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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



Grilled to Perfection

Ah, summer! It's a wonderful time of year to relax. The weather is perfect for grilling and for casual dinners that slowly unfold over deliciously long evenings. I love to get creative using the healthy food grown and raised by our sustainable farm partners. It brings me great pleasure to share these recipes with friends and family and, sometimes, introduce them to new flavors and cooking techniques along the way.

I often grill in the summer, which keeps the heat out of my kitchen and house. My recipe for Grill-Roasted Tara Firma Farms Pork Shoulder with Chimichurri uses a common chef's technique to keep the roast tender and moist. It's easy to achieve spectacular results, every time, and it's the perfect party meal to honor your father, celebrate your graduate or just enjoy a cool summer evening for no special reason at all.

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

SUMMER MENU

Serves 8

Chilled Jacob's Farm Heirloom Tomato Soup

Charred Golden and Red Cherry Tomatoes with Cypress Grove Goat Cheese over Coke Farms Little Gem Lettuce with Dill Vinaigrette

Grill-Roasted Tara Firma Farms Pork Shoulder with Chimichurri, Fresh Corn and Polenta Cakes and Sautéed Baby Squash

Crepes with Watsonville Olallieberry Compote, Burnt Honey and Toasted Almonds



photo: www.chowtownstudios.com



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Chilled Jacob's Farm Heirloom Tomato Soup

4 pounds heirloom tomatoes
2 chipotle adobo peppers, seeded
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 medium red onion, diced
6 garlic cloves, sliced
4 ounces extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons seasoned rice vinegar
Kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper

Directions:

Char half of the tomatoes over hot coals on the grill or over an open flame until well-blistered and tender. Hold in a nonreactive bowl. Dice the rest of the tomatoes and place in same bowl with chipotle peppers and tomato paste. Heat 1 ounce of the olive oil in a medium sauté pan until it shimmers. Add the garlic and onions and cook while stirring until golden brown. Remove from heat and add to the tomatoes. With an immersion blender or a food processor, purée all ingredients to a smooth consistency. Pass through a fine sieve and discard the solids. Refrigerate the tomato mixture overnight.

To serve:

Stir mixture well and add kosher salt to taste. Ladle soup into 8 bowls and drizzle the rest of the olive oil over each bowl. Top with fresh ground pepper and serve immediately.

Charred Golden and Red Cherry Tomatoes with Cypress Grove Goat Cheese over Coke Farms Little Gem Lettuce with Dill Vinaigrette

18 (approximately 1 1/2 pints) golden cherry tomatoes, cut in half
1/4 cup fresh oregano, chopped
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil, divided
2 cucumbers, peeled, seeded and sliced on the bias
8 heads Little Gem lettuce, washed and leaves torn by hand
1 cup goat cheese, grated

Directions:

Toss the cherry tomatoes with the oregano and half of the olive oil. Season with kosher salt and fresh ground pepper.

Heat the remaining olive oil in a large sauté pan until it shimmers. Place the tomatoes in the pan cut side down. Leave tomatoes on the heat until a dark char is achieved. Remove from the pan and hold in a plate with the char side up.

For the Dill Vinaigrette:

1/3 cup fresh chopped dill
1/4 cup sherry wine vinegar 1 shallot, chopped fine
4 ounces extra virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper

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

To serve:

Toss the lettuce with the dressing and divide onto 8 plates. Place the tomatoes and cucumbers on top of the greens and then top with the goat cheese. Serve immediately.

Grill-Roasted* Tara Firma Farms Pork Shoulder with Chimichurri, Fresh Corn and Polenta Cakes and Sautéed Baby Squash

4 pounds of pork shoulder, butterflied and pounded to one-inch thickness
Kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper
1/2 bunch fresh rosemary, chopped fine
1 teaspoon fennel seed
6 cloves fresh garlic, chopped coarse



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Directions:

Spread the pork roast out on a board and season with salt and pepper. Spread the rest of the ingredients evenly over the roast. Roll the roast like a jellyroll, ingredients inside and tie with butcher twine at 1- to 2-inch intervals.

Heat coals in the grill until completely white and pile on one side of the grill. Place a small pan of water on the opposite side of the coals. Place the grate over the coals and water, then place the roast over the water. Put the cover on the grill with the vent over the roast. Open the vent to its widest to allow maximum airflow. Every 30 minutes turn the roast so that the other side is exposed to the heat. Cook for 2 to 2 1/2 hours or until it reaches a meat thermometer reading of 155 degrees in the center of the roast. Close all vents to the grill to keep warm until ready to serve.

Epicurean Tip: Light Your (Grill) Fire!

Avoid using lighter fluid to start your coals; it could add an unwanted taste to anything you grill. Better options:

- 1. Use a Chimney. This tool takes some practice, but once you figure how many sheets of old newspaper it takes to get your charcoals started, it is very efficient.*
- 2. Use an electric starter. Several types are available - one type uses an electronically heated coil that you place in your grill and cover with charcoal. Another type, which resembles a hair drier, uses electronically heated coils and a fan that blows an airstream heated to 1256 degrees Fahrenheit to fire up your coals. Another similar lighter incorporates batteries and butane to create a 2600 degree Fahrenheit airstream.*
- 3. Use a propane starter. Smoker-cooker gurus are using propane fire starters that can deliver 3000 degree Fahrenheit flames to get their coals going. This tool is for those who just can't wait to start grilling or smoking!*

For the Chimichurri:

- 1/4 cup water
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- 1 1/2 cup Italian parsley leaves, chopped fine
- 6 garlic cloves, chopped fine
- 1/4 teaspoon chili flakes
- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

Bring water to a boil in a small saucepan. Add salt and stir until cooled. Add vinegar, parsley, garlic cloves and chili flakes. Slowly drizzle in oil until all is incorporated. Set aside and hold at room temperature.

