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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



Summertime. To me, it means warm sun, soft breezes and lazy Saturday strolls. Relaxing over casual dinners with my family and friends.

One of my favorite places to stroll on a weekend morning is among the booths at my local farmers' market. I meander through the booths, chatting with farmer friends, tasting fresh, organic produce and fruits, and picking up herbs, sustainable seafood and grass-fed meats for my menus in the week ahead.

A relaxing afternoon for me is to create a menu from my market bounty. My family and friends often join me in the kitchen for these prep parties. After a few hours, our meal is prepared and the table is laid. With the late-afternoon breeze freshening the air, we gather together at the table and enjoy the fruits of our labor and of this wonderful season.

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

SUMMER MENU

Serves 8

Cool Organic Capay Farms Tomato Soup with Crème Fraiche

Twin Palms Ranch Red Leaf Lettuce with Watercress, Heirloom Tomatoes and Roasted Red Bell Pepper Vinaigrette

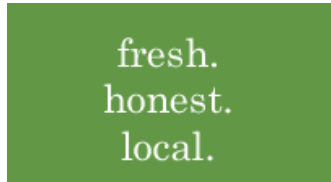
Rosemary Roasted Rack of Martin Emigh Ranch Free-range Lamb with Pan-Seared Peaches, Sautéed Romano Beans and Toasted Orzo "Risotto"

Mixed Swanton Berry Farms Berries and Rhubarb Fool with Vanilla Bean Cream



Cool Tomato Soup with Crème Fraiche

3 ounces extra virgin olive oil
4 medium carrots, peeled and diced
4 shallots, peeled and finely chopped
4 cups vegetable stock
4 tablespoons tomato paste



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3 cups fresh squeezed orange juice
1/2 cup basil, chopped
2 tablespoons agave syrup
10 ripe organic Roma tomatoes, cored and diced
Kosher salt and fresh cracked pepper
1 cup crème fraiche

Directions:

In a saucepan, heat oil over medium heat until oil shimmers. Add carrots and shallots and cook while stirring until carrots are tender. Add stock, tomato paste, orange juice and Roma tomatoes. Bring all to a boil, reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, for 20 minutes.

Remove from heat, add agave syrup and puree to a smooth consistency. Season with kosher salt and fresh cracked pepper to taste and add basil. Cool to room temperature. Ladle into soup bowls and garnish with a dollop of crème fraiche.

Red Leaf Lettuce with Watercress, Heirloom Tomatoes and Roasted Red Bell Pepper Vinaigrette

For the Vinaigrette:

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
2 red bell peppers, fire-roasted, peeled, seeded and diced small
2 cloves fresh peeled garlic, pressed and minced
3 tablespoons Italian parsley, rinsed and chopped coarsely
Kosher salt and fresh cracked pepper

Place vinegar, bell peppers, garlic and parsley in a non-reactive bowl. Drizzle oil into mixture while whipping constantly, until all oil is incorporated. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Set aside.

For the Salad:

1 head red leaf lettuce, washed, drained and torn into bite-sized pieces
1 bunch watercress, sprigs separated from large stems, then washed and drained
4 medium organic heirloom tomatoes, washed, core removed and tomatoes cut into 1/4 inch slices
2 cucumbers, peeled, seeded and cut on the bias
1/2 cup pistachios, shelled and lightly crushed
Kosher salt and fresh cracked pepper

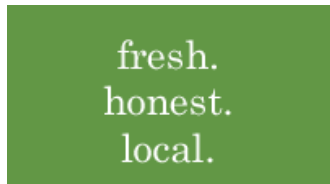
To serve:

Arrange sliced tomatoes on salad plates and season with salt and pepper, set aside. In a salad bowl, add lettuce, watercress and cucumbers. Season with salt and pepper and let rest for 10 minutes. Add vinaigrette and toss together until lettuce is well coated. Portion onto plates on top of sliced heirloom tomatoes. Garnish with pistachios.

Rosemary Roasted Rack of Lamb with Pan-seared Masumoto Farm Peaches, Sautéed Romano Beans and Toasted Orzo "Risotto"

For the Lamb:

4 racks of lamb, French-cut* and trimmed
2 tablespoons rosemary, finely chopped
4 cloves fresh garlic, peeled, pressed and finely minced
8 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and fresh cracked pepper



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Directions:
Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Mix 4 tablespoons oil with rosemary and garlic. Season lamb with salt and pepper then rub with rosemary mixture. Place in a non-reactive pan and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Heat remaining 4 tablespoons of oil in a skillet over high heat until the oil shimmers. Sear all sides of lamb until well browned and a nice crust is formed. Transfer to a roasting pan and cook for 15 to 20 minutes until your meat thermometer reads 130 degrees. Remove from oven and let rest for 10 minutes before carving.

To serve:
Cut between each rib bone and arrange 3 to 4 chops per plate with 2 peach halves.

* Epicurean Tip: French-cut
To French-cut a rack of lamb, a butcher removes the meat, fat and membranes that connect the individual rib bones. If you are interested in learning this technique, there are many fine knife skills and butchering classes offered in the Bay Area, or you can watch an online educational video. Remember to always start with a sharp knife!

