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## A Trio of Good Eats from The Punky Chef

*By Susie Iventosch*

You never know what you might learn about people when you start asking questions. This is a favorite habit of local education consultant Elizabeth LaScala, who, in keeping with her line of work as a college advisor, is always interested in what young people in our community are up to. One day, she was full of questions as she ventured into Papillon to get a latte from her favorite barista.

"Andrea Cebalo has made the most wonderful lattes for me for over a decade," said LaScala. "Finally, one day I asked her what her future plans held, because I could see she had many talents, besides being a terrific barista. She told me that she was in the culinary program at Diablo Valley College."

Now, food is a subject near and dear to LaScala's heart, and in the course of the conversation, she discovered that Cebalo had a small catering business, The Punky Chef. The timing couldn't have been better, as LaScala had her daughter's impending graduation party on her mind.

"I've had Andrea cater several gatherings since, and her cuisine is divine, prepared exactly how I ask. She really knows her nutrition, too, and handles every special request, from low-sodium or low-fat dishes to creamy sauces and rich desserts, without hesitation. I always get everything exactly how I request it, whether it's a latte at Papillon, or an entree prepared for a party.

"But, perhaps the best quality is her absolutely unflappable calmness under pressure. Andrea makes perfection happen!"

Needless to say, with an introduction like this, I wanted to try a few of her recipes myself. So, I asked The Punky Chef (so named for Cebalo's childhood nickname, "Punky") to please send a few recipes my way to try for the food column.

"Meyer lemon is one of my favorite flavors of the season and I love to combine it with apricot," the Punky Chef told me. "Even though fresh apricots aren't in season yet, I found there are plenty of recipes that work well with a good quality preserve. The combination is also good for adding a little springtime sweetness to a meal such as a St. Patrick's Day corned beef or an Easter lamb."

Cebalo, who loves Mediterranean cuisine, spent a summer in Florence enrolled in a "contemporary" Italian cooking class. There she learned that one of her favorite dishes is a simple, yet classic, Margherita pizza made with fresh mozzarella, basil and tomatoes.

"I love to use the freshest, most organic ingredients possible," she said. "I am always inspired by perusing the farmers' markets."

In fact, she is committed to growing different vegetables in her own garden each year. This year, she plans to grow fava beans and cranberry beans -a red and white striped variety.

One of her favorite uses of fava beans is in the salad below, with escarole, orange segments and hazelnuts tossed in Apricot-Meyer Lemon Vinaigrette. But, she also incorporates fava beans with her Mint Puree-Pecorino Crostini.

Unfortunately, it's still a month or so too early for both fresh fava beans and escarole, but I found that the Apricot-Lemon Meyer Vinaigrette was fantastic drizzled over Belgian endive with a little touch of feta cheese and toasted pecans. The sweetness of the dressing was the perfect foil to the slight bitterness of the endive.

Cebalo's recipes are unique and delicious. The Punky Chef caters events from very large parties to single platters for private family meals, in addition to her "special occasion" cupcake delivery service for any holiday or event.

The Punky Chef

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### Apricot Meyer Lemon

*By Susie Iventosch*



Photo Susie Iventosch

#### Apricot Meyer Lemon Vinaigrette

##### INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon minced shallot  
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
1 1/2 to 2 tablespoons good quality apricot preserves

(I used just 1 tablespoon due to husband who refrains from mixing sweet and savory)

1/2 teaspoon fresh ginger  
1/3 cup white or red wine vinegar  
Juice of two Meyer lemons  
Pinch of garlic powder  
Salt and pepper to taste  
3 to 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
(may want to add a little more olive oil)

##### DIRECTIONS

Blend all ingredients except the olive oil in a blender or whisk well in a bowl, slowly add extra virgin olive oil to taste. Taste the dressing, and add more sweetness, acid or oil to taste.

#### Fava and Escarole Salad with Apricot Meyer Lemon Vinaigrette

##### INGREDIENTS

2 heads escarole (or about 1 handful per person), cleaned and chopped  
1/3 finely sliced red onion  
1/3 cup chopped and toasted hazelnuts (or walnuts)  
1/2 cup Cara cara navel orange segments  
1/2 cup blanched and shelled fresh or frozen fava beans  
Salt and pepper

Apricot Meyer lemon vinaigrette (recipe nearby)

##### DIRECTIONS

Mix all the ingredients, and toss with vinaigrette to taste.

#### Roasted Root Vegetables in an Apricot Meyer Lemon Glaze

##### INGREDIENTS

1 lb. parsnips  
1/2 lb. carrots  
1/2 lb. sweet potato, turnip, or beet root  
1 1/2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
1 finely chopped shallot  
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder  
Salt and pepper  
3 to 4 sprigs fresh thyme  
Pinch herbes de Provence

Apricot Meyer lemon glaze (below)

##### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Peel and chop vegetables to 1 1/2 inch pieces and toss with olive oil, salt, pepper, shallot, garlic powder, thyme, and herbs. Lay in a single layer in a baking sheet or roasting pan. Bake until fork tender and browning on the edges, about 25 minutes.

Toss in apricot glaze. Serve warm.

#### Apricot Meyer Lemon Glaze

##### INGREDIENTS

1/3 cup good quality apricot preserves  
Juice of one Meyer lemon

Gently warm apricot preserves and lemon juice for a few minutes. Set aside for vegetables.



Photo Susie Iventosch

## Lavender Honey Caramelized Onion and Roasted Asparagus Flatbread

By Susie Iventosch



Photo Susie Iventosch

minutes or until lightly browned. Take the dough out of the oven and sprinkle with pieces of chevre, caramelized onion, asparagus, (salmon, if using), Parmigiano, zest, salt and pepper to taste. Place back in the oven until the toppings are just warmed through.

### For Caramelized Onions

Heat 2 teaspoons olive oil in a saute pan over medium low heat; add in sliced onion, lavender and a pinch of salt. Cook the onions until they start to become translucent, about 10 minutes. Stir in the honey, and add another teaspoon of olive oil if the onions are beginning to stick or burn. Continue to cook until the onions cook down and become browned and caramelized, about 10 to 15 minutes more.

### For the Roasted Asparagus

1/2 lb. asparagus spears

1 teaspoon olive oil

1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar or juice of a lemon

Salt and pepper, to taste

Roast in 400° oven for about 10 minutes, or until just al dente. Cut into 1 1/2 inch pieces.

Serves 4 to 6

### INGREDIENTS

1/2 medium yellow onion, finely sliced

4 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil (used to brush dough and also in caramelizing onions, and roasting asparagus)

1 teaspoon finely chopped lavender

1 1/2 teaspoons honey

Salt and pepper to taste

1/2 lb. fresh asparagus, roasted and chopped into

1 1/2 inch sticks

2 oz. chevre

1 prepared whole wheat pizza dough (can use crostini or focaccia bread)

1 1/2 teaspoon grated Parmigiano reggiano

Olive oil for brushing

1/2 teaspoon lemon zest

1 to 2 oz. smoked salmon (optional)

### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Roll out pizza dough to about 1/4 inch, and brush with olive oil. Place dough on pizza pan or heated pizza stone and bake for about 8 to 10

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