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And an Olive in a Pear Tree...

By Susie Iventosch



Photo Susie Iventosch

The Lamorinda area is an exciting place for foodies to be over the next couple of weekends! This Saturday, September 29, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. the 14th Annual Moraga Pear & Wine Festival will take place at the Moraga Commons. This year's event will feature wineries, a variety of local vendors (businesses and community organizations), in addition to an art show, plus ... the highlight for me, the Pear Recipe Contest! The contest boasts a talented panel of judges and includes both adult and youth categories. Elaine Cable of Moraga won first prize last year for her Savory Caramelized Pear Tartlets with Chevre.

"There are so many talented cooks in our area, and we encourage them to participate, along with their kids," said Kimberley Nelson, Recreation and Facilities Coordinator for the Town of Moraga. "We have some terrific prizes lined up for contest winners!"

This year, all entries must be delivered by 11:30 a.m. to the contest tent near the bandshell. Each should be clearly labeled and accompanied by an entry form, which can be downloaded from www.moraga.ca.us, along with a printed recipe for each entry. Entries are limited to two per

person. Recipes will be judged at noon and winners announced at 1:15 p.m. at the bandshell. Don't miss out on this great opportunity to show off your cooking skills!

On Sunday, October 7, the Third Annual Olive Festival will take place from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Wagner Ranch Nature Area, 350 Camino Pablo in Orinda. The proceeds of this event go to fund Nature Area activities for all Orinda students. While there is not a recipe contest for this event, there will be olive oil pressing and cooking demonstrations, as well as olive oil tastings offered by McCauley Brothers and Berkeley Olive Grove 1913. New to the event this year, vendors will be sampling and selling olive oil-based soaps and lotions.

In the next issue, we hope to feature the winning pear contest recipe as well as homemade olive bagels!

Pear, Avocado Salad with Spiced Pecans

(Serves 4)

INGREDIENTS

1 head butter lettuce, washed and torn into bite-sized pieces
 1 large firm, but ripe, avocado, sliced
 1 large pear, sliced (can use one extra pear, whole or halved for garnish!)
 1/4 cup crumbled bleu cheese
 1/2 cup spiced nuts (recipe below)
 Dressing
 1/4 cup pear vinegar (or white wine vinegar)
 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
 1/2-2/3 cup of your favorite, most fabulous olive oil (use according to desired taste)
 Salt and white pepper, to taste
 Shake well.

DIRECTIONS

Tear lettuce into bite-sized pieces and form a layer on the bottom of a glass bowl or a serving platter. Arrange pear avocado slices on top and sprinkle nuts and cheese over evenly. Drizzle dressing over the top, or gently toss it all in a large bowl.

Spiced Nuts

(This recipe will make extra, but that is okay, because there are always snitchers lurking about the kitchen!)

INGREDIENTS

1 cup pecan halves
 1-2 tablespoons olive oil

2 teaspoons granulated sugar (brown sugar is fine, too)
Spice mixture-mix well before adding to nuts
dash cayenne pepper
1/4 teaspoon cumin powder
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon cardamom
1/4 teaspoon sea salt

DIRECTIONS

In a large saute pan, heat olive oil and toss nuts in to coat. Cook over medium heat, until nuts begin to brown. Add sugar, and stir well. Continue to cook just until sugar is melted. Remove from heat and sprinkle spice mixture over all and toss until all of the nuts have been seasoned with the spices. Cool and store until ready to use.

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