of an entire beef tenderloin that couldn't be cut into filet mignon steaks. It was a simple matter of combining bite-sized bits of tenderloin with an even thicker version of my Cabrales blue cheese dressing and thinly sliced red onion. We use beef tenderloin, but you can use sirloin tips or any other cut of beef that you like to saute or grill.

1 cup	Cabrales Blue Cheese Dressing—see <i>Vegetables & Salads</i>
1/4 cup	Cabrales blue cheese, crumbled
1 lb	beef tenderloin (fillet), thinly sliced, cut into 1" pieces
1/2 tsp	black pepper freshly ground
3 Tbs	extra virgin olive oil
1 small	red onion, thinly sliced
1/2 Tbs	fresh parsley, chopped

Procedure

- Add the extra Cabrales to the dressing.
- Sprinkle the beef with the pepper.
- In a large sauté pan, with the heat on high, quickly cook the onions in the oil until just transparent.
- Add the beef and color on both sides. If you move fast enough the beef will come out medium rare.
- Dollop the dressing all over the top of the beef. Cover and heat for 1 minute.
- Garnish with the parsley. Serve immediately.

Yield: 4 portions

Veal with Strawberries & Basil with Blackberry-Basil Sauce

This recipe was created out of boredom and the desire to make something I had never seen on any other menu. It quickly became a guest and staff favorite.

I had been growing basil on the restaurant's patio and was not using it fast enough, and with New Mexico heat it had begun to bolt. Fresh strawberries were luscious and abundant, and they were spoiling faster than I could use them. (There was just so much strawberries over real short cake we could sell—even though we had sold a lot!) And my newest source of milk-fed veal was superb and priced just right. Those were the factors in my head as I tried to come up with something new. It worked so well, it has been on every summer menu since.

1½ lbs veal cutlet, pounded thin
to taste black pepper freshly ground
1 pint strawberries, sliced
2 Tbs fresh basil chopped

For the Blackberry-Basil Sauce

1 rd Tbs basil
1 cup water, boiling
1 cup blackberry preserves, seedless
1 tsp balsamic vinegar
1 tsp shallots, minced
1/2 tsp fresh lemon juice
1/8 tsp black pepper freshly ground
1 pinch salt

Procedure

Sauce:

- Pour the boiling water over the basil. Steep for 20 minutes.
- Drain off the excess water.
- Place all sauce ingredients into a pot. Cook on a medium heat for 5-6 minutes until simmering, stirring with a wooden spoon. The Blackberry Preserves should be fully melted. Cool for 20 minutes. Blend, on high, until smooth.

Veal:

- Slice the veal into approximately 1" squares. Lightly coat with fresh ground pepper.
- In a large non-stick pan, add a little olive oil to just coat. Get the pan hot.
- Lay the veal in the pan and lightly color— when the edges look colored, turn over each piece. Cook about 1 minute more.
- Lay on a serving plate interspersed with the fresh strawberries.
- Drizzle the sauce over the plate—use about 1/3 cup; more if desired. Just don't drown the meat and berries.
- Garnish with the fresh basil. Serve immediately.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

Grilled Lamb Tenderloin with a Spicy Harissa, Roasted Pepper, Walnut, Pomegranate Relish

This is my twist on a recipe I tasted at a food show. I, of course, like mine better. The original was over buffalo and the relish was blended into a smooth sauce. I felt that a chunky relish over lamb would be tastier. A year later I found two other similar recipes, also over lamb. The buffalo was just washed out. Enjoy!

A pomegranate aril is the edible seed in a pomegranate. If you break open the pomegranate in a bowl of water and remove the arils in the bowl, they will be easier to separate and will come cleaner than any other way you can use to remove the arils.

Relish

1/4 cup	pomegranate juice
1/4 lb	red bell pepper, roasted
1/3 cup	walnut pieces
4 tsp	fresh parsley, chopped
2 tsp	Harissa—see <i>Miscellaneous</i>
3 tsp	bread crumbs
1 tsp	fresh lemon juice
rounded 1/4 tsp	cumin
rounded 1/4 tsp	ground sumac
1 pinch	kosher salt

Lamb

1½ lbs	boneless lamb tenderloin
to taste	fresh ground pepper
to taste	ground sumac
1 cup	pomegranate arils

Procedure

- Put the pomegranate juice into a small sauce pan. Bring to a boil and lower to a simmer. Reduce by half.
- Put the peppers, walnuts, harissa, bread crumbs, lemon juice, cumin, sumac and salt into a food processor. Pulse until the consistency of a lightly chunky relish. Stir in the reduced pomegranate juice. Keep chilled until it is needed.
- Cut lamb tenderloin into approximately 4 ounce pieces. Add fresh ground pepper to taste. Grill until medium or desired doneness. (One can substitute lamb chops.)
- Top cooked lamb with chilled relish. Sprinkle with pomegranate arils and ground sumac. Serve immediately.

Servings: 6

Yield: 1½ lbs

Puerco al Salamanca

Like many new recipes created in Spanish cuisine, this one blends the spices of the Moorish Caliphate with pork. Pork is not Halal, not “kosher,” under Muslim dietary rules. But the Spanish thrive on it. The flavors work well together, or so say our guests. This is my version of modern Spanish cuisine.

Just as it took the Spanish nearly two decades before they threw off the creative shackles with which Generalissimo Franco chained them, it has taken several centuries PLUS two decades for the chefs to start playing with combining Moroccan spicing with traditional Spanish foods. I honor this new creativity with several dishes at the restaurant; this is one of the staff’s favorites.

I called this dish after the last city held by (and the capital of) the Caliphate—a city in southern Spain known for some of the most beautiful architecture in all of Europe, most of it Moorish. Be warned, this is a spiey dish.

4 ounces	pork tenderloin, cut in 2 ounce pieces
1 Tbs	extra virgin olive oil
1/2 Tbs	garlic, minced
1/2 Tbs	shallots, minced
1/2 Tbs	Salamanca Spice Mix—see <i>Miscellaneous</i>
2 Tbs	Beef Reduction—see <i>Miscellaneous</i>
2 Tbs	Chicken Reduction—see <i>Miscellaneous</i>
2 Tbs	Merlot wine
1 tsp	fresh lemon juice
to taste	fresh parsley, chopped

Procedure

- In a sauté pan heat the oil and brown the pork on both sides.
- Add all the other ingredients EXCEPT the fresh parsley. Bring to a boil. Sauté, turning over, until the pork is cooked, approximately 2 minutes.
- Serve hot. Garnish with parsley.

Servings: 1

Yield: 1 portion

Portobello Mushroom-Liver Pâté

My pâtés tend to be rich enough that chicken livers are the best base. This particular pâté was created shortly after I tasted portobello mushrooms for the first time. Their meaty flavor struck me as the perfect complement to liver; and their love of sherry was obvious from the moment I sautéed them with just a little butter, salt and pepper, and added a splash of cooking sherry.

Pâté

1 lb	chicken livers
1/3 cup	butter (no substitutes), melted
1 Tbs	garlic, minced
1/4 cup	cream sherry
1/2 Tbs	paprika
1/2 tsp	basil
1/4 tsp	turbinado or brown sugar
1/4 tsp	salt
1/4 tsp	black pepper
1 pinch	nutmeg

Mushrooms

1/3 cup	portobello mushrooms, chopped into 1/4" pieces
1 Tbs	clarified butter or ghee
1/4 cup	cooking sherry

Procedure

- In a large frying pan place all the Pâté ingredients (EXCEPT the mushrooms, clarified butter and second 1/4 cup of sherry). Cook until all of the liquid is absorbed, stirring occasionally.
- Allow the cooked livers to cool about 20 minutes.
- In a separate pan sauté the mushrooms in the clarified butter for one minute. Add the second 1/4 cup of sherry and cook for 4 more minutes. Drain off the sherry the mushrooms have been cooked in into a food processor; put the mushrooms into a mixing bowl.
- Place the livers in the food processor with the mushroom sherry. Blend until smooth.
- Place in the bowl with the mushrooms and stir together.
- Pâté can be served warm or chilled.

