

Warm, creamy twice-baked goodness perfect for fall



Twice Baked Sweet Potatoes

Photo Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

Sweet potatoes rarely see the light of day in our house because my husband can't stand them, not even sweet potato fries, which are so yummy. I get it, I'm that way with beets, and they are so popular these days. You see beets everywhere and on every menu. But, you'll probably never see a beet recipe from me! Nevertheless, my daughter and I really love sweet potatoes, so we occasionally

do get around to making them and we like coming up with new ideas for them. This is our latest creation. I actually dreamed about this recipe one night and when I woke up I went straight to my notes so as not to forget what was in them. Why I'd be dreaming about sweet potatoes with brown butter and crème fraiche, I can't really answer, but if anyone out there can help me figure it out I'd be much obliged. I hope you love these so much, you'll be dreaming about them too.

Twice Baked Sweet Potatoes

(Serves 4 as a side dish)

INGREDIENTS

2 medium-sized sweet potatoes (any color ... remember the orange ones they call yams are really sweet potatoes)
2 tablespoons creme fraiche (sour cream or plain yogurt could replace this, but crème fraiche is the best)
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon white pepper
3 tablespoons butter, room temp and cut into small pieces (you will be browning the butter)
1 large shallot, chopped
2 tablespoons dried cranberries
2 tablespoons pecan pieces

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 F.

Clean sweet potatoes with a veggie brush or a clean sponge. Poke a hole in each with a fork. Bake for about 30 minutes (+/-) until potatoes are done and meat is soft. Remove from oven and cool enough to handle.

Meanwhile brown the butter in a small light-colored pan over medium heat, until it begins to foam. It will slowly turn golden brown and you will see little crystals starting to form. Once perfectly browned, it will take on a rich, nutty smell. This will take about 10 minutes, but keep your eye on it. Using a light colored pan will allow you to see when the color is just right.

Once browned, separate one tablespoon for the potato filling. Add the chopped shallots to the brown butter remaining in the pan and cook until translucent. Add pecan pieces and cranberries and continue to cook for a few more minutes just until pecans are toasted. Set aside.

Back to the cooled sweet potatoes! Scoop out the meat with a grapefruit or other spoon and place in a mixing bowl. Leave skins intact and place in a casserole dish or baking sheet open side up.

Mash the sweet potato meat with a fork, potato masher or food processor. Mix the sweet potato meat with 1 tablespoon of brown butter, creme fraiche, salt and white pepper. Tuck this filling back into the hollow sweet potato skins.

Sprinkle the shallot mixture over the tops. Reheat in 350 F oven for about 15 minutes, or until hot.



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>

'Raining in the Mountain' an epic Taiwanese film offered by the International Film Showcase



Photo provided

By Sophie Braccini

Three travelers start at dawn for a long journey on foot through a beautiful and mountainous Asian landscape. A man, the rich philanthropist Wen, his new concubine, and a male servant carrying their luggage live in the 15th century, during the Chinese Ming dynasty. Their destination is the Temple of Three Treasures, one of the most renowned Buddhist temples of the country.

The travelers are not seeking enlightenment; they have been invited by the aging abbot

who is about to depart for his last voyage and is seeking advice to choose his successor. The abbot has also invited governor Wang, and the wise Master Wu Wai to give their opinion.

But some of the dignitaries invited are coming with ulterior motives. The monastery is the repository for the Mahayana sutras written by Xuan Zang, a priceless treasure; Wen and Wang would do about anything to get their hands on this treasure. The arrival of Chiu Ming, a criminal who has paid to get his sentence commuted to becoming a monk starts disrupting the false

peace of the monastery. The movie has all the elements to make it a great epic story with its villains, its good guys, and a secret treasure. Lies, treason, theft attempts and even murder escalate during the days that precede the induction ceremony.

The 1978 movie is a Taiwan/Hong Kong co-production made by King Hu, a Chinese-born director who lives in Hong Kong. This is the first time in its 10-year history that the International Film Showcase is presenting a classic movie. The film, available online, has been completely restored and is worth seeing on

as big a screen as possible. The filming and the editing are flawless. The costumes, the natural decor, and the choreography are extremely beautiful.

The first scene of the three walkers at dawn, for example, is lyrical: women bathing in a spring, scenes in the forest, in the temple, across water, all have evocative and poetic qualities. The fight scenes include their share of kung fu and spectacular jumps, but it stays in the realm of human possibility and it is just sparingly interspersed. Group scenes with crowds of monks, intimate scenes with one or two people are just as well mastered and the overall rhythm is fast enough without being overwhelming.

King Hu, who wrote and directed the movie, said in an interview in the '70s that he wanted to study the struggles for power. "I do not know if power is a means or an end," he said. "I choose to set the movie in a Buddhist temple where the question of the essence of power can be questioned."

