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Perfect Pears

By Susie Iventosch



Elaine Cable cooks with her boys, Will (7) and Alex (3) Photo provided

Elaine Cable of Moraga won first place in the recipe contest at the 13th annual Moraga Pear and Wine Festival in September, and ... was she ever surprised!

"I'm not really a cooking contest type," she said. "But, the contest piqued my interest and when I saw that we had two pears left on our backyard pear tree, I said, why not? There are only a few things I can do well, and one of them is cooking!"

Elaine remembered tasting a wonderful savory apple tartlet at a wedding over the summer, and thought that whatever could be done with an apple, could surely be done with a pear.

And, I discovered that Elaine's award-winning recipe for Savory Caramelized Pear Tartlets with Chevre is delicious!

Though Elaine is a Bay Area native hailing from the Peninsula, she and her husband relocated to Moraga from Virginia in April. She thought that participating in the recipe contest would be a great way to immerse herself in her new community. As an occupational therapist on leave to raise her two boys, Will, 7, and Alex, 3, who also love to cook with her, she welcomed the opportunity to venture out of

the family kitchen to participate in the contest.

"Coming from Virginia most recently, I am amazed by the amount of fresh 'anything' you can get in Moraga at the local stores, the farmers' markets, and even our own back yard," Elaine said. "You can get whatever you want! So much of this great produce would be 'special-order only' where we come from. We lived in a very transitory area in Virginia due to all of the government jobs, and there was just not this kind of awesome environment, where everyone is so upbeat and happy."

Because Elaine loves food, and has been cooking ever since she was a wee child, she really enjoys the bounty the local market affords. Her grandmother, who came from Poland, did a lot of canning, and her own mom taught her how to "punt" in the kitchen.

"I can't remember a time when I wasn't in the kitchen with my mom," she said. "Now that I'm out here and she is in Charleston, I really miss cooking with her. My younger brother, Zach, is a phenomenal cook, and come holiday time, we are all in the kitchen together."

Elaine has enjoyed the taste of success, and, in fact, she says she already has an idea for her contest recipe for next year's Pear and Wine Festival!

2011 Moraga Pear and Wine Festival Pear Recipe Contest Winners' Recipes

Other Pear and Wine Festival recipe contest winners are listed below, and their recipes can be found on our website.

Sharon Metcalf, 2nd Place, for her Fresh Pear Upside-down Cake

Robin Valentine, 3rd Place for her Pear Red-White Sorbet (using both wine and pears!)

Brian Pergamit, 4th Place for his Cinnamon Pear Pockets

Kim Burrows, 5th Place for her Fresh Pear Pie with Dried Cherries and Brown Sugar Streusel

Savory Caramelized Pear Tartlets with Chevre



Pear caramelized onion tartlet Photo Susie Iventosch

Elaine Cable

First Place, 2011 Moraga Pear and Wine Festival

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 tablespoon butter

4 Bartlett pears, cored and sliced

1/2 medium sweet onion, thinly sliced

Kosher salt and pepper, to taste

Your favorite pie crust recipe (can use frozen, thawed pie dough also)

4 ounces chevre (cheese) ... Elaine uses Trader Joe's goat cheese

with honey, but says you could probably use Brie**

1 teaspoon cider vinegar

1 teaspoon minced rosemary (or other herb from your garden,

i.e. thyme, sage, etc.)

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Melt butter and olive oil together in saute pan, over medium heat (careful not to let burn). Add sliced onion and gently "sweat" them out until translucent, about 7 minutes. Then add pear slices. Let the pear/onion mixture become soft, again, the pears will also begin to become translucent. Add salt and pepper to taste.

*Meanwhile, roll out pie dough and use round cookie cutter to cut 12 circles for the crust. Then place each one into each of the 12 muffin cups. Crumble the chevre cheese

and put aside. Turn up heat to medium high/high (depending on your stove) and begin to caramelize the mixture, stirring occasionally to prevent burning. After approximately 7-10 minutes, may add cider vinegar, then after the mixture thickens again, add rosemary. Place an even amount of pear mixture (1-2 tablespoon) into each pie dough cup in the muffin tin. Place small amount of crumbled cheese on each tartlet. Bake in preheated 375 °oven for 12-14 minutes or until crusts are browned and cheese is softened. Serve warm or room temp.

* Use a muffin tin or round cookie cutter, approximately 4 inches in diameter, to cut the pastry. Elaine uses a wine glass. I used small, fluted tart tins, so I used a smaller diameter biscuit cutter, which made at least 24 tartlets.

** I used a bit of blue cheese on top, too which worked well!

Jalapeno-Lime Cranberry Sauce



Jalapeno-lime cranberry sauce Photo Susie Iventosch

INGREDIENTS

1 bag or 7-8 cups fresh (or frozen) cranberries

1 cup dried cranberries

1 teaspoon finely minced fresh, seeded jalapeno pepper

1 cup light brown sugar

1 cup orange juice (or water)

Juice of two limes

DIRECTIONS

Place all ingredients, except dried cranberries, in a medium-sized pot. Bring to boil over medium-high heat and continue to cook until sauce begins to thicken, about 4-5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat. Stir in dried cranberries and cool completely. Store in airtight container until ready to use for Thanksgiving!

Thanksgiving is just around the corner, and I wanted to share this unusual and delicious recipe for cranberry sauce that my good friend gave to me. She and her family love spicy food and this sauce is no exception. I've used just a small amount of jalapeno in the recipe, but you can add as much as your taste buds (and dinner guests) will allow. Just

be sure to seed the jalapeno before adding to the sauce.

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