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Holiday Favorites

By Susie Iventosch

This year for our holiday recipe page, we decided to ask the experts for their favorite holiday traditions. Who would know better what to serve at a festive event than our local caterers? They did not disappoint and we discovered some amazing new recipes! I think you'll enjoy each and every one of these dishes. We also tried Charlie's Beef Wellingtons with buffalo and Dianna's pork tenderloin with turkey tenderloins, and both proved to be wonderful, healthy alternatives.

Winter Clementine Dessert Salad

Darius Somary of SpringLoaf Catering likes to make a fresh and fruity, yet festive dessert at this time of the year, made with sliced Clementines, almond croquant, orange blossom infused honey, shaved chocolate and fresh mint.



Winter Clementine Dessert. Photo Susie Iventosch

Ingredients (Serves 4)

- 6-8 whole seedless Clementines, peeled (alternatively Satsumas or navel oranges)
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 cup slivered almonds*
- 2 teaspoons orange blossom essence (available at Diablo Foods, Berkeley Bowl, Whole Foods etc.)
- 1 1/2-2 tablespoons honey
- 3-4 leaves of fresh mint, chopped
- 1 oz. Toblerone (or any other favorite dark or milk chocolate bar)*

Directions

Almonds

In a small stainless saucepan, bring water and sugar to a boil. Continue cooking on medium heat until all the water is evaporated and sugar starts turning color to a very light brown. Turn off heat and carefully add all nuts to caramel in one go. Stir caramel/nut mixture well using a wooden spoon or heat proof rubber spatula and immediately turn out onto a dinner plate. Careful: the caramelized nuts will be very hot, don't touch them with bare hands. Let them cool to room temperature. When the nuts are cool, pulse them in a food processor for 20 seconds, or crush them by putting them in a Ziploc freezer bag and pounding it with a heavy saucepan, mallet or hammer (watch your fingers!)

In the meanwhile, peel the Clementines, remove all the pith (the white stuff) without pulling apart the segments. Try and keep the Clementine as intact as possible. Now cut each Clementine into 4-5 slices using a sharp kitchen knife, and set aside

Honey Syrup:

Combine honey and rose water in a cup, mix well and microwave for 30 seconds on high until hot and very runny, let it cool down a bit.

To Serve

Arrange Clementine slices on a large dinner plate right before serving, top them with the rosewater honey syrup, then carefully sprinkle on the crushed caramelized nuts. Grate your favorite chocolate right over the entire plate and top with chopped mint. Serve immediately and enjoy.

Notes* To grate the chocolate, use your box grater, a Microplane zester or ribbon grater, or use a vegetable peeler to make chocolate curls. Instead of slivered almonds you can also use cashews or peanuts. For a quicker version, skip the nut caramelizing part and use honey roasted peanuts or store bought caramelized almonds instead.

"Personal" Beef Wellingtons

Charlie Vollmar, Epicurean Exchange

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This elegant staple of 1960s dinner parties derives its name from the Duke of Wellington, the 19th century English statesman and military officer. The dish is not due to his gourmet tastes, however, but rather because the final dish is said to resemble the shiny dark military boots he wore. Beef Wellington is traditionally a 2-4 pound beef tenderloin topped with mushrooms duxelle, and foie gras pate, and then encased in puff pastry. This variation uses individual filets that are wrapped in their own pastry "package."



Beef Wellington. Photo Susie Iventosch

Ingredients (Serves 4)

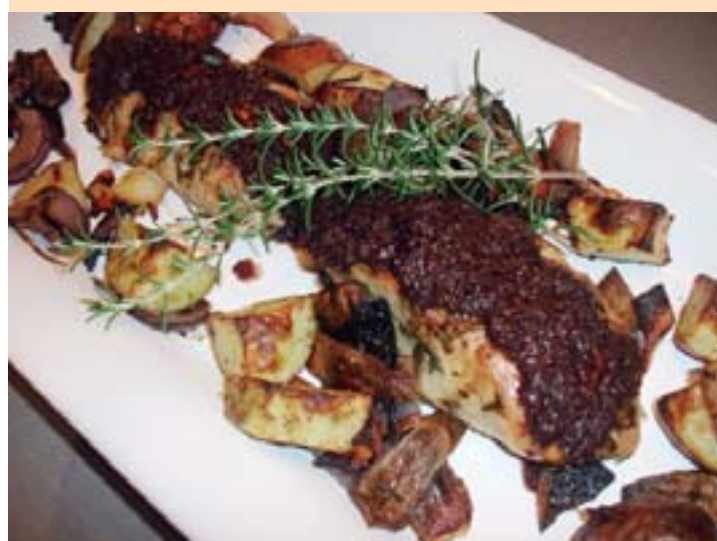
- 4 (6 ounce) 1 1/2-inch thick cut filet mignon, trimmed of fat and silver skin
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- One-half (17-1/4 ounce package) frozen puff pastry (1 sheet) thawed
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 2 shallots, minced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 12 cremini mushrooms, washed, trimmed and finely chopped
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 1 teaspoon each kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 6 ounces duck liver pâté
- 1 large egg beaten with 2 teaspoons water