Yield: Appetizers for 8 to 12

Desserts

Carrot Cake

Amberwind has called this the world's best carrot cake when featuring desserts to our guests. Only three people have said that they disagreed in all these years. What all three had in common was, if they didn't consider this as tied for first, they thought it was a very close second. Also, their favorite had alcohol soaked raisins or currants.

Light, flavorful, non-oily and delicious, this cake has won over many people who consider carrot cake inedible. It's such a favorite, we almost always have some for sale.

Batter

3 packed cups	carrot, grated
2 cups	sugar
2 cups	flour
1 cup	raisins or currants
1 cup	pecans, chopped
1 Tbs	baking powder
1 tsp	cinnamon
1 tsp	nutmeg
1/2 tsp	cardamom
1/2 tsp	salt
1 pinch	coriander, ground
4 each	eggs, well beaten
1 cup	canola oil

Frosting

2/3 cup	butter, unsalted, softened
15 ounces	cream cheese or neufchâtel, softened
1¾ cup	powdered sugar, sifted
2½ Tbs	2% milk
4 tsp	pure vanilla extract
2 pinch	nutmeg

Procedure

- **CAKE:** Spray with pan spray and then flour a 10" cake pan.
- THOROUGHLY mix together all the dry ingredients in a bowl—do not mix in the eggs and oil.
- Beat the eggs and oil together. Add to the bowl of dry ingredients and mix together thoroughly, by hand.
- Add to cake pan. Put pan on a cookie sheet and bake for approximately 1 hour at 350°F.
- Spin the cake front to back and bake approximately 15 minutes more. A toothpick will come out clean and the sides of the cake will have begun to pull away from the sides of the cake pan.
- Let cool on a wire rack or a cool stove burner. Run a thin pointed knife around the edge of the pan when the cake is cool enough to handle.
- Put a plate large enough to cover the cake pan upside down on top of the cake pan. Turn plate and cake pan over, holding them tightly together. Lightly tap them both on a counter or table, all around the edges. Cake will detach from the cake pan to sit on the plate. Refrigerate until ready to ice.
- **FROSTING:** Beat together, with a hand mixer or stand mixer, the cream cheese and butter.
- Add all the other ingredients and beat until smooth. Refrigerate if you are not immediately icing the cake.
- **PUTTING IT TOGETHER:** Cut the cake in half with a long serrated knife to make 2 layers. Place the bottom layer on the plate or stand you will be serving on. At this point, if you refrigerated the icing, beat it for a minute or longer to make it easier to spread.
- Spread a nice, but not too thick, layer of icing on the bottom layer. Put the second layer on the first.
- Ice the top of the cake and the sides with the rest of the icing.
- Serve. Refrigerate the unused portion.

Yield: 10" cake

Cherry Clafouti

This is moderately difficult because you have to strain the batter that defies being smooth, as much as you might try to make it so. Once you've made your first, you'll realize how truly easy it is.

This is a traditional dessert from Southern France and Northern Italy. We describe it as a cherry custard with flour in it that is closer to a flan than a cake.

Cherry is the traditional flavor, but we have used many other fruits and even do a fig and saffron version. Try fresh blueberries, pears, apples tossed with apple pie spices, etc. Just avoid very juicy fruits since the clafouti will not fully set and will be watery and gross.

2 Tbs	butter, melted
6 Tbs	sugar
1/8 tsp	salt
1 pinch	nutmeg
3 each	eggs, beaten
1 each	egg yolk, lightly beaten
6 Tbs	flour
3/4 cup	half and half or heavy cream
1/4 cup	2% milk
2 cans (14.5 oz)	sweet cherries, pitted, in light syrup, drained

Procedure

- Butter a 9" square baking dish—we use glass or ceramic. Preheat your oven to 400°.
- Put the cherries in a sieve and let them drain while you prepare the batter.
- In a bowl, with a hand mixer or in a stand mixer, beat together the butter, sugar, salt and nutmeg.
- Add the eggs and yolk and beat together with the sugar mixture, the results will be a little clumpy, but this is all right!
- Add the flour and beat. Again, this will not be a smooth mixture.
- Add the milk and the half and half or cream. Beat until it is as smooth as you can get it.
- Place the drained cherries into the buttered baking dish.
- Using the sieve the cherries were in, strain the batter into the baking dish. Use a rubber spatula to push the batter through.
- Bake for 1 hour. Clafouti should be set but not hard, and lightly browned.
- Let sit about 15 minutes, until cool enough to handle. Slice into nine 3"x3" squares. Serve warm.

Yield: 9 portions

Mascarpone Cheesecake

To me, there is nothing like this cheese cake. It is light and luscious. Mascarpone is Italian cream cheese and has a subtle ricotta cheese flavor. Topped with macerated berries or fruit, this cake will surprise your guests by its rich flavor but light texture. If “there is always room” for that gelatin dessert, it holds even truer for this cheese cake.

Dough

1/4 cups	flour
1/3 cup	sugar
1/3 lb	butter, softened
1 each	egg, beaten
1 each	egg yolk, lightly beaten
1/2 Tbs	fresh lemon zest
1/2 tsp	pure vanilla extract
3 Tbs	water, cool

Batter

5 each	eggs, beaten
3 each	egg yolks, beaten
2 1/2 lbs	Mascarpone cheese, softened
1/4 cup	heavy (whipping) cream
1 3/4 cups	sugar
1/4 tsp	pure vanilla extract
2 pinches	nutmeg
1 pinch	salt
3 Tbs	flour
2 1/4 tsp	fresh lemon zest

Procedure

- **DOUGH:** Mix the flour and sugar together.
- Add all the other ingredients, EXCEPT the water, and mix together by hand.
- Add the water and mix. The result will be the texture of a good cookie dough. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill until the batter is finished.
- **BATTER:** Beat together the eggs and yolks and put aside until needed.
- In a large bowl, OR preferably, in a stand mixer, add the cheese, cream, sugar, vanilla, nutmeg and salt. Beat until smooth.
- Add the egg mixture and beat well.
- Add the flour and zest. Beat until smooth, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Leave out until needed.
- Spray a 10” spring form pan with pan spray. Press the dough into the bottom of the pan as evenly as possible. Bake at 400°F for 15 to 18 minute until lightly browned.
- Turn the oven up to 550°F. Place the cake pan on a cookie sheet. Pour batter into the pan. Bake for 20 minutes at this temperature.
- Turn the oven down to 250°F. Bake for 1 hour.
- Spin the cake pan front to back. Bake for 15 minutes more.
- Turn off the oven and let the cake sit for 1 1/2 hours in the closed, warm oven. Remove and cool.
- Remove cake from the pan and refrigerate until serving.

Yield: 10” cake

Aztec Mousse

This is moderately difficult because you can't leave the steps unwatched. Otherwise, this is one of the easiest and tastiest mousses I know.

My friend Nora introduced me to this flavor combination, though she refused to give me the proportions so I created my own. We served this mousse at a restaurant we both worked in. One day a sweet woman came in to celebrate her 93rd birthday with us. She ordered this mousse for dessert. About half-way through the mousse she called her waitress over and in a soft voice confided that, "This mousse is better than sex!" What better compliment?

