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Comestible Fine Catering's delectable short ribs

By Susie Iventosch



Photo Susie Iventosch

My niece Dori (Lubliner) Jacob, grew up in Lafayette and attended Campolindo High School before heading off to Santa Cruz for college and New York University for grad school in performance studies - the theory of performance. Today, she is the casting director for San Francisco Playhouse. (You are probably thinking, "this is a nice story, but what in the world has it got to do with food?" I promise, there is a connection.) She is also the president of Comestible Fine Catering and Supper Club, an Oakland-based catering company, co-owned with her husband Noah Jacob. This fun story has its origins back at New York City, where she met Noah, also a graduate student elsewhere in the city for film production, but truly a chef at heart.

Noah says that when he was a youngster living in Portland, Oregon, he got into trouble a lot. When he was just 14, his father sent him to work

at a local restaurant doing dishes to keep him busy and out of trouble. The thing is, Noah really enjoyed working at the restaurant and in short order, he graduated from dish duty to prep cook. Equipped with this experience, he was later hired by a family friend to work for Elephants Delicatessen, a pioneer in the specialty foods market where everything was made from scratch - European style.

Noah and Dori got married and thoroughly enjoyed the New York scene surrounded by fabulous dining options, but eventually they moved back to San Francisco for Dori's job and to be closer to family. Together they decided it was the right time to get back into the food industry, so Noah got on board with a brand new Jewish deli, working for free, to learn as much as possible about the food industry. He started at the very bottom doing the grunt work of processing roughly 2,000 pounds of corned beef and pastrami each week!

"My pants could stand up alone at the end of each day from so much salt, sugar and blood," he said, "but I moved up the ladder to become the catering chef, and I got paid!"

He tried to convince the owners that catering is where they should focus because of the financial reward and the more flexible hours, but they wanted the glory of having brick and mortar restaurants. Noah left the deli and his culinary dreams sprouted into supper club events that he and Dori held in their very own house, often for 60 people over the course of two nights, where local chefs would "compete" and where diners would vote on their favorite dishes. It was from these events that they gained notoriety and, more importantly, clients for both private and corporate events, cooking for as many as 80 people from their own kitchen at home.

"This business was 100% grass roots, built by the seat of our pants," Dori reflected. "Besides doing all of the paperwork, I did all the dishes and helped in any way that I could, while Noah did the meal planning, client relations and cooking. Even though we started out small, as a result of our supper club dinners we landed an opportunity to book an 800-person corporate event."

Today the Jacobs, through Comestible Catering, employ 25 people and prepare 2,000 to 3,000 meals per week in their professional kitchen in Oakland. We are lucky because they also manage to prepare most of the meals for our own big holiday gatherings! This is where I first tasted Noah's amazing lamb and short rib recipes.

As a result of this grassroots business and "fly by the seat of your pants" ingenuity and drive, Dori and Noah are able to spend time with their 3-year old son, Oscar, and have another baby boy

on the way! They have also been so gracious as to share Noah's Short Rib recipe with all of our readers. I've made it several times, now and it's become one of our family favorites. It is fabulously delicious and I like to serve it with mashed yams for the beautiful color combination. It's a perfect fall recipe as the days begin to turn chilly.

For more information about Comestible Catering, or to book an event, please visit:

www.comestibleoak.com, or call: (917) 514-2678

Noah's Short Ribs

(Manischewitz-braised short ribs)

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

4 pounds boneless short ribs (can use bone-in, but takes about 20% longer to cook)

1 bottle Manischewitz (750 ml)

1 jar Asian garlic and black bean sauce

2 yellow onions, roughly chopped

1 bunch fresh thyme, roughly chopped

1 handful garlic cloves

1/2 cup pomegranate molasses

Garlic salt

DIRECTIONS

Portion and sear off short ribs until browned. Place short ribs in a large roasting pan with onions, the black bean garlic sauce, thyme, raw garlic and the whole bottle of Manischewitz. If meat is not completely covered with wine, add water until covered.

Cover pan tightly in foil and braise at 325 F for about 2.5 to 3 hours. You will know when the short ribs are done as they should be able to be pulled apart by forks, but not completely falling apart.

When done, remove meat from braising liquid and set aside. Place braising liquid in the blender, and blend until very smooth. Add the pomegranate molasses and continue blending. Depending upon how fatty the short ribs are, this sauce may be perfect as is. If the short ribs are super lean, it may still be a little bit tart. If it's too tart, add about half a stick of butter to it and continue to blend. Clean roasting pan for use again later.

Season to taste with garlic salt. If you want to be fancy, you can run the sauce through a chinois, to make it super smooth, but it's not strictly necessary for everyday presentation. (Susie's note: I don't blend the sauce at all, because my family loves the chunkiness of the onions in the sauce.)

Add the sauce back over the short ribs in the same roasting pan. At this point, they can hold for up to three days. If you are going to serve them day of, put them back in the low oven, uncovered at 325 F for another 30-45 minutes until you are ready to serve. If you are reheating from chilling them in the refrigerator, they will probably need about an hour at 350 to get yummy!

Smashed Sweet Potatoes

(Note- this is how I make them, but Noah makes a much fancier version which is below)

2 large sweet potatoes (I use the brighter orange ones that we call yams in the stores)

2 tablespoons butter

1 teaspoon salt

Bake sweet potatoes in 350 F oven for approximately 45 minutes, or until cooked all the way through and soft. Cool until able to handle. While still warm, remove meat from skins and place in a bowl. Smash with potato masher or with an electric beater. Fold in butter and season with salt.

Noah's Whipped Sweet Potatoes

Noah peels and boils the sweet potatoes until tender and then whips them along with butter and salt, until they are super fluffy like a mousseline. He also does several different versions of these which include black truffle butter, or fresh truffles if you can find them, or maple syrup, or mild red peppers such as Aleppo or Espelette. He makes a bed of the potatoes and serves the short ribs on top of them.



Dori and Noah Jacob Photo Kathryn Rummel



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