

SPRING 2013

The days are lengthening and the sky is brightening. The unique clarity of California light sparkles on the bright green of the hills and the new growth, buds and flowers of early spring.

The first day of spring, March 20, celebrates the vernal equinox, when days and nights are both 12 hours long. On this day, the sun rises due east and sets due west.

With these longer, warmer days comes a lighter fare. Our menu showcases fish and early vegetables, greens and a light strawberry and Meyer lemon meringue pie - just the kind of recipes to make you grateful to be here, on the West Coast, in springtime.

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

MENU

Serves 8

Spring Vegetables in Broth

*Red Butter Lettuce with Microgreens,
Red Onions and Orange Tarragon Vinaigrette*

*Almond-Crusted California Halibut
with Asparagus and Morel Mushrooms*

Strawberry and Meyer Lemon Meringue Pie



Spring Vegetables in Broth



For the Broth:

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
2 yellow onions, peeled and sliced thick
1/2 bunch celery, cleaned and cut large dice
2 leeks, cleaned and cut into large dice
4 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
2 quarts cold water
All trimmings from vegetables prepped for garnish (excluding fennel stalks)*
1 sachet (cheesecloth bundle) of 1/4 bunch oregano, 1/4 bunch thyme and
1 6-inch piece Parmesan cheese rind
Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper

** Epicurean Tip: Savory Stocks*

To enrich a stock, use vegetable trimmings - such as rinsed pea shells, parsley stems and celery tops. Save and freeze Parmesan cheese rinds and add them to the stock.

Directions:

Heat oil in stockpot. Add onions, celery, leeks and garlic and cook until onions are translucent. Add water and sachet and bring to a boil. Drop heat to a low simmer and cook for 2 to 4 hours. Strain and season with kosher salt and fresh-cracked pepper, to taste. Keep warm.

For the Garnish:

1 pound English peas in shell
1 pound fava beans in shell
2 fennel bulbs, cut into 2-inch by 1/4-inch sticks
1/2 pound carrots peeled and cut in 2-inch by 1/4-inch sticks
8 each red and white pearl onions
24 sugar snap peas
1/2 bunch Italian parsley, leaves only
Extra virgin olive oil

Directions:

Preheat oven to 150°.
Bring a stockpot with heavily salted water to boil.

Shell peas and set aside.

Shell fava beans, cook for 2 minutes in boiling water, shock in ice water, drain, peel skin and set aside. Cook carrots in boiling water to al dente*, shock in ice water, drain and set aside. Cook pearl onions for 2 minutes in boiling water, shock in ice water, drain, peel, cut in half and set aside. Cook snap peas in boiling water for 15 seconds, shock in ice water, drain and set aside. Hold all garnish at room temperature until ready to serve.

To serve:

Distribute cooked vegetables evenly in 8 bowls. Bring broth to a boil, then distribute evenly into bowls. Place bowls in preheated oven for 15 minutes before serving. Use oven mitts to set bowls in place at the table, garnish with parsley leaves and drizzle each bowl with 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil.

** Epicurean Tip: Al Dente:*

Al dente is an Italian phrase that translates as "to the tooth." Al dente means to cook something - pasta, vegetables, etc. - firm to the bite.



Red Butter Lettuce with Microgreens, Red Onions and Orange Tarragon Vinaigrette

2 heads red butter lettuce washed, drained and torn into bite-size pieces
1 small red onion, peeled and sliced in thin slices*
1 1/2 cups microgreens washed and drained
1 cup fresh-squeezed orange juice
1 sprig tarragon
2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon garlic, minced finely
1/2 cup grapeseed oil
Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper

** Epicurean Tip: Taming Raw Onions*

Some stomachs are sensitive to the "bite" of raw onions. Tame them by soaking the slices in a bowl of cool water for a few minutes. Squeeze the water from the onions and replace in fresh water. Repeat two to three times. Drain, and dry onions with a clean cloth.

Directions:

Place lettuce and red onions in a salad bowl and season with salt and pepper. Set aside while dressing is made.

Place orange juice and tarragon in a small pot and bring to a boil over high heat. Lower heat to a slow simmer and reduce by half. Remove the tarragon sprig and place juice in refrigerator to chill. When juice is chilled, place in a stainless steel bowl with all ingredients except for oil. Slowly drizzle oil into bowl while whisking ingredients until incorporated. Add salt and pepper to taste and set aside.

To serve:

Toss butter lettuce and red onion with vinaigrette. Divide evenly on 8 plates and garnish with microgreens. Serve immediately.

Almond-Crusted California Halibut with Asparagus and Morel Mushrooms

8 each 6-ounce California halibut filets
1 cup blanched sliced almonds, chopped finely
2 ounces extra virgin olive oil
4 tablespoons unsalted butter
Kosher salt and fresh-ground pepper

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Season fish with salt and pepper and hold in refrigerator while asparagus and morels are prepared.

For the Asparagus:

4 pounds asparagus, cut into 3-inch tips (reserve stems)
2 tablespoons unsalted butter

Directions:

Bring large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the asparagus and cook until just tender. Remove from pot and shock in ice water until cool. Drain and set aside.