2 each	eggs, separated
1/2 cup	heavy (whipping) cream
6 ounces	semisweet chocolate
1/4 cup	coffee liqueur
1 Tbs	cinnamon

Procedure

- Beat the egg yolks. Let the separated egg whites and beaten yolks slowly come to room temperature by sitting out while you do the next steps.
- Whip the heavy cream to a stiff peak. Cover and refrigerate.
- Chop or break up the chocolate into pieces no bigger than 1/2". Melt the chocolate with the coffee liqueur. Use one of the following methods:
 - **METHOD 1:** Put the chocolate and liqueur into a double boiler. If you do not own a double boiler make one: Any bowl that will sit approximately half way down into a sauce pan will do. Add enough water to the pan so that it is about a half inch below the bowl. With the chocolate and liqueur in the bowl, bring the water to a boil. Lower to a simmer. Stir frequently. Completely melt the chocolate. Do NOT let the chocolate burn by allowing it to stick to the sides of the bowl or double boiler!
 - **METHOD 2:** Put the chocolate and liqueur into a microwaveable bowl. Microwave the mixture for 1 minute. Stir. Do this over and over again until the chocolate is almost melted. When the chocolate is close, switch to half minute timings. Do NOT let the chocolate burn by allowing it to stick to the sides of the bowl!
- Let the mixture cool to approximately 145°F or baby bottle hot. Temper the egg yolks by quickly beating in the hot chocolate mix one tablespoon at a time. About 4 or 5 spoonfuls should be enough. Quickly beat the tempered yolks into the chocolate mixture. Now beat the cinnamon into the chocolate mixture.
- With clean beaters, whip the egg whites until they form stiff peaks. Refrigerate until needed.
- When the chocolate mixture is baby bottle warm, around 90°F, gently fold in the egg whites. Allow the mixture to cool to room temperature. Fold in the whipped cream. Do NOT fold in completely! Small ribbons of cream should run through the chocolate.
- Place in the serving dishes. Chill and serve.

Yield: approximately 3½ cups

White Chocolate Amaretto Mousse

This is moderately difficult because you can't leave the steps unwatched.

White chocolate, amaretto and toasted almonds make this a textured silky mousse that will convince those who think they hate white chocolate that they're wrong.

3 each egg whites
2 ounces almonds, toasted and ground
3/4 cup heavy (whipping) cream
9 ounces
white baker's chocolate
1/4 cup whole milk
1/4 cup amaretto liqueur
1/2 tsp pure vanilla extract

Procedure

- Let the separated egg whites slowly come to room temperature by sitting out while you do the next steps.
- Toast the almonds in a pre-heated 375°F oven for 7 minutes or until lightly brown. When cool, put into a food processor and grind until the size and texture of coarse salt.
- Whip the heavy cream to stiff peaks. Cover and refrigerate.
- Chop/break up the chocolate into pieces no bigger than 1/2". Melt the chocolate with the milk, amaretto liqueur and extract. Use one of the following methods:
 - **METHOD 1:** Put the chocolate, milk, liqueur and vanilla into a double boiler. If you do not own a double boiler make one: Any bowl that will sit approximately half way down into a sauce pan will do. Add enough water to the pan so that it is about a half inch below the bowl. With the chocolate and liqueur in the bowl, bring the water to a boil. Lower to a simmer. Stir frequently. Completely melt the chocolate. Do NOT let the chocolate burn by allowing it to stick to the sides of the bowl or double boiler!
 - **METHOD 2:** Put the chocolate, milk, liqueur and vanilla into a microwaveable bowl. Microwave the mixture for 1 minute. Stir. Do this over and over again until the chocolate is almost melted. When the chocolate is nearly melted, switch to half minute timings. Do NOT let the chocolate burn by allowing it to stick to the sides of the bowl!
- With clean beaters, whip the egg whites to stiff peaks. Refrigerate until needed.
- When the chocolate mixture is baby bottle warm, around 90°F, gently fold in the egg whites.
- Allow the mixture to cool to room temperature. Fold in the whipped cream. Do NOT fold in completely! Small ribbons of cream should run through the chocolate.
- Now gently fold in the ground toasted almonds.
- Spoon into serving dishes and chill.

Servings: 6

Yield: approximately 3¼ cups

Breads

Whole Wheat Baguettes

This is the easiest and tastiest whole wheat dough I know I know for French or Italian breads.

I prefer for both taste and nutritional value to only use stone ground whole wheat flour.

1½ packages	dry yeast (1½ Tbs)
1 Tbs	sugar
2 cups	water, baby bottle warm
2 Tbs	extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbs	salt
2½ cups	flour, whole wheat
2½ cups	flour, all purpose
1/2 cup	wheat bran
As needed	oil, canola or olive

Procedure

- In a large bowl stir together the flours, bran and salt.
- Put sugar, yeast and water together and allow yeast to bloom for about 4- 5 minutes.
- Add the oil to the yeast mixture.
- Make a hole in the middle of the flour and add the yeast- oil mixture and stir and then knead for 5 minutes or until a nice dough. If too wet add up to a 1/2 cup more of flour.
- Oil the dough in a bowl, cover and let rise until doubled in size.
- Punch down the dough. Split in 2 for baguettes or leave whole for Italian bread.
- Shape and Place on a non-stick cookie or baking sheet pan or one lined with bakers' paper. Oil or spray loaf(s) with pan spray. Let rise until doubled.
- In a pre-heated 400°F oven bake for approximately 18 minutes on bakers paper or on a non-stick cookie sheet. Spin the pan and bake 5 minutes more.
- Loaves will be lightly browned and will have a hollow sound when thumped on the bottom.

Yield: 2 French baguettes or 1 Italian loaf

Pita Bread

I used to make this recipe in a wood fired oven when I lived in Tennessee, but it tastes great even out of any home oven.

2 packages	dry yeast
1/2 tsp	sugar
2 cups	water, baby bottle warm
1/4 cup	extra-virgin olive oil
6 cups	flour, all purpose
1½ Tbs	salt

Procedure

- Mix the flour and salt together in a large bowl.
- Put sugar, yeast and water together and allow yeast to bloom for about 4- 5 minutes.
- Add the oil to the yeast mixture.
- Make a hole in the middle of the flour and add the yeast- oil mixture and stir and then knead for 5 minutes or until a nice dough. If too wet add up to a 1 cup more of flour.
- Oil the dough in a bowl, cover and let rise until doubled in size.
- Punch down dough and let rest for 10 minutes.
- Divide dough into 8 balls and shape. Cover with a cloth or plastic wrap and let rest 30 more minutes.
- On a floured board or counter, flatten each ball and roll out into an 8” circle approximately 1/8” thick each.
- Place bread either on a cookie sheet with bakers paper, a non-stick pan or on a pan with corn meal.
- Bake in the pre-heated oven on the lower shelf. DO NOT open oven until 5 minutes are up.
- Move to top shelf and bake for approximately 4 more minutes. Each bread will be inflated like a balloon and will be lightly brown. If you do not have enough room in your oven to do all the loaves at once bake them in shifts.
- The breads will deflate as they cool; this is how the pockets are formed.
- Pita bread does NOT need to be thumped to tell if it is done. The light brown color and inflation is your sign.

Yield: 8 loaves

Our Gluten Free Bread

Sous chef Cody and I spent nearly 2 years working on gluten free bread until we came up with this finalized recipe. This recipe doesn't form a dough, but instead is a batter that rises while proofing and will have risen nearly double by the end of the bake. The texture is light with a just little bit of crumble and is the closest to non-gluten bread in texture that we ever created. We serve it to our guests with Crohn's and Celiac disease and those with wheat allergies and they love it.

Dry Ingredients

1 lb	brown rice flour
3 ounces	tapioca flour
3 ounces	buckwheat flour
3 ounces	potato starch
2 ounces	cornstarch—use non-GMO
1 ounce	sugar, granulated
3/4 ounce	salt
3/4 ounce	dry yeast

Herbs

1 Tbs	parsley flakes
1/2 Tbs	marjoram, dry
1/2 Tbs	basil, dry

Wet Ingredients

3½ cups	warm water about 115°F
6 ounces	egg whites, beaten for 2 minutes
2 ounces	butter, unsalted, melted
1/2 Tbs	white wine vinegar or white vinegar

Procedure

- Sift all the dry ingredients. Put all the dry ingredients into a stand mixer or in a deep enough bowl.
- Add the herbs and mix well.
- Turning on your stand mixer or using an electric hand mixer add the water slowly and steadily.
- Now add the eggs slowly and steadily. Then the butter and finally the vinegar.
- Distribute the batter into 2 buttered 9" x 2½" bread pans and let rise 45 minutes in a warm place—until it has risen at least 50%.
- Bake in a pre-heated oven at 425°F for 35 minutes. The bread will sound hollow when tapped on the bottom.

