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Salad with Baby Greens, Poached Pears, Candied Spiced Pecans, Orange Sections and Crumbled Blue Vein Cheese

- 8 cups baby greens
- 1 cup of crumbled Blue Vein cheese
- 1 cup fresh orange sections, skin removed and cut in thirds
- 4 red wine poached pears, sliced or diced (see recipe below)
- 1 cup candied spiced pecans (see recipe below)
- 4 ounces good quality aged balsamic vinegar
- 6 ounces fine extra virgin olive oil
- salt and fresh pepper to taste
- 1-2 tablespoons fresh citrus zest

Remove the skin and the rind from the orange and slice into 1/4-inch slices. Wash and spin dry the greens and keep cold. Toss the greens with the olive oil and season well with salt and fresh pepper. Mound the oiled and seasoned salad greens on 8 large plates. Top with orange sections, poached pear, Roquefort cheese, spiced nuts and citrus zest. Drizzle with balsamic vinegar and serve

Red Wine Poached Pears

- 6 small, firm pears. Bosc or Bartlett
- 2-3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon each of lemon zest and orange zest
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 star anise
- 3 whole cloves
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup water
- 3 cups dry red wine

Peel the pears and set aside in a bowl of water with the lemon juice until ready to use. In a large saucepan, stir together the grated zests, cinnamon, star anise, cloves, water, sugar, and wine; bring to a boil. Add the pears, reduce heat to a simmer and poach, uncovered, until pears are tender, 25-35 minutes.

Transfer the pears to a bowl and let the poaching liquid cool. Pears can be returned to the cooled liquid and stored in the refrigerator for up to 2 days. Bring to room temperature before serving.

Candied Spiced Pecans

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup cornstarch
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon allspice
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon fresh nutmeg
- 2 tablespoons curry powder
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne
- 2 egg whites
- 4 tablespoons water
- 1 pound pecan halves

Mix together the first 9 ingredients in a small bowl. Next combine the egg white and water and whisk lightly. Add the nuts to the egg white mixture and stir well to coat all of the nuts. Using a fork take the nuts, one at a time, and drop into the dry spice mix. Shake the bowl to coat each nut and remove to a sheet pan lined with parchment paper. Bake at 300 degrees for about 30-45 minutes until golden brown. Do not allow to burn. Remove from oven and allow to cool before eating.

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Individual Beef Wellingtons

- 1 filet mignon, trimmed and cut into 1 ½ inch steaks
- 3 tablespoons regular olive oil
- 1 pound puff pastry, if frozen
- ½ pound Pâté de foie gras , de volaille, or your favorite liver pâté
- mushroom duxelles, 1 recipe listed below
- 1/3 cup brandy or cognac
- 1 egg white
- 1 egg yolk whisked with 2 tablespoons water or milk to for a French egg wash
- salt and fresh pepper
- sauce bordelaise

Heat a medium sauté over high heat and add the olive oil. Sear the filet mignon steaks on both sides quickly. Remove to a plate and allow to return to room temperature. Deglaze and flambé with brandy or cognac. Reserve pan juices to be added with red wine for sauce preparation.

Roll out puff pastry about 1/8 to 1/16 inch thick sheets. Have 2 sheets the same size rolled out. Butter the individual steaks with a thin layer of pâté de foie gras , de volaille, or your favorite liver pâté. Place the individual filet steaks, pâté side down, 5 inches apart, on one of the puff pastry sheets. Spread a thin layer of room temp. mushroom duxelle, on top of each steak. Brush all around the steaks with egg white. Lay the other rolled out sheet of puff pastry over the filet steaks and seal by pressing edges together. Trim edges, leaving 1 inch all around, with a ridged cutter.

(Wellingtons can be made up to this point and placed in the refrigerator until the next day.)

Place individual Wellingtons on a sheet tray lined with parchment paper, brush with the French egg wash, and cook in a preheated 425 degrees oven. Place Wellingtons in oven and cook until pastry is golden brown about 10 minutes. Remove from oven and allow to rest for about 4 minutes. Serve with 1-2 tablespoons of sauce.

