

Thursdays in the Kitchen: Exploring the Autumn Harvest

Early Fall Dinner Party

September 26th, 2013

White Lillet Cocktails

Serves 4

These refreshing cocktails incorporate white Lillet, a French aperitif that blends white wine, herbs and citrus.

Ingredients

Ice cubes as needed
1 bottle (24 fl. oz.) white Lillet
1/4 cup Cointreau
4 orange peel strips, each about 1/4 inch wide and 4 inches long

Directions

Select 4 tumblers or highball glasses. Fill each glass with ice. Add about 3/4 cup of the Lillet and 1 Tbs. of the Cointreau to each glass and stir. Garnish each glass with an orange peel strip and serve immediately.

Winter Squash Dip

Makes 10 Servings

Ingredients

1 winter squash (about 2 pounds), such as butternut or turban, unpeeled, seeded, and cut into 3-inch pieces
Extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling
Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
2 heads garlic, tops cut off to expose cloves
1 1/4 sticks (10 tablespoons) unsalted butter, room temperature
8 scallions, white and pale-green parts only, sliced 1 inch thick
2 chipotle chiles (canned in adobo sauce)
2 cups (16 ounces) sour cream
8 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
1 1/4 cups grated Parmesan cheese (about 4 ounces)
4 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
Paprika, for sprinkling
Roasted pepitas (pumpkin seeds), for garnish

Breadsticks, for dipping

Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place squash on a rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with oil, season with salt and pepper, and toss. Spread squash in a single layer. Place garlic on a piece of parchment-lined foil. Drizzle with oil, and wrap loosely. Place on baking sheet with squash. Bake until squash is soft and golden brown, about 50 minutes. Let cool slightly.

Meanwhile, melt 4 tablespoons butter in a skillet over medium heat. Add scallions, and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 4 minutes.

Scoop flesh from squash, and transfer to a food processor. Squeeze garlic from skins, and add to squash. Add scallions and chipotles, and pulse until smooth. Add remaining 6 tablespoons butter, the sour cream, cream cheese, Parmesan, and lemon juice, and pulse until just combined but not smooth. Season with salt and pepper.

Pour into a hollowed-out squash or a serving bowl. Refrigerate for 1 hour. Sprinkle with paprika, and garnish with pepitas. Serve with breadsticks.

Grilled Ratatouille

Serves 4 to 6

Ratatouille, the famed French vegetable ragout, is traditionally simmered on top of the stove. Here, the vegetables are grilled, which intensifies the flavor of each and brings them all together in a deliciously smoky finish. The grill marks visible on the vegetables contribute to an eye-catching presentation.

Ingredients

4 garlic cloves, crushed and peeled
1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 1/8 tsp. plus 1/2 tsp. salt
1 large globe eggplant, about 1 1/2 lb., cut into slices 1/2 inch thick
Canola oil for brushing
1 large yellow onion, cut crosswise into rounds 1/4 to 1/2 inch thick
1/8 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
2 large red bell peppers
2 zucchini, about 1 lb. total, halved lengthwise
3 large tomatoes, about 1 lb. total, halved crosswise
1/2 cup fresh basil leaves
1/4 tsp. red pepper flakes

Directions

In a small saucepan over low heat, combine the garlic and olive oil. Heat until small bubbles surround the garlic cloves and they turn golden brown, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and let stand for 10 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove the garlic and discard it. Set the infused oil aside. Sprinkle 1 tsp. of the salt over both sides of the eggplant slices. Place a large colander in the sink and add the eggplant. Let drain for at least 30 minutes or up to 1 hour. Lightly brush a 12-inch square of aluminum foil with canola oil and arrange the onion slices in their original sequence to make a relatively round sphere in the center of the foil. Drizzle the slices with 2 tsp. of the garlic oil, 1/8 tsp. of the salt and the black pepper.