Yield: 2 loaves

Starches

Baked or Fried Polenta

Baked or fried, this polenta dish is flavorful, easy and vegan. It's a perfect gluten free alternative, higher in fiber than white rice or potatoes.

The choice of seasonings and ingredients, as well as the lack of cheese in the recipe, was designed to make this polenta as versatile as possible.

Whatever method you chose, the results can be cut, made into patties, frozen, and fried or re-baked for later use.

At the restaurant, we shape the polenta into triangular pyramids, freeze them and then we 'fry' the polenta on all 4 sides before serving. Covering the pan as you do this guarantees that the polenta will be hot on the inside and crispy on the outside.

2 cups	Vegetable Broth—see Miscellaneous
1/4 can (14.5 oz)	tomatoes, fire roasted and diced
1 Tbs	parsley flakes
1/2 tsp	marjoram
1/8 tsp	basil
1/8 tsp	salt
1/8 tsp	black pepper
2 Tbs	pimento, diced
1/2 cup	polenta cornmeal

Procedure

- Mix one half of the vegetable broth with the polenta.
- Put all of the spices, canned tomatoes and the other half of the broth into a pot. Bring to a boil.
- Add the pimento. Stir in the polenta/broth mix. Lower to a high simmer and cook until thick, stirring regularly. **NOTE:** Be careful, the polenta might "spit", and it will burn if it gets on your skin.
- Shut off heat and stir well for a full minute or more.
- When cool enough to handle, but still warm, **EITHER:**

Method 1

- Pour onto a non-stick cookie sheet sprayed with pan spray. Bake in a 450°F pre-heated oven for 20 minutes. Slice into 8 portions and serve.

Method 2

- Pour onto a wooden board or a cookie sheet. Allow to cool enough to easily hold in one's hand. Shape into 8 patties. Let cool 10 minutes more.
- Heat extra virgin olive oil in a large skillet. Place **ONLY** 1 drop of water into oil. Heat until the water is boiled away, being careful not to allow the hot oil to splatter you.
- Carefully place the polenta patties into the hot oil and fry on both side until golden brown. Drain on a paper towel. Serve.

Servings: 8

Provençal Spiced Poached Apples

This not only complements the crêpe recipes included here (see Phyllo, Crêpes & Savory Pastries) but many a person agrees that these apples also help pull the flavors of both dishes together.

Try them with grilled pork or use them with any of your favorite dishes that you usually serve with warmed apples. In either Mediterranean or Eastern European foods, these apples make a superb replacement for plain old potatoes as a side dish.

2 lbs	Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, sliced
1/4 cup	Chardonnay wine
1/4 cup	water
2 Tbs	parsley flakes
1 Tbs	sugar
1/2 Tbs	marjoram
1 tsp	basil
1/2 tsp	chervil
1/2 tsp	oregano
1/8 tsp	thyme
1/8 tsp	tarragon
1/8 tsp	sage leaves
1/8 tsp	salt
1/8 tsp	white pepper

Procedure

- Place everything into a heavy bottomed sauce pot.
- Bring to a boil, then simmer for 20 minutes.
- Will last up to 2 weeks under refrigeration.

Yield: approximately 1½ pounds

Sauces

Herbed Garlic Butter

This is not only used as a sauce and sauce base, but as a spread. Use this as a garlic butter for French bread. Sauté fish in it or use as a dip. Just enjoy this flavorful butter. After all, everything in moderation, including moderation itself!

1/2 cup	butter, unsalted
1 Tbs	garlic, minced
1/2 Tbs	fresh lemon juice
1/2 tsp	sage leaves
1/2 tsp	basil
1/4 tsp	marjoram
1/8 tsp	chervil
1/8 tsp	oregano
1/8 tsp	salt
1/8 tsp	black pepper
1 pinch	nutmeg

Procedure

- Carefully melt the butter so as not to burn it.
- Add all the other ingredients. Warm for 2 to 3 minutes more.
- Warm and stir before using.
- Store in refrigerator until needed.

Marinara Sauce

Always better the next day, this Marinara is quick, but tastes like it was simmered for hours.

When reheating, I always add a splash of red wine. Grandma Julia would approve and would be pleased by the flavor.

1 can (28 oz) crushed tomatoes
1/2 cup water
1/2 cup onion, diced small
1/2 Tbs extra-virgin olive oil
1/4 cup wine, Merlot
1 rd Tbs garlic, minced
2 tsp parsley flakes
1 1/2 tsp sugar
1 tsp oregano
1/2 tsp basil
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper

Procedure

- Sauté onions in olive oil until transparent. Add garlic and sauté 1 minute more.
- Blend the canned crushed tomatoes until smooth. Pour into a sauce pan.
- Use the water to rinse out the tomato can and the blender and add to pan with tomatoes.
- Add all other ingredients. Bring to a boil. Lower to a simmer, stirring regularly. Cook 20 minutes.

Servings: 6

Yield: approximately 3 cups

Crème Fraîche

Also known as Coddled Cream in Britain or Queso Fresca in Mexico, this is a very easy project; but it must be ignored for a long time before it is ready. The only real drawback is the fact that one must buy so much buttermilk to make the first batch. After that, one can use a heaping tablespoon of your homemade crème fraîche to make each batch that follows.

1 cup heavy (whipping) cream
1 Tbs buttermilk, or previous batch of crème fraîche

Procedure

- Warm the heavy cream to baby bottle warm—around 110°F. (This can be done on the stove top or in a microwave.)
- Stir in the buttermilk.
- Place in a warm place, around 90°F, for 48 hours. If you have an gas oven, the pilot light will keep the inside of the oven at the correct temperature naturally. Just remember NOT to turn on your oven while the crème fraîche is doing it's thing.
- Refrigerate.

Yield: 1 cup

Lemon Crème Fraîche

This is one of the many sauces we make with crème fraîche. Try it with grilled fish. Great for cooling spicy foods, use this in place of yogurt or raita.

1/2 cup	Crème Fraîche
1 Tbs	fresh lemon juice
1 pinch	nutmeg

Procedure

- Beat all ingredients together.
- Refrigerate in a closed container.

Yield: approximately 1/2 cup

Mayonnaise in a Food Processor

This is a fast and easy, no-fail mayonnaise that is flavored for the makings of Aioli.

1 large	egg
1 each	egg yolk
3 Tbs	fresh lemon juice
1 tsp	Dijon mustard
1/4 tsp	salt
1/8 tsp	black pepper freshly ground
1 pinch	cayenne
1/2 cup	extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 cup	canola oil

Procedure

- Place all the ingredients into a food processor EXCEPT the oils. Turn on and run until the egg looks pale yellow.
- Combine oils together. When egg mixture is pale, with the food processor continually running, steadily pour in the oils. Stop within 10 seconds. Do not over-blend. Chill

Yield: approximately 1 cup

Harissa Aioli

Though many North Africans resented their colonial status under the French, the influences upon their food has, for the most part, been subtle and positive.

In that vein I created this sauce, a mixture of Harissa hot paste from North Africa and Aioli—a traditional French garlic mayonnaise. I'm sure I wasn't the first to have this idea, but it's a good one nonetheless.

1 cup	Mayonnaise—see Sauces
1/4 cup	Harissa—see Miscellaneous
2 Tbs	garlic, minced
1/2 Tbs	Dijon mustard
1/2 Tbs	fresh lemon juice
1 scant tsp	cilantro
1 pinch	nutmeg

Procedure

- Put all in a food processor and blend.
- Refrigerate until needed. Will last up to a month in a sealed container.
- **NOTE:** If you are using my food processor mayonnaise, make the mayonnaise first and then add the rest of the ingredients with the following adjustment:
- REDUCE the Dijon and lemon juice to 1/2 teaspoon each.

Yield: 1¹/₄ cups

Preserved Lemon Sauce

This makes enough sauce for 1 Feta Stuffed Pepper or for 2 ounces of shrimp for the Grilled Shrimp with Lavender and Mint.

