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"We believe fresh, good food not only feeds the body, but the mind and spirit as well."

Reynaldo Hernandez,
Co-Founder and VP,
Epicurean Group



A Menu to Bridge the Seasons

Harvest in Northern California is a special time of year for both farmers and cooks. While we are all saying a fond farewell to summer fruits and vegetables, we are welcoming in the new season, which provides us with a bounty of fall vegetables and fruits to delight the palate. Cooking with fresh, local food attunes our bodies and our minds to the changing seasons in a way that cooking prepared foods never can.

The recipes I've created here are a "bridge" - in other words, they provide a transition from summer to fall, easing you into autumn as the weather cools. They include both summer and winter vegetables that are available now, such as the last of those delicious summer tomatoes, paired with dried organic cranberry beans and with Lost Coast Ranch Beef Cheeks. Fall arrives with the first Brussels Sprouts and Half Moon Bay Pumpkin for my Pots de Crème recipe.

Enjoy the bounty and blessings of harvest time. Cook something seasonal, and support your local farmers and ranchers!

—**Chef Rey Hernandez**, Co-Founder and VP, Epicurean Group

FALL MENU

Serves 8

Organic Cranberry Bean Soup with Saffron

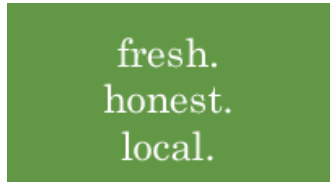
Muzzi Farms Greens with Brussels Sprouts, Aged Balsamic Vinaigrette and Toasted Flax Seed

Lost Coast Ranch Beef Cheeks with Heirloom Tomatoes and Root Vegetables, Coke Farms Spicy Broccoli and Stove-Top Yukon Gold Potatoes

Half Moon Bay Pumpkin Pots de Crème with Bourbon Maple Cream Topping



photo: www.chowtownstudios.com



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Organic Cranberry Bean Soup with Saffron

4 cups dry organic cranberry beans, soaked overnight and drained*
8 cups vegetable stock
2 large ripe tomatoes, coarsely chopped
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 small yellow onion, peeled and chopped coarsely
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1/2 teaspoon saffron threads, crushed
1 teaspoon ground cumin
Kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper
4 ounces Queso Cotija
1/2 cup cilantro leaves, washed and drained.

** Epicurean Tip: Dried Beans - Two Ways to Eliminate the Gas*

1. In a nonreactive container, cover dry beans with cold water at a ratio of 2:1. They can be left on the counter or in the refrigerator overnight, depending on the weather. Drain all water and cook in fresh water.

2. Place beans in a pot with cold water at a ratio of 2:1. Bring to a boil, turn off the heat and let sit on the stove for 1 hour. Drain the water and refill with fresh water to cook.

Directions:

Place beans and vegetable stock in a large soup pot and boil*. Drop to a soft boil and cook until tender, about 45 minutes. Set aside and keep warm.

Place tomatoes, garlic and onion in a food processor and puree until smooth.

In another large soup pot, heat oil until it shimmers and slowly add the tomato and onion mixture. Cook over medium heat until almost dry. Slowly add the beans and their cooking liquid, saffron and cumin into the tomato and onion mixture. Bring to a boil and then drop to a soft boil. Cook until beans are very tender and starting to break up. Season to taste with Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper.

To serve:

Ladle soup into 8 bowls and top with Queso Cotija and cilantro leaves. Serve immediately.

** Epicurean Tip: Don't Stir the Beans!*

Never stir beans while cooking. Agitation with a spoon will cause the skins to separate from the bean. These skins will settle to the bottom and may burn before the beans are cooked. Let the action of a "soft boil" or "slow rolling boil" work to keep the beans stirred.

Muzzi Farms Greens with Brussels Sprouts, Aged Balsamic Vinaigrette and Toasted Flax Seed

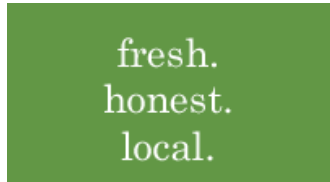
1/2 pound arugula
2 heads of radicchio, leaves washed, dried and torn into bite-size pieces
1 pound of Brussels sprouts, leaves separated, washed and drained
2 Hass avocados, deseeded and cut into strips
1/2 cup of golden flax seed, toasted

For the dressing:

2 tablespoons aged balsamic vinegar
1 shallot, chopped finely
2 ounces extra virgin olive oil
2 ounces flax seed oil
Kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper

Directions:

Put the vinegar and shallot in a nonreactive bowl. Drizzle oil into the bowl while whisking until all is incorporated. Add salt and pepper as needed.



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To serve:

Toss the arugula, radicchio and Brussels sprouts with the dressing and divide onto 8 plates. Place avocado slices over the greens. Sprinkle the flax seed over each salad. Serve immediately.