The spiritual undertone of the movie is discreet. There are a few Buddhist parables such

as that of the pail of clear water, and of course the Abbot's final decision. But a similar story could have happened anywhere, in any place of power where a succession war rages. Although the story takes place in a monastery, women have an important role to play, including the beautiful White Fox played by Feng Hsu. King Hu often chose a heroine to be at the center of his stories. He is viewed with this film and others such as "A Touch of Zen" or "Dragon Inn" as a major actor of the revival of wuxia (martial heroes) fiction films.

Sun Yueh, who plays Wen, and Shih Chun, who plays the villain Hui Tung, are all very expressive actors, with sometimes almost a stage presence. The film has English subtitles but includes many scenes that are action-oriented, which makes following it very easy even for non-Mandarin speaking audiences.

The film is available to be rented online on the IFS website. Details can be found on the website links at <http://internationalshowcase.org/>. IFS founder Efi Lubliner recommends using a Chrome browser to access the site more easily.

Lynn's Top Five

Be tax aware! Five year-end planning tips

By Lynn Ballou CFP®

As I'm writing this, it's the night before the election and so much is still up in the air regarding our shared political futures. That said, it's pretty unlikely we'll get any earth-shaking last minute tax law changes inflicted upon us before the clock strikes midnight on Dec. 31. As we say good-bye (good riddance?) to one of the most truly bizarre years on record, it's time to focus on any remaining tax moves that could be helpful. Here are five for your consideration:

1) Required Minimum Distributions: Although Congress gave us a tax break this year and allowed RMDs to be skipped for 2020, there are some taxpayers who could benefit from taking distributions anyway. If your taxable income for the year will be less than zero when you file without taking distributions, you should

consider pulling some money out of the appropriate retirement accounts and invest these dollars into your other after tax accounts so you don't waste this opportunity to pay nothing on something!

2) Roth Conversions: Taxpayers who are in very low tax brackets might also benefit from Roth conversions. One important consideration to take into account before you make this move: whatever you do before year-end cannot be undone next year during filing season in 2021, so run your projections thoughtfully. Also, it's not just about the federal taxes you'd owe on the conversion – it's also about the tax impact to your state taxes as well. Last but not least be sure you have the cash to pay the taxes from a source other than the funds you are converting.

3) Charitable Giving: For some you'll want to consider gifting low basis assets. For others the traditional cash ap-

proach will be best. Another idea for those of you who qualify would be to consider making a donation from your IRAs up to the limits (your RMD for the year, even if not taken). Called Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD), donating directly from your IRA funds this year could impact future years' taxable RMDs favorably.

4) Employee Retirement Benefits: You have until the end of the year to fully fund the employee contribution portion of your retirement plans such as 401(k)s. Check out your paystubs, and determine if you are on track to fully fund the maximum you are allowed to not only for the deduction, but for the benefit of future tax deferred growth. At a minimum, be sure you are investing enough to receive all the available employer matches.

5) Last call to realize Capital Gains and Losses: In this year of extremes, take a last look at portfolio moves you made and

tally up your gains and losses. This might not be the worst year to take gains if Congress decides to increase the tax in future years on these capital transactions to help pay for all the stimulus being provided now. Conversely, if you have losses on the books, determine if it's wise to lock some of those in. Keep in mind that you can only deduct net realized capital losses (after offsetting against realized capital gains) up to \$3,000 per year. However, at least under current law, any losses you can't use in 2020 carry forward to next year.

If ever my advice to work closely with your Certified Financial Planner™ and tax advisor was appropriate, this is the year to take that advice to heart! And if any of these ideas appeal to you, I'd recommend you act soon to be sure they are all tucked in place properly by year end. Here's to a better 2021 for us all.



Lynn Ballou CFP® is a Senior Vice President and Partner with EP Wealth Advisors. Information used in the writing of this column is believed to be factual and up-to-date, but we do not guarantee its accuracy and it should not be regarded as a complete analysis of the subject(s) discussed. All information is derived from sources deemed to be reliable. All expressions of opinion reflect the judgment of the author as of the date of publication and are subject to change.

High school students' collaboration

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"My hope is to have the documentary shared on social media through AC5 and the California Arts Council," says Considine. "I would also love it to be seen as a pre-show at the now popular drive-in movies. It's impor-

tant to have this message of cohesion from our youth especially during these divisive times."

Considine brought Lafayette Art Gallery Owner Jennifer Perlmutter in as a mentor to guide "Project We" as the students, most of whom did not know each

other beforehand, set to work.

Considine, for whom this was a first collaborative effort, and the other artists were nervous about how it would work and what they could create together, but with Perlmutter's help and supervision, Considine says

once the painting started they all got into a groove as one brushstroke was finished by the next person.

Over lunch the students started discussing various topics and how art is important in life.

"After lunch we were in tremendous synch and had

fun painting together. At the closest interviews for each artist, everyone clapped as our group mates finished expressing themselves."

Lessons learned, says Considine, are about the power of collaboration. "We are always better together!"