I created this sauce when I came up with the Feta Stuffed Pepper. I was actually going out of my way to create a dish that would be built from parts of different cuisines. I had just finished making (versus buying) my first batch of preserved lemons. This Tunisian inspired sauce worked so well that the dish became a best seller almost immediately.

Add the optional seafood paste, and the sauce became a perfect foil for shrimp and harissa.

1 tsp	clarified butter or ghee
1 tsp	flour
1/4 cup	Vegetable Reduction— <i>see Miscellaneous</i>
2 Tbs	Chardonnay wine
1 tsp	honey
1/2 rd tsp	Preserved Lemons, rind only, diced— <i>see Miscellaneous</i> .
1/2 tsp	fresh lemon juice
1/4 tsp	fresh ground salt and pepper
1/4 tsp	cumin
1 pinch	nutmeg
1/8 tsp	black pepper, freshly ground

Optional

scant 1/4 tsp Seafood Paste—*see Miscellaneous*

Procedure

- In a small pan mix the butter and flour to make a roux. Heat, stirring for 2 minutes.
- Add all the other ingredients (ONLY use the optional Seafood Paste for seafood dishes). Bring to a boil, lower to a high simmer and cook until thick.

Yield: approximately 1/2 cup

Roasted Red Pepper Pesto

Besides being the sauce for the Grilled Portobello, this makes a great complement to pasta, especially ravioli and tortellini.

To make one of our most popular ravioli sauces, add 1 part Pesto to 1 part Vegetable Reduction, 1 part Herbed-Garlic Butter, and 1 part Chardonnay wine. Heat and pour over any ravioli except meat.

3/4 cup	roasted red peppers
2/3 cup	extra-virgin olive oil
1/3 bunch	fresh parsley, chopped
1/3 cup	Parmesan cheese, grated
1½ Tbs	garlic, minced
1½ Tbs	pine nuts
1/2 Tbs	fresh lemon juice
1/2 tsp	basil
1/4 rd tsp	salt
1/4 rd tsp	black pepper
1 pinch	nutmeg

Procedure

- Put all the ingredients into a food processor. We prefer a slightly textured versus a smooth pesto. How far you blend the ingredients is up to you.

Yield: approximately 2 cups

Tzatziki à la Shevek

Though there is a long waiting time in this recipe, it is so easy that I couldn't rate it anything else.

My tzatziki recipe is a little untraditional for Greece, blending how my Greek Jewish friend's mother made it and how my Greek Orthodox friend's mother made it. This version gets rave reviews. It wonderfully complements the Spanakopitta and Cheese Cigars. Try it with other fried foods, like fritters. It also makes a great dip for toasted pita bread points or crostini.

2 cups	yogurt, unflavored
1/2 each	cucumber, peeled and grated
1/2 Tbs	garlic, minced
1/2 Tbs	fresh mint leaves, chopped
1/2 Tbs	dill
1 tsp	salt
1/2 tsp	black pepper
1 pinch	nutmeg

Procedure

- Take a piece of cheese cloth or a thin, clean, lint free towel and wet it. Place a sieve over a bowl and line it with the cloth. Place the yogurt inside the cloth and let drain at least 2 hours.
- Place a second sieve over a bowl and place the grated cucumber into it. Let it drip until the yogurt is ready.
- Into a dry, clean bowl, place the drained yogurt, cucumber, and all the herbs and spices. With a rubber spatula blend together. Chill.
- Will last 10 days to 2 weeks in a tight container in the refrigerator.

Yield: approximately 2 cups

Miscellaneous Recipes

Beef Broth or Stock

This recipe is included for the truly adventurous. The moderately difficult rating comes from the time it takes to cook and the need to skim the broth well if you don't use the pressure cooker method, which is rated "Easy".

5 lbs	beef bones and inexpensive beef cuts and scraps
3 medium	onions, rough cut
3 medium	carrots, cut into 3-inch lengths
3 each	celery stalks, chopped
1 can (6 oz)	tomato paste
1/4 bunch	parsley
1 Tbs	garlic, minced
1/2 Tbs	salt
1 tsp	thyme
1/2 tsp	chervil
5 each	peppercorns
3 each	spice, whole cloves
1 large	bay leaf
4 quarts	water

For Method 1

1/4 cup	canola oil
As needed	flour

Procedure

Method 1

- In a large pot, brown the lightly floured beef and bones in the canola oil. Add all the ingredients. Bring to a boil. After 5 minutes skim off the scum. Continue to do the same every few minutes for the next 15 to 20 minutes. Boil for 2½ hours. Add water as needed to keep the level at approximately 3 quarts. Strain through a sieve lined with cheese cloth.
- Refrigerate for at least 12 hours, or until the fat is congealed on the top. Remove the fat, which can be saved for making pâtés.
- **NOTE:** Broth will refrigerate up to 10 days OR freeze in quart or pint batches for up to 3 months.

Method 2

- Obeying the manufacturer's instructions, put all the ingredients into a pressure cooker. Bring to pressure and hold it there for 45 minutes. Turn off and let the pressure reduce naturally. When the pressure is gone, open and strain. **NOTE:** There is nothing to skim using this method.

Yield: approximately 3 quarts

Chicken Broth or Stock

This recipe is included for the truly adventurous. The moderately difficult rating comes from the time and the need to skim the broth well if you don't use the pressure cooker method, which is rated "Easy".

5 lbs	chicken, cut in parts
3 medium	carrots, cut into 3-inch lengths
3 medium	onions, cut into quarters
1/4 bunch	fresh parsley
1 Tbs	garlic, minced
6 each	black peppercorns
1 each	bay leaf
1/2 Tbs	salt
1 tsp	thyme
1/2 tsp	chervil
4 quarts	water

Procedure

- Use chunks of various chicken parts such as legs, gizzards, thighs, backs, necks, etc. The cheaper are best used for soups.

Method 1

- Add all the ingredients into a large pot. Bring to a boil. After 5 minutes skim off the scum. Continue to do the same every few minutes for the next 15 to 20 minutes. Boil for 2½ hours. Add water as needed to keep the level at approximately 3 quarts. Strain through a sieve lined with cheese cloth.
- Refrigerate for at least 12 hours, or until the fat is congealed on the top. Remove the fat, which can be saved for making pâtés.
- **NOTE:** Broth will refrigerate up to 10 days OR freeze in quart or pint batches for up to 3 months.

Method 2

- Obeying the manufacturer's instructions, put all the ingredients into a pressure cooker. Bring to pressure and hold it there for 45 minutes. Turn off and let the pressure reduce naturally. When the pressure is gone, open and strain. **NOTE:** There is nothing to skim using this method.

Yield: approximately 3 quarts

Vegetable Broth or Stock

This recipe is included for the truly adventurous. The “moderately difficult” rating comes from the time and the need to skim the broth well if you don’t use the pressure cooker method, which is rated “Easy”.

As long as you do not add vegetables with a strong and distinctive flavor (eg: broccoli) the broth will be usable in most recipes. If you’re making the broth strictly for broccoli soup, definitely use the woody stalks for your broth.

4 quarts	water
3 each	onions, cut in quarters
3 each	carrots, scrubbed and sliced
2 each	tomato, cut into chunks
1 each	apple, chopped
2 cups	celery, chopped
1/2 lb	mushrooms and stems, coarsely chopped
1/2 bunch	fresh parsley
1½ Tbs	canola oil
1/2 Tbs	garlic, minced
1/2 tsp	salt
6 each	black peppercorns
1 each	bay leaf

Procedure

Method 1

- Add all the ingredients into a large pot. Bring to a boil and skim. Boil for 2½ hours, skimming occasionally. Add water as needed to keep the level at approximately 3 quarts. Strain through a sieve lined with cheese cloth.

Method 2

- Obeying the manufacturer’s instructions, put all the ingredients into a pressure cooker. Bring to pressure and hold it there for 45 minutes. Turn off and let the pressure reduce naturally. When the pressure is gone, open and strain. **NOTE:** There is nothing to skim using this method.

Yield: approximately 3 quarts

Reductions: Chicken, Beef & Vegetable

We use reductions as a sauce base in many different recipes.