Lost Coast Ranch Beef Cheeks with Heirloom Tomatoes and Root Vegetables

8 12-ounce beef cheeks, trimmed
Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper
4 ounces extra virgin olive oil, divided
2 medium red onions, cut to 1-inch dice
2 medium celery roots, peeled and cut to 1-inch dice
4 parsnips, peeled and cut to 1-inch dice
4 cloves garlic, crushed and chopped
1 teaspoon wasabi powder
3 cups beef stock
1 cups red wine
2 pounds ripe heirloom tomatoes
1/2 cup sour cream
4 tablespoons chopped Italian parsley

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees

Wash and pat dry the beef cheeks. Season with salt and pepper. Heat olive oil in a large skillet (do this in batches and reserve 1 ounce of oil) until it shimmers. Add beef cheeks to pan, but do not crowd. Brown the beef on all sides. Remove from pan and set aside. Repeat for all beef.

Drain excess oil from skillet and add reserved olive oil. Heat to a shimmer then add onion, celery root, parsnip and garlic. Sauté over low heat until al dente, about 8 to 10 minutes. Add wasabi, beef stock and red wine. Scrape any brown bits on the bottom of the pan. Add tomatoes and season with salt and pepper. Remove from heat. Arrange beef in a large roasting pan on top of the stove. Add tomato stock mixture and bring to a boil. Cover the pan and place in oven. Cook for 2 to 3 hours until beef is fork-tender.

To serve:

Rest beef for 20 minutes, then place 1 piece on each of 8 plates. Add salt and pepper, as needed, to sauce. Stir sour cream into sauce and pour over the beef. Sprinkle parsley over each plate.

Coke Farms Spicy Broccoli

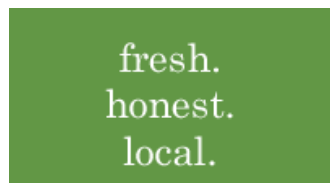
2 pounds broccoli florets
2 ounces extra virgin olive oil
4 fresh Serrano chiles, cut into round slices on the bias
2 shallots, peeled and julienne cut
Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper
Zest from one lemon*

Directions:

Steam broccoli until al dente. Remove from steamer and hold. In a large sauté pan, heat olive oil over medium-high heat until oil shimmers. Add the chiles and shallots and cook until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Add broccoli and stir together until heated through. Add salt and pepper and remove from heat. Stir in lemon zest and serve immediately.

**Epicurean Tip: No Zester? No Problem!*

In a pinch, you can use a vegetable peeler to carefully skin the citrus fruit, being careful not to include the bitter white pith beneath the skin. You can then julienne and chop the peel.



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Stove-Top Yukon Gold Potatoes

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 each white onion peeled and julienne cut
4 each garlic cloves, crushed and chopped
2 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, scrubbed, dried and cut in 1/2 inch rounds
1 1/2 cups fresh vegetable stock
Kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leave, chopped coarsely

Directions:

Heat oil in a sauté pan until shimmering. Add onions and garlic and cook until just starting to brown. Add potatoes and toss to coat. Add stock and season with salt and pepper. Over high heat, bring to a boil and then drop to a slow simmer. Cover and cook until potatoes are tender, about 25 to 30 minutes. Leave uncovered over very low heat and sprinkle with thyme. Continue to cook until almost dry. Adjust salt and pepper as needed. Keep warm or serve immediately.

Half Moon Bay Pumpkin Pots de Crème with Bourbon Maple Cream Topping

1 3/4 cups whipping cream
1 1/2 cups whole milk
1/2 cup evaporated cane juice
Pinch of Kosher salt
Zest from one orange
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon fresh grated nutmeg
10 egg yolks
1 cup pumpkin puree

Directions:

Preheat oven to 300 degrees

In a nonreactive sauce pan, over medium-low heat, add the cream, milk, cane juice, salt, zest, cinnamon and nutmeg. Bring to a slow simmer. Cook for 2 minutes, then strain into a clean saucepan. In a nonreactive mixing bowl add the egg yolks and pumpkin puree and whip until well blended. Continue to whip the egg pumpkin mix and slowly pour in the warm cream mix.

Place 8 each 5 to 6 ounce ramekins in a roasting pan large enough so that they do not touch each other. Divide the custard evenly among them. Pour boiling water into the roasting pan until it reaches half way up the side of the ramekins. Place in the preheated oven and bake for 30 to 40 minutes and the custard is just set. Remove the ramekins from the water and set on a cooling rack. Let cool completely to room temperature then wrap and refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight.

For the Topping:

1 1/4 cup whipping cream
3 tablespoons bourbon
2 tablespoons pure maple syrup

In a chilled nonreactive bowl mix the whipping cream and bourbon. Start to whip the cream and, as the volume grows, drizzle in the syrup until all is incorporated. Whip to soft peaks.

To serve:

Place one good dollop of the whipped cream on each Pots de Crème and serve immediately.