For the Asparagus Sauce:

3 tablespoons unsalted butter
3 shallots, peeled and sliced
4 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
Reserved asparagus stems
1/2 cup white wine
3 cups vegetable stock
1 bay leaf
1 sprig fresh thyme
Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper

Directions:

In a sauté pan, melt butter and heat to just foaming. Add shallots and garlic, and cook until translucent. Add asparagus stems and cook for 2 to 3 minutes. Deglaze with white wine and reduce by half. Add stock, bay leaf and thyme and simmer until asparagus is tender. Place in blender and puree until smooth. Strain through a fine strainer into a saucepan and keep warm.

For the Morel Mushrooms:

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
4 cloves garlic peeled, crushed and minced
2 sprigs fresh thyme
1 pound fresh morel mushrooms
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
Kosher salt, fresh ground pepper

Directions:

Clean fresh morels with a brush to remove dirt. Place in a bowl of salted water for 2 minutes. Remove and place in bowl of fresh water for 1 minute, stir, drain and pat dry. Cut in half and place in a strainer lined with paper towels.

In sauté pan, heat olive oil, add garlic and thyme and cook until translucent. Add mushrooms and cook for 5 to 7 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, add the butter and toss to coat. Remove from heat and cover to keep warm.

For the Halibut:

Remove halibut filets from refrigerator. Press one side of the halibut into the chopped almonds. Heat olive oil in sauté pan and sear the fish, almond side first, until almonds are browned. Turn the fish onto a baking platter. Repeat until all fish is in platter. Place the platter into the oven and cook 6 to 8 minutes until fish is flaky to the touch. Remove from oven.

Place dinner plates in oven to warm.

Melt butter in sauté pan and heat until foaming. Baste fish with the butter and cover to keep warm.

To serve:

Heat asparagus sauce, add asparagus tips and toss together until tips are warmed. Strain sauce onto warm dinner plates and place the halibut in center of plate. Divide the asparagus tips and the morel mushrooms evenly among the 8 plates and serve.



Strawberry and Meyer Lemon Meringue Pie

For the Pie Shell:

- 2 3/4 cups all purpose flour
- 16 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut in 1-inch cubes
- 1/4 cup evaporated cane juice
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups whole milk

Heat oven to 350 degrees

Combine flour, butter, cane juice and salt in an electric mixer with a paddle. Mix at medium speed until butter is evenly distributed. Add milk and mix until just combined. Gather dough into a ball, wrap in plastic and refrigerate for 2 hours or overnight.

Dust a work surface with flour. Butter the inside of a pie pan and set aside. Roll out crust dough to an even circle to fit the pie pan. Shape dough circle into the buttered pie pan.

Cut a circle of parchment paper (or aluminum foil) to fit the pie pan and place it on top of the crust. Fill the crust with pie weights* and bake until golden, about 25 minutes. Remove the pie crust from the oven. Remove weights and parchment paper and cool crust on rack to room temperature.

** Epicurean Tip: No Pie Weights? No Problem!*

Unless you are a professional baker, you probably don't have pie weights in your kitchen. For an inexpensive and readily accessible substitute, use lentils, rice or beans. After baking the crust, remove your "pie weights" and store them in a plastic zip-lock bag for reuse.

For the Filling:

- 1 cup evaporated cane juice
- 3 large eggs
- 2 large egg yolks
- 1 cup fresh Meyer lemon juice
- 1/4 cup cornstarch
- 1/2 vanilla bean
- 1/3 cup crème fraîche
- 1/2 pint fresh strawberries, washed, stemmed, dried and sliced

Directions:

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

In an electric mixer with whip attachment, add 1/2 cup cane juice, egg and yolks. Whip at medium speed until smooth. Set aside.

Place second 1/2 cup of cane juice, lemon juice, cornstarch and vanilla bean in a saucepan, stir and bring to a boil. Lower to a simmer.

Slowly temper juice blend into egg mixture: add 1/4 cup to egg mixture while mixer is at medium speed. Add another 1/4 cup of juice to egg mixture. Then, add all of egg mixture to saucepan with remaining juice blend. Continue to cook at a simmer, while whisking, until the mixture



thickens. Remove from heat and strain through a fine strainer. Cool at room temperature for 10 minutes. Fold in crème fraîche and berries. Pour mixture into prebaked pie shell and bake for 20 minutes or until the mixture is set.

For the meringue:

5 large egg whites

1/4 cup evaporated cane juice

1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar

1/4 cup water

Directions:

Whip egg whites in an electric mixer at high speed to soft peaks. Set aside.

In a saucepan with a lid, heat cane juice, cream of tartar and water, covered, to 230 degrees (use a candy thermometer) over medium heat.

Set electric mixer to low and gradually add cane syrup to egg whites until all is incorporated. Use a piping bag with a plain or star tip to top the pie with the meringue.

The topping can be browned by placing the pie briefly under the broiler or by using a culinary torch held at a distance. Be careful not to burn.