You can make this recipe with canned broth, or your own homemade broth. Recipes for scratch Chicken Broth or Stock, Beef Broth or Stock and Vegetable Broth or Stock are provided.

Scratch Broth

2½ cups appropriate scratch broth (chicken, beef or vegetable)—see recipes in this section

1/4 cup cooking sherry
2 tsp garlic, minced
1 tsp basil
1/4 tsp cracked black pepper
1 pinch nutmeg

Canned Broth

14 ounces canned low/reduced salt broth of the appropriate kind (chicken, beef or vegetable)
3/4 can water, ONLY if using canned broth

Procedure

- Place all ingredients into a pot
- Bring to a boil. Lower to a high simmer. Simmer approximately 30 minutes, or until reduced to 2 cups of liquid
- STORAGE: Refrigerate for up to 10 days in a sealed container OR put into ice cube trays, freeze and then put into a freezer bag for up to 3 months (stir well each time you ladle into the ice cube tray for even distribution).

Yield: approximately 2 cups

Preserved Lemons

This is an easy item to make, though one must be patient for the lemons to be ready. Use a pint Mason jar to make your own. The tight seal is necessary for success.

You can also find imported jars of preserved lemons in specialty grocers or on-line.

5 each	lemons
2 Tbs	fresh lemon juice
2 Tbs	salt, kosher or sea water

Procedure

- Without cutting all the way through, cut the lemons into “flowers” by making 4 cuts the long way from the flower end to the stem end. Lemon should still hold together, but barely.
- Pour salt into the opened lemon “flowers.” Stuff tightly into the Mason jar.
- NOTE: Add extra lemons until you can’t stuff the jar any more.
- Pour in the last of the salt, the lemon juice and enough water to fill the jar to the rim.
- Seal jar tightly. Leave at a cool room temperature for at least 1 month.
- Refrigerate.

Yield: approximately 5 lemons

Chive Shmeer

As long as you warm the cream cheese to room temperature this recipe is easy. If need be, slowly microwave the cream cheese, well wrapped and on half power until soft.

Besides being the base for the Grilled Portobello stuffing, this tastes great on bagels or toast. Use it to stuff a baked potato.

12 ounces	low fat cream cheese/neufchâtel
4 Tbs	fresh chives or scallions, chopped
1 Tbs	water, room temperature
1/4 tsp	salt
1/8 tsp	white pepper
1 pinch	nutmeg

Procedure

- In a food processor, combine all ingredients and blend until smooth.
- Chill.

Yield: approximately 1½ cups

Harissa

This is a traditional North African hot paste without one ingredient that was in the first version I got to taste—hashish, since that is illegal in the USA. In much of Morocco using hashish in cooking is also not legal.

As a teenager I got to taste it made with hashish at my Moroccan Jewish friend Lawrence's house. The flavor was incredible, though there was not enough of the drug in the dish to do anything more than calm the burning in my throat from the spiciness of the hot peppers used.

If you do not want to make your own, jarred Harissa can be found in specialty food shops or on-line.

1 oz	dried hot red chiles, destemmed
2 cups	boiling water
1/2 Tbs	garlic minced
1/2 rd tsp	cumin
1/4 rd Tbs	kosher salt
1/4 rd Tbs	coriander
scant 1/4 cup	extra-virgin olive oil

Procedure

- Pour boiling water over the chile peppers. Let steep for 2 hours.
- Drain peppers and put in a food processor with all the other ingredients, EXCEPT the olive oil. As the processor runs, slowly add the oil. Result should be a paste.

Yield: approximately 1/2 cup

Pine Nut Gunk

I've never found a name for this luscious paste, so we just call it "Pine Nut Gunk".

It also acts as a thickening agent in any recipe.

1/4 cup	pine nuts
1 scant tsp	garlic, minced
1/2 tsp	saffron threads, packed

Procedure

- Put all in a food processor and blend until a paste. Scrape down sides as necessary.
- Refrigerate in a covered container for up to 2 months. Can be frozen.

Yield: approximately 1/4 cup

Seafood Paste

I have never seen a commercial product similar to this available in supermarkets or specialty food stores, though there is a version made for the food service industry available through Sysco and other purveyors.

Rated “Moderately Difficult,” due to the need to watch the heat level and stir frequently to prevent the paste from burning, or even browning. It is not difficult to prepare.

I use mostly shellfish in this recipe, but you can substitute any rich, flavorful fish as available.

2 ounces	shrimp, raw
2 ounces	lobster, raw
2 ounces	crab meat, raw or canned
2 ounces	tuna, raw
2 Tbs	Chardonnay wine
2 Tbs	water
1 Tbs	paprika
1/2 Tbs	celery leaves
1/2 Tbs	carrot, grated
1 tsp	canola oil
1/2 tsp	shallots, coarsely chopped
1/4 tsp	flour
1 each	garlic clove, crushed
1 pinch	salt
1 pinch	white pepper

Procedure

- Put all the ingredients into a food processor and make a thin paste.
- Place in a 10” sauté pan and cook on a very low flame, stirring frequently with a wooden spoon, until all the liquid is absorbed and you have a thick, dry-ish paste.
- Put through the food processor a second time, until finely minced.
- Paste can be refrigerated up to 2 weeks in a sealed container OR freeze in ice cube trays and then put into a freezer bag for up to 3 months.

Yield: approximately 1 cup

Moroccan Blackening Spices

I love Cajun blackened meats and fish. The first time I had Blackened Chicken it was obvious that using the same cooking technique, but with Moroccan/Algerian spices would be fantastic. This is my own special blend using the rules of traditional North African spice blends

Sumac, both whole and ground, can be found in specialty food stores or on-line.

1 rounded Tbs	cinnamon
1 Tbs	parsley flakes
1 Tbs	spearmint
1/2 rounded Tbs	black pepper
1/2 Tbs	paprika
1/2 Tbs	coriander, ground
1/2 Tbs	cardamom
1/2 Tbs	garlic powder
1 tsp	onion powder
1 tsp	turmeric
1 tsp	cumin, ground
1 tsp	salt
1/2 tsp	sumac, ground
1/2 tsp	allspice, ground
1/4 tsp	cayenne
1/4 tsp	nutmeg

Procedure

- Mix all ingredients together. Place in a sealed jar.

Yield: scant 1/2 cup

Salamanca Spice Mix

In addition to the Puerco Salamanca recipe, this spice mix can also be tossed with pork or lamb chunks, vegetables, and olive oil for a great kebab.

1 Tbs	curry powder
1/2 Tbs	thyme
2 tsp	paprika
2 tsp	cumin, ground
2 tsp	parsley flakes
1/4 tsp	red pepper flakes

Procedure

- Mix all ingredients together.

Yield: approximately 1/4 cup

Zarzuela Spices

Having your spice blends pre-made saves time and makes cooking much more fun. This blend will last a couple of months in a sealed jar at room temperature.

1/4 cup	almonds, ground
4 tsp	Hungarian paprika
4 tsp	thyme
4 tsp	crushed red pepper flakes

Procedure

- Mix together.

Yield: approximately 1/2 cup

Appendix: The Proper Handling of Raw Chicken & All Poultry

Most of us buy frozen chicken. After all it is a savings over fresh, and with the new Individually Quick Frozen (IQF) breasts and other pieces being extremely close to fresh, it makes for a tasty, safe and fast ingredient for many great dishes. More importantly, it is often a safer alternative as well. But chicken in any form is a case of food-poisoning in the making when mishandled. Eighty percent of all cases of food-poisoning occur from meals prepared in the home and chicken is the number one culprit. Contrary to most people's belief, many of the causes of food-poisoning do not show symptoms for up to thirty-six hours, which makes tracing which food had actually caused it difficult. The following rules will keep you and your family healthy and safe.

FROZEN CHICKEN: The ideal is to defrost chicken by pulling it the day before you plan on using it. Always place it in a bowl or pan large enough to hold the container or bag you purchased it in. Place this on the lowest shelf of your refrigerator—the drippings will contaminate any foods they touch, even in tiny amounts, and will get you sick if the food they drip on is eaten without cooking—e.g. fresh fruits, soda can tops. Also, you might not be able to see the drips and will transfer it to your hand, and then to other foods, eating utensils, the cloth you wipe your child's dirty face with, etc.