Mushroom Duxelles

(Finely diced sautéed mushrooms)

- 4 cups fresh mushrooms, diced
- 2 tbs. butter
- 2 tbs. minced shallots or onions
- salt and freshly ground pepper
- juice of 1-2 lemons
- 2 tbs. port or madeira, optional

Heat the butter in a sauté pan and add the mushrooms. cook over moderate heat, stirring and tossing, 3-4 minutes. Add the shallots and sauté a moment more. squeeze in the lemon and season to taste. Raise the heat and cook until almost dry. Remove from pan, spread out on tray, and allow to cool if using for stuffing.

Bordelaise Sauce

A reduction of shallots, crushed peppercorns, thyme, and bay leaf, in dry red wine along with any pan juices. Veal Demi-glaze is added and the sauce is strained. Diced beef marrow, which has been blanched in some stock, is added as an option. The sauce is seasoned with a few drops of lemon juice, salt, and fresh pepper. Add fresh chopped parsley.

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Creamy Shrimp and Lobster Risotto

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ½ pound small shrimp, cleaned
- 1 small red onion, peeled and chopped fine, about ½ cup
- ½ cup finely chopped leeks, white end only
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup arborio rice
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- 2 cups stock, fish, chicken or vegetable
- ¼ pound soft Brie, skinned and cubed 1/2 inch (Alouetté brand makes a good Crème de Brie)
- ¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 small tomato, seeded and diced, about ½ cup
- ½ pound cooked lobster meat, shells removed
- salt and pepper to taste

In a medium pressure cooker, over medium heat, add the oil and butter. When hot, add the shrimp and sauté until color changes and shrimp are just about cooked. Remove from pan and keep on a warm plate. Next add the onions, leek and garlic. Sauté until tender. Do not allow to color or burn. Add the rice and stir until the rice looks opaque. Add the wine and stock, stir, and allow to come to a boil. Close lid and bring pressure to first red ring, raising pressure to 7.5-8 pounds per square inch above normal pressure. Adjust heat to stabilize pressure and cook for 7 minutes. Remove from heat and use cold-water release method. Taste and adjust with salt and pepper if necessary. Stir in the cheeses and season with salt and pepper. Top with pine nuts. Spoon out finished rice in the center of a large platter and serve. Stir in the shrimp, lobster, tomato, cheese, Brie, tarragon and serve.

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Madeira Infused Creamy Soup of Wild Mushrooms and leek

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups of sliced leek, split in half, washed and white only
- 1 ounce dried wild mushrooms, reconstituted, coarsely chopped and drained.
Save the liquid and strain.
- 12 ounces fresh mushrooms, wild and or white, sliced
- 5 tablespoons flour
- 1-2 tablespoons hot paprika
- ½ cup Madeira wine
- 8 cups chicken stock
- Salt and fresh pepper to taste
- Fresh chopped parsley or herbs to garnish

Heat the oil and the butter over medium heat in a large stockpot. Add the leeks and cook slowly until wilted and tender. Add the fresh mushrooms and cook until wilted and tender. Add the flour and stir for two minutes. This acts as a roux and will thicken the soup. Next stir in the stock, paprika, reconstituted mushrooms, and Madeira. Bring to a simmer and cook, uncovered, for 30 minutes. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper, and serve topped with chopped herbs. You can also make some Madeira infused whipped cream and serve a dollop on top.

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Individual Warm Chocolate Cake (Serves 12)

- ½ lb bittersweet chocolate, shredded
- 1 stick sweet butter
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 cup all purpose flour
- ½ dz eggs
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp pure vanilla
- 12 small ramekins, lightly buttered
- 12 medium chunks of chocolate

Procedure;

1. Melt chocolate and butter over a double boiler, chill slightly, whisk in sugar and flour.
2. Whisk in eggs one at a time until all the eggs get incorporated, add salt and vanilla extract.
3. Pour into small muffin tins; insert chocolate chunk into middle of cake, and bake for 8-10 minutes in a preheated 350-degree oven.
4. Serve while still warm.

Recipe by Chef Steven Capodicasa