To serve:

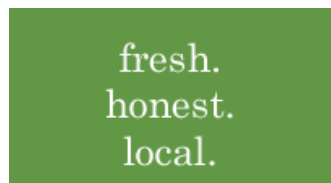
Rest pork for 20 minutes on a cutting board. Cut into 1-inch slices and place on plates. Serve chimichurri on the side.

Fresh Corn and Polenta Cakes

- 3 cups chicken stock
- 3/4 cup polenta
- 1/2 medium red onion diced
- 1 small red bell pepper diced
- 2 fresh ears of corn, shucked, kernels scraped on a mandolin, "corn milk" reserved
- 2 ounces extra virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper
- 3 ounces shredded Parmesan cheese

Directions:

Heat stock in a saucepan. Add polenta and bring to a boil while stirring. Drop to a simmer and cook for 15 to 20 minutes until polenta is tender. Add onions and peppers and keep a low simmering heat. Keep covered. Stir polenta every few minutes to keep a consistency of mashed potatoes. Add stock if necessary. Add corn kernels and corn milk to polenta and continue to stir every few minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste.



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Place 2 ounces of olive oil in a nonstick pan or cast iron griddle and heat over medium setting. Remove polenta from heat and stir in Parmesan cheese. Use a large scoop or spoon to place polenta servings on hot griddle. Cook until polenta is browned on one side, then flip. Arrange polenta cakes on a platter and keep warm until serving.

Sautéed Baby Squash

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 pounds baby Patty Pan or Sunburst squash, washed and trimmed
1/2 bunch Italian parsley leaves, chopped
Kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper

Directions:

Heat oil in a sauté pan until shimmering. Add squash and sauté for 5 to 8 minutes until tender. Season with salt and pepper to taste and toss with fresh parsley. Serve immediately.

Crepes with Watsonville Olallieberry Compote, Burnt Honey and Toasted Almonds

3 large eggs
1 1/2 cups whole milk
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
2 tablespoons evaporated cane juice
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
3 ounces unsalted butter, melted

Directions:

Mix all ingredients, except butter, in a blender until a smooth batter is achieved. Heat a 9-inch crepe pan over medium high heat. Brush the pan with the melted butter and pour 2 ounces of batter into the pan. Spread the batter by swirling the pan until the bottom is coated. Cook until the crepe is browned. Use a spatula to pick up one side of the crepe, grab it with your fingers and flip the crepe. Cook for 30 seconds more and then place crepe on a platter. Continue to cook crepes until batter is finished. Layer on a platter with wax paper in between. Keep at room temperature.

For the Compote:

3 cups fresh olallieberries
3 ounces water
3 tablespoons evaporated cane juice
1 teaspoon lemon juice

Place 1/2 the berries in a small sauce pan with the water and cane juice. Cook over medium heat until berries just begin to boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and cool for 5 minutes before adding rest of berries and lemon juice. Stir together and hold at room temperature for service.

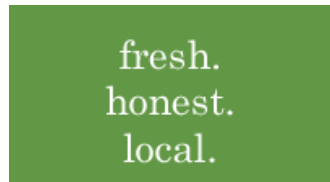
For the Burnt Honey:

1/2 cup honey
1 cup room temperature whipping cream

In a small saucepan heat honey, stirring constantly, until you see the faintest sign of smoke. Remove from heat and slowly stir in cream to a smooth consistency.

For the Toasted Almonds:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees
Spread 1 1/2 cups almond slices evenly on a sheet pan and place on the middle shelf of the oven. Leave for 10-15 minutes or until they are golden brown. Remove from oven and transfer immediately to a ceramic bowl.



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To serve:

Place one crepe on each of 8 dessert plates. Spoon the berries evenly onto each crepe. Fold in quarters or roll. Drizzle with burnt honey and top with toasted almonds. Serve immediately.

**Epicurean Tip: Toasting Nuts and Seeds*

Here are two techniques to toast nuts and seeds:

1. The most convenient way to toast any nut or seed is to preheat the oven to 375, spread the nuts on a sheet pan and place in the oven. Check them every 5 minutes, stirring each time for an even toast. Remove them from the oven when they reach desired toast and transfer them immediately to another container.

2. They may also be toasted in a preheated, dry, sauté pan. Heat the pan over medium-high heat and add the nuts. Start to stir, toss and sauté the nuts immediately. When they become golden and fragrant, transfer them immediately to another container to stop the cooking.

Important Note: If you leave the nuts in the hot pan, the oils in the nut will continue to conduct heat and can scorch the nut. When the nuts or seeds are toasted, transfer them immediately to another container to stop the cooking.