For a quick defrost you have two options.

- 1. DEFROSTING IN THE SINK:** Remove the chicken from the packaging you purchased it in. Put the meat in a bowl or container deep enough to submerge the chicken. Run the cold water tap continuously into the bowl until chicken is defrosted. NEVER use hot water; it will encourage rapid bacterial growth. Certain bacteria cause poisons to accumulate in the meats; killing them by cooking does not remove the cause of the illness.
- 2. DEFROSTING IN A MICROWAVE:** Remove the chicken from its packaging and put in a microwavable container with a cover. Use the defrost setting. Defrost until the chicken achieves an internal temperature of 140°F! **NOTE:** A good meat thermometer will ensure that everything you cook and serve will always be safe and healthful! If you defrost any meat using this method it should be cooked the rest of the way as soon as possible. More than a 10 minute lag between the time you defrost the chicken by microwave and when you place it in a preheated oven or on a hot barbecue will allow bacteria to grow at astonishing rates! ALWAYS cook microwave-defrosted chicken to an internal temperature of 165°F (or up to 175°F to kill avian flu)!

FRESH CHICKEN: Always make sure you place it in its original packaging inside a sealed bag or in a bowl on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator. Use within three days of purchase for the safest and freshest-tasting results. Remember, chicken drippings can contaminate other foods, the refrigerator shelves, your hands, etc.

HANDLING CHICKEN: Keep your chicken under refrigeration until right before seasoning, marinating or cooking. Many recipes can be adapted to using frozen chicken without defrosting if you just increase the baking time.

Remember that though the greatest bacterial growth occurs when the meat is between 90°F and 140°F, there is still some growth at 40°F or above—the main reason why you should never allow your groceries to ride around in your car for very long. Run all your other errands before you shop. The fresh chicken or other meats you bought were around 34°F when you put them in your cart. It does not take long for the chicken to reach the first critical bacterial growth temperature—only a six degree change.

If you are seasoning or marinating any meat for later cooking, place back in the refrigerator and treat as you would fresh chicken. Remember to wash your hands and prep surfaces thoroughly before going on to anything else (see Cleaning Up, below).

When barbecuing or frying, do not return the cooked chicken to a plate or bowl that held the raw. In fact, put nothing on such a plate, including other raw meats. Use a good thermometer whenever barbecuing or frying to make sure you have cooked your chicken to an acceptable temperature. Often, due to too-hot coals or frying oil the outside is burnt and the inside is raw. With fried chicken consider finishing it off in a preheated oven at 350°F.

A great barbecue trick is to bake your chicken in the sauce or marinade to at least 140°F and immediately finish it off on your grill. This will not only give it a full barbecued taste and time to absorb the seasonings and sauce, but will eliminate the tiresome wait for the chicken to finish cooking and any health concerns from under-cooked poultry.

Never stuff any chicken or poultry—it inhibits the meat from finishing cooking by becoming a barrier to the heat of your oven.

CLEANING UP: Always bleach your cutting board, knife, and any surface the raw chicken or its packaging and your chicken “slimed” hands have come in contact with before allowing any other item to come in contact with them—including other types of meat! A solution of 1 Tablespoon of bleach per quart of water is sufficient for this purpose—using more bleach is neither better for you nor the environment. Make sure your bleach solution remains in contact with the contaminated surfaces and items for a FULL minute before rinsing or washing with soap.

Wash your hands thoroughly for thirty seconds or more—this includes wrists, and above as necessary, and between your fingers. If you sing the “Happy Birthday to You” song through twice you will have achieved the proper amount of washing. Do your nails with a brush as needed.

Remember, if you have touched the phone, a dish-cloth or any other item before clean-up, these also need washing. Salmonellae and other bacteria can survive on any surface that has the correct conditions.

If you follow these guidelines you will always be an agent for continued good health. Your family, friends and your own body will thank you for it.

Appendix: Barbecue Safety

As the old saw has it, “Most food poisoning occurs in the home...” And barbecuing is one of the main culprits. We often make dangerous mistakes, like dropping raw foods on the grill with bare hands and not washing afterwards, or serving just-cooked meats on plates that formerly held raw, or eating the burnt parts of the chicken and then throwing the rest back over the fire to finish cooking. The health ill-effects these practices can incur are all preventable.

These days one can buy gel-and-alcohol-based hand sanitizers that require no water to work. “Washing” one’s hands has never been easier. Read the label on how to use these products properly.

Take your raw meats out on a distinctive platter. Have another platter with a different pattern for cooked items. Make sure all participants know the difference, and make the raw foods platter disappear into the sink or dishwasher the moment the last of the food goes on the grill.

Finally, learn how to use your barbecue properly. The most common mistakes are:

- Not **STARTING YOUR FIRE 35–45 MINUTES AHEAD** of desired cooking time. The coals should be gray and hot, but not so hot that you cremate the outside of food and leave the inside cool, partially cooked and growing germs.
- Not **PRECOOKING VERY THICK MEATS LIKE CHICKEN PARTS OR BRISKET OF BEEF AHEAD OF TIME**. Unless thick cuts like these are precooked, they’re almost guaranteed to be undercooked on the inside. I prefer to slow cook my chicken or brisket in the BBQ sauce I will be serving it in. A low oven will not overheat your home, and the meat will have absorbed maximum sauce flavor.
- Not **HAVING A SPRAY BOTTLE OF WATER TO KEEP FLAMES DOWN**. Fatty meats and oily sauces flame up very easily. A spray of water can douse the flames and prevent the meat from burning before it is thoroughly cooked. To prevent disease like avian-flu, an internal temperature of 175°F is required for all poultry; most other meats and fish are safe at 165°F.

While you’re at it, don’t forget to roast your corn and potatoes on the grill. Vegetables taste great this way. Only, remember to keep them from touching raw meats. And have a safe and healthy summer!

Index

A

- Aioli 87**
 - Harissa Aioli 87*
- almonds 72, 103**
- angel hair 45, 46**
- Antipasto di Pesce 56**
- apples 79**
 - Provençal Spiced Poached Apples 79*
- artichoke hearts 16, 48**
 - Artichoke Hearts with Lemon-Mint Dressing 16*
 - Shrimp Farfalle with Artichokes & Tomato 48*
- Artichoke Hearts with Lemon-Mint Dressing 16**
- Aztec Mousse 71**

B

- baguettes 74**
- Baked or Fried Polenta 78**
- Balsamic Vinaigrette 20, 56**
- Barbecue Safety 107**
- beef bones 92**
- Beef Broth 92**
- Beef Stock 92**
- beef tenderloin 62**
 - Beef Tips Cabrales 62*
- Beef Tips Cabrales 62**
- beets, fresh 17**
 - Lebanese Beet Salad 17*
- blackberry 59**
- Blackberry Balsamic Sauce 59**
- Blackberry-Basil Sauce 63**
 - Veal with Strawberries & Basil with Blackberry-Basil Sauce 63*
- blackberry preserves 63**
- blackening spice 101**
 - Moroccan Blackening Spices 101*

- blood orange 30, 50**
 - Blood Orange Chicken 50*
 - Cabrales Blue Cheese & Blood Oranges 30*
- Blood Orange Chicken 50**
- blood orange juice 21, 30, 50, 53**
- Blood Orange & Poppy Seed Dressing 21, 54**
- blueberries 25**
- bread 74, 75, 76**
 - Our Gluten Free Bread 76*
 - Pita Bread 75*
 - Whole Wheat Baguettes 74*
- Bride's Fingers 37**
- broth 92, 93, 94**
 - canned broth 95*
- butter 36, 37, 38, 66, 68, 69, 82**
 - Herbed Garlic Butter 82*
- button mushrooms 26, 27, 34, 45**