For the Peaches:
8 ripe but firm peaches, peeled, halved and pitted
2 tablespoons evaporated cane juice
4 tablespoons butter
4 tablespoons aged balsamic vinegar

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

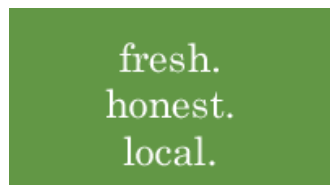
Sprinkle cut side of peaches with cane juice. Heat butter in a large skillet over medium heat. When foaming subsides, add peaches cut side down. Cook until you see the edges begin to brown. Flip the peaches and place in oven. Cook until a paring knife inserted into the peach feels little resistance, about 20 minutes. Remove from oven and drizzle with the vinegar. Let rest.

For the Sautéed Romano Beans:
2 pounds Romano (Italian flat) beans, trimmed and cut in half
4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
4 shallots, peeled and julienned
3 tablespoons butter
1 bunch chives, cut in 1-inch lengths
Kosher salt and fresh cracked pepper

Place 6 tablespoons of kosher salt and 6 quarts water in a large pot and bring to a boil. Add the beans and blanch* for 2 to 3 minutes to al dente. Drain the beans and shock in an ice bath until cool. Drain, pat dry and set aside.

To serve:
Heat oil in a sauté pan over medium heat until shimmering. Add shallots and cook for 2 minutes while stirring. Add the beans and sauté for 2 to 3 minutes or until they are heated through. Add the butter and chives and toss together until well coated. Season with salt and pepper to taste, remove from heat and serve immediately.

* Epicurean Tip: Blanching
Blanching is a technique used to partially cook vegetables. To blanch, add cut vegetables to a pot of boiling salted water. Most vegetables will cook within 2 to 5 minutes; taste often to see when the vegetable is done to your liking. To stop the cooking process, "shock" the vegetables by immediately plunging them into a bowl filled with ice and water. Drain.



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For the Toasted Orzo "Risotto":
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 pound orzo
2 tablespoons butter
1 cup onion, finely chopped
2 cloves fresh peeled garlic, pressed and minced
3 1/2 plus 1/4 cups chicken stock*
3/4 cup dry white wine
3 ounces freshly grated Parmesan cheese
Kosher salt and fresh cracked pepper

Heat oil in a skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add orzo and stir constantly until it is evenly browned. Remove from heat, pour into a bowl and set aside.

Heat the skillet again over medium heat and add butter. When foaming stops add the onion and cook until just browned. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant. Add the toasted orzo and remove from heat. Add 3 1/2 cups of stock and the wine and stir together. Return to the heat and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer, while stirring, until all liquid is absorbed and orzo is al dente. Orzo may be held at this point, covered and off the heat.

To serve:
Place the pan on medium heat and add the final 1/4 cup of the stock and stir until orzo is warmed through. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper, stir in Parmesan and serve.

*** Epicurean Tip: Homemade Chicken Stock**

It's easy to make your own chicken stock - and it tastes so much better than supermarket stock! The next time you roast a chicken, save the bones. Take a large pot, add the bones and filtered water to cover, along with several pinches of salt, some roughly cut onions and carrots and a handful of fresh herbs, such as rosemary, thyme and parsley. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for several hours.

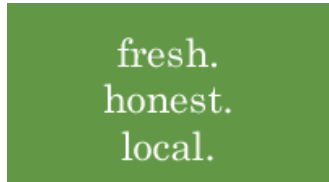
Remove pot from heat and discard bones and vegetables. Strain stock through a colander into a large bowl and place in the refrigerator to cool. Skim off the fat that will have accumulated on the surface, then strain the stock through a fine mesh into containers and freeze.

Mixed Berry and Rhubarb Fool with Vanilla Bean Cream

1 pound rhubarb, ends trimmed, strings removed
1/2 pint blackberries, washed and drained
1/2 pint raspberries, washed and drained
1/2 cup freshly squeezed orange juice
3/4 cup plus 1/4 cup evaporated cane juice
2 cups whipping cream
1/2 vanilla bean

Place mixing bowl and whip attachment from electric mixer in refrigerator to chill. Soak rhubarb in ice-cold water for 20 minutes. Drain, pat dry and cut in 2-inch lengths.

In a non-reactive* saucepan, bring orange juice and 3/4 cup cane juice to a boil. Add rhubarb, return to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer until the rhubarb is tender. Do not stir the mixture or it will become mushy. Place the berries in a non-reactive* bowl, pour rhubarb mixture over the berries, cool to room temperature, then cover with plastic and refrigerate. This may be done 1 day before needed.



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Split the 1/2 vanilla bean lengthwise and scrape the seeds into the chilled mixing bowl. Add the cream and the rest of the cane juice. Start at slow speed until cream is frothy and gradually increase to medium speed. Whip to soft peaks.

To serve:

Layer the whipped cream and fruit mixture alternately in a champagne flute or small goblet. Garnish with a sprig of mint.

*Epicurean Tip: Non-reactive Pans

Non-reactive cookware will not react to acid ingredients, such as citrus. When a recipe calls for a non-reactive pot, pan or bowl, use stainless steel, clay, enamel, glass, or plastic.