Directions

- Preheat oven to 425°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside.
- Prepare the Filets: Season one side of the filets with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper. Heat the olive oil in a large heavy skillet over medium-high heat until slightly smoking. Place filets seasoned-side down in the skillet, and sear until golden brown, about 2 minutes. Season second side of the filets with kosher salt and black pepper, and turn, searing the other side for an additional 2 minutes. Remove filets from pan and place on a plate to cool completely.
- Prepare the Mushrooms: Heat the butter in a medium sauté pan until frothy. Add the minced shallots and garlic and sauté until soft, about 1 minute. Add the chopped mushrooms, wine and seasonings. Sauté mushrooms until soft and all the liquid has evaporated, approximately 5 - 7 minutes. Allow mushrooms to cool completely.
- Roll out the puff pastry on a lightly floured surface to a 14-inch square, and cut into 4 (7-inch) squares.
- Spread one-quarter of the pâté on the top of each prepared filet. Spread one-quarter of the mushrooms duxelle on top of the pâté-covered filet. Place each filet, mushroom/pâté-side down, in the center of a puff pastry square. Using a pastry brush, paint the inside edges of the pastry with the egg wash. Fold the pastry over the filet as though wrapping a package and press the edges to seal. Place the packages seam-side down on the parchment-covered baking sheet. If you would like, decorate the top of each package with extra dough). Brush egg wash over the tops and sides of each package. Place packages in the pre-heated oven and bake until the pastry is golden brown and an instant-read thermometer registers 140°F for medium rare, about 20 minutes.
- Remove from the oven and let rest for 10 minutes before serving.

Roasted Pork Loin with Fig Sauce

Dianna Condon (of Dianna Condon Cuisine) enjoys making this hearty yet elegant dish for the holidays.



Pork Tenderloin with Port. Photo Susie Iventosch

Ingredients (Serves 4-6)

- Fig Sauce** 2 1/2 cups Port
- 1 1/4 cups low sodium chicken stock
- 8 dried black Mission figs, coarsely chopped
- 2 sprigs of fresh rosemary
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 tablespoon unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper
- Pork** 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- One 4 to 4-1/2 pound pork tenderloin
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth

Directions

Fig Sauce

In a medium-size, heavy saucepan, combine the port, chicken broth, figs, rosemary, cinnamon, and honey. Boil over medium-high heat until reduced by half, about 30-minutes. Discard the rosemary sprigs and cinnamon sticks. Transfer the port mixture to a blender and puree until smooth. Blend in the butter, salt, pepper. (The sauce can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and refrigerate. Re-warm over medium heat before using).

Pork

Preheat the oven to 425-F. Stir the oil, rosemary, 1 tablespoon of salt, and 1-1/2 teaspoons of pepper in a small bowl to blend. Place the pork loin in a heavy roasting pan. Spread the oil mixture over the pork to coat completely. Roast, turning the pork every 15 minutes to ensure even browning, until an instant-read meat thermometer inserted into the center of the pork registers 145-F, about 45 minutes total.

Transfer the pork to a cutting board and tent with foil to keep warm. Let the pork rest for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, place the roasting pan over medium heat and stir in the chicken broth, scraping the bottom of the pan to remove any browned bits. Bring the pan juices to a simmer. Season with more salt and pepper to taste.

Cut the pork crosswise into 1/4-inch-thick slices and arrange on plates. Spoon the pan juices over. Drizzle the warm fig sauce around and serve immediately.

*When I made this delicious pork dish, I used the pan scrapings for a red-wine gravy which complemented the fig sauce in the most wonderful way-Susie

Candy Cane Biscotti

Elain Smit of Chow Bella says this is her favorite holiday recipe.

"I make Candy Cane biscotti every year during the holidays and package them up in cellophane bags with a ribbon to give away as gifts or just keep around the house to have with my coffee in the morning."

Ingredients (Makes 24-30 cookies)

- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
- 3 large eggs
- 3 1/4 cup all purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1teaspoon vanilla
- 20 small candy canes, finely crushed.

Directions

Pre-heat oven 350 degrees. Beat sugar, butter and eggs in large bowl. Stir in flour, baking powder and vanilla. Fold in the broken bits of candy canes. Shape half the dough into a rectangle, 10 x 3 inches on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean. Cool on a cookie sheet for 10 minutes. Cut crosswise into 1/2 in slices. Place sliced cut sides down on cookie sheet. Bake 15 minutes longer. Optional-drizzle melted milk chocolate over cooled biscotti.



Candy Cane Biscotti.

These recipes are available on our web site.

Go to: www.lamorindaweekly.com

Susie Iventosch is the author of *Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels*, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at suziven@gmail.com.

Many of our readers like Susie's recipes. Our website now features a link to our recipe page where you can read, print or download all of the recipes we have published. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at 925-377-0977