C

- Cabrales blue cheese 22, 30, 62**
 - Cabrales Blue Cheese & Blood Oranges 30*
 - Cabrales Blue Cheese Dressing 22*
- Cabrales Blue Cheese & Blood Oranges 30**
- Cabrales Blue Cheese Dressing 22, 62**
- canned broth 95**
- canola oil 40**
- capers 56**
- cappellini 45, 46**
 - Cappellini in Wild Mushroom Cream 45*
 - Cappellini with Chicken & Fresh Basil 46*
- Cappellini in Wild Mushroom Cream 45**
- Cappellini with Chicken & Fresh Basil 46**
- Carrot Cake 68**
- carrots 68, 92, 93, 94, 100**
- cavatappi pasta 47**
 - Pheasant Sausage with Cavatappi 47*
- Cheese Cigars 39**

cherries, sweet 69
Cherry Clafouti 69

Cherry Clafouti 69

chicken 27, 42, 46, 50, 51, 52, 53, 57, 93
Blood Orange Chicken 50
Cappellini with Chicken & Fresh Basil 46
Chicken & Fig Tagine 52
Chicken Marsala 51
Handling Raw Chicken 105
Moroccan Chicken Crêpe with Apples 42
Tunisian BBQ Chicken 53

Chicken Broth 27, 57, 93

Chicken & Fig Tagine 52

chicken livers 66
Portobello Mushroom-Liver Pâté 66

Chicken Marsala 51

Chicken Stock 27, 57, 93

chile, green 27, 33, 37
Green Chile Chicken & Rice 27

chile, red 98
Harissa 98

Chilled Blueberry Merlot Soup 25

Chive Shmeer 19, 31, 97

chocolate, semisweet 71

chocolate, white baker's 72

chorizo sausage 41, 57
Spanish Chorizo & Date Crêpe 41

clarified butter 10, 33, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 46, 50, 51, 66

cooking methods 7

cooking wine 13

cornichons 56

cous cous 60

crab meat 28, 100
Crab & Roasted Corn Bisque 28

Crab & Roasted Corn Bisque 28

cream cheese 38, 39, 68, 97

Cream of Portobello 26

Crème Fraîche 13, 60, 84
Lemon Crème Fraîche 85

crêpe 41, 42
Crêpes for Savory Dishes 40
Moroccan Chicken Crêpe with Apples 42
Spanish Chorizo & Date Crêpe 41

Crêpes for Savory Dishes 40

currants 68

cuts of meat & poultry 8

D

dairy products 9

dates 41

duck 54
Duck with Mandarin Oranges 54

Duck with Mandarin Oranges 54

E

eggs 33, 34, 38, 40, 44, 69, 70, 71, 72, 76

Eggs in Brandied Cream Sauce 34

equipment 7

F

farfalle pasta 48
Shrimp Farfalle with Artichokes & Tomato 48

feta cheese 31, 32, 38, 39
Feta-Stuffed Roasted Pepper with Preserved Lemon Sauce 31
Grilled Herbed Feta Cheese 32

flour 12

G

garlic 82
Herbed Garlic Butter 82

Gazpacho 24

ghee 10, 33, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 46, 50, 51, 66

Gluten Free Bread 76

grape leaves 32

Green Chile Chicken & Rice 27

Grilled Herbed Feta Cheese 32

Grilled Lamb Tenderloin with a Spicy Harissa, Roasted Pepper, Walnut, Pomegranate Relish
64

Grilled Mahi Mahi with Blackberry Balsamic Sauce 59

Grilled or Baked Polenta 31

Grilled Shrimp with Lavender & Mint
60

Grilled Stuffed Portobello Mushroom
19

H

Handling Raw Chicken 105

Harissa 13, 53, 60, 64, 87, 98

Harissa Aioli 42, 87

health & nutrition 6

Herbed Garlic Butter 32, 46, 48, 82

herbs, spices & seasonings 10
herbs 11

I

Italian sausage 47

L

lamb tenderloin 64

Grilled Lamb Tenderloin with a Spicy Harissa, Roasted Pepper, Walnut, Pomegranate Relish 64

lasagne

The Ultimate Four Cheese Lasagne 44

lavender 59, 60

Lebanese Beet Salad 17

Lemon Crème Fraîche 41, 85

lobster 100

M

mahi mahi 59

Grilled Mahi Mahi with Blackberry Balsamic Sauce 59

mandarin orange 54

Marinara Sauce 44, 47, 83

Mascarpone cheese 70

Mascarpone Cheesecake 70

Mascarpone Cheesecake 70

Mayonnaise 22, 86, 87

Mayonnaise in a Food Processor 86

Menemen 33

Moroccan Blackening Spices 42, 52, 101

Moroccan Chicken Crêpe with Apples 42

Moroccan Date & Orange Salad 18
mousse 71

Aztec Mousse 71

White Chocolate Amaretto Mousse 72

mozzarella cheese 44

mushroom 45, 47

Mushroom Pâté 45

O

oils & fats 10

P

Paella 57

Parmesan cheese 39, 44, 89

pâté 66

Portobello Mushroom-Liver Pâté 66

pecans 68

pheasant sausage 47

Pheasant Sausage with Cavatappi 47

Pheasant Sausage with Cavatappi 47

philosophy 5, 7

phyllo 36, 37, 38, 39

Shaping Phyllo Dough for Briouats 36

pignolia 54

pine nut 54, 89, 99

Pine Nut Gunk 99

Pine Nut Gunk 13, 52, 99

piñon 54

Pita Bread 75

polenta 78
Baked or Fried Polenta 78

pomegranate arils 64

pomegranate juice 64

pomegranate molasses 17

pork tenderloin 65
Puerco al Salamanca 65

portobello mushroom 19, 26, 45, 66
Grilled Stuffed Portobello Mushroom 19
Portobello Mushroom-Liver Pâté 66

Portobello Mushroom-Liver Pâté 66

Preserved Lemons 13, 52, 88, 96
Preserved Lemon Sauce 88

Preserved Lemon Sauce 31, 60, 88
Feta-Stuffed Roasted Pepper with Preserved Lemon Sauce 31

Provençal Apples 41, 42
Moroccan Chicken Crêpe with Apples 42

Provençal Spiced Poached Apples 79

provolone cheese 44

Puerco al Salamanca 65

R

raisins 68

Reduction 46, 50, 51, 52, 58, 65, 88, 95

ricotta cheese 44

roasted diced tomatoes 58

Roasted Red Pepper Pesto 19, 89

S

safety
Barbecue Safety 107
Handling Raw Chicken 105

saffron 57, 99

Salamanca Spice Mix 65, 102

seafood 56, 57, 58
Antipasto di Pesce 56
Paella 57
Zarzuela 58

Seafood Paste 13, 28, 58, 88, 100

Shaping Phyllo Dough for Briouats 36

shrimp 37, 48, 60, 100
Grilled Shrimp with Lavender & Mint 60
Shrimp Farfalle with Artichokes & Tomato 48

Shrimp Farfalle with Artichokes & Tomato 48

sour cream 22

Spanish Chorizo & Date Crêpe 41

specialty & scratch items 13

Spicy Harissa, Roasted Pepper, Walnut, Pomegranate Relish 64
Grilled Lamb Tenderloin with a Spicy Harissa, Roasted Pepper, Walnut, Pomegranate Relish 64

stock 92, 93, 94

strawberries 63

sweeteners 12

T

tuna 100

Tunisian BBQ Chicken 53

Tunisian BBQ Sauce 53

Tzatziki à la Shevek 90

U

Ultimate Four Cheese Lasagne 44

V

veal cutlet 63
Veal with Strawberries & Basil with Blackberry-Basil Sauce 63

Veal with Strawberries & Basil with Blackberry-Basil Sauce 63

Vegetable Broth 78, 94

Vegetable Stock 78, 94

W

walnut 64

White Chocolate Amaretto Mousse
72

Whole Wheat Baguettes 74

wild mushroom 45

Cappellini in Wild Mushroom Cream 45

wine 13

cooking wine 13

Y

yogurt 90

Tzatziki à la Shevek 90

Z

Zarzuela 58

Zarzuela Spices 103