Enclose the onion in the foil. Set aside. Working with 1 bell pepper at a time and using a paring knife, cut around the stem and discard it. Cut a long slit down the side of the pepper, then open it up so it lies flat. Cut 1/2 inch from the top and bottom. Cut out and discard the ribs and seeds. Rinse the eggplant slices well under cold running water and pat dry with paper towels. Arrange the eggplant, zucchini, bell peppers and tomatoes on a baking sheet. Prepare a charcoal or gas grill with 2 areas of high heat and 1 cooler area. Lightly oil the grill rack. Place the onion over the cooler area of the grill. Place the bell peppers, skin down, over the hottest part of the grill and cook until the skins are blackened, 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer the peppers to a bowl and let cool. Brush the eggplant, zucchini and tomatoes on both sides with half of the remaining garlic oil. Place the tomatoes, cut sides up, on the grill and cook until the skins blister, about 3 minutes. Turn them over and cook just until the cut sides are nicely grill-marked, about 2 minutes more. Transfer to a platter. Grill the eggplant and zucchini, turning once, until nicely grill-marked and tender when pierced with a knife, about 8 minutes total. Transfer to the platter. Carefully unwrap the onion and test for doneness with a paring knife; it should pierce the onion easily, but the onion should not be too soft. If the slices are still tough, rewrap them in the foil and continue cooking for 2 to 3 minutes. Remove the onion from the foil and transfer to the platter. Transfer the grilled vegetables to a cutting board. Pour any juices from the platter into a large bowl. Peel off and discard the blistered skins from the peppers and tomatoes. Using a chef's knife, chop the peppers, tomatoes, eggplant, zucchini and onion into 1/2- to 3/4-inch chunks and place in the bowl. Tear the basil leaves into small pieces and add them to the bowl. Add the red pepper flakes, the remaining garlic oil and the 1/2 tsp. salt and stir gently. Let stand for 20 minutes to allow the flavors to come together. The ratatouille can be served at room temperature. To serve it hot, transfer the ratatouille to a large fry pan, place over medium heat and heat, stirring occasionally, until just warmed through, about 5 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasonings with salt, black pepper and red pepper flakes. Serve immediately.

Chef's tip: Infused oils are a great way to add flavor to vegetables. Homemade versions are best when used the day they are made, as they do not refrigerate well.

Grilled Cedar Plank Pork Loin

Makes 10 Servings

It's important to soak the wood in water overnight to reduce the likelihood of flare-ups; keep some water nearby just in case it catches fire.

Ingredients

1 boneless pork loin (about 4 pounds), trimmed and trussed

Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper

Fig Balsamic Jam, for serving

Directions

Soak a cedar plank in water overnight. (Weigh it down with cans or something else heavy to keep it submerged.)

Heat grill to medium, and brush grates clean. Season pork with salt and pepper.

Place pork on soaked cedar plank. Grill pork on plank over direct heat with lid closed (the grill should

reach 425 degrees on a grill thermometer), until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center of the pork loin reaches 138 degrees, 50 to 55 minutes.

Remove pork from plank and let rest for at least 10 minutes before slicing. Serve warm or at room temperature with jam.

Fig and Balsamic Jam

Makes: 2 ½ cups

Figs make great jam. This jam is sweet, bright, and a perfect accompaniment to sweet and savory dishes such as Panini, flatbreads, cheeses, and ice cream. It keeps in the refrigerator for a good while, and it assembles in about thirty minutes.

2 pounds figs, preferably Black Mission, stems removed and coarsely chopped
1 ½ cups granulated sugar
½ cup balsamic vinegar
1 teaspoon black peppercorns, tied into a sachet
Fresh lemon juice

Instructions:

Combine the figs, sugar, balsamic vinegar, and sachet in a large saucepan and attach a candy thermometer to the pan. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat, then lower the heat to maintain a gentle simmer and cook, stirring to break up the larger pieces of fig, keeping a chunky consistency, until the jam reaches 215 degrees to 220 degrees. Remove from the heat.

Remove the sachet and stir in lemon juice to taste. Spoon the jam into a canning jar or other storage container, cover, and let cool to room temperature, then refrigerate for up to one month.

Bittersweet Chocolate and Hazelnut Cookies

Adapted from Gina DePalma's "Dolce Italiano," W. W. Norton, 2007

2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
1/3 cup unsweetened Dutch-processed cocoa powder
½ tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. kosher salt
½ cup whole hazelnuts, skinned or unskinned
1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
½ cup granulated sugar
1 large egg
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
5 ounces semisweet or bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
1 ½ cups confectioners' sugar, for dusting

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, and salt. Place the hazelnuts in the bowl of a food processor and pulse them 2 or 3 times to chop them medium-fine. Add the hazelnuts to the bowl with the dry ingredients and stir to combine them.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream together the butter and granulated sugar on medium speed until pale and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Beat in the egg and vanilla extract and scrape down the sides of the bowl. On low speed, beat in the dry ingredients, followed by the chocolate, and beat just until combined. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and chill the dough until firm, about 30 minutes. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Lightly grease two baking sheets with nonstick cooking spray or butter or line them with parchment.

Place the confectioner's sugar in a shallow bowl. To form the cookies, roll 1 scant tablespoon of dough into a 1-inch ball, then flatten it slightly with our fingertips to form a small disk. Roll the cookie in the confectioner's sugar to coat it evenly and place it on the baking sheet. Repeat until all of the dough is used, spacing the cookies 1 inch apart on the baking sheets.

Bake the cookies until they are puffed and cracking, 8 to 10 minutes. Rotate the baking sheets 180 degrees halfway through the baking time to ensure that the cookies bake evenly. Allow the cookies to cool on the baking sheets for 1 to 2 minutes, then use a spatula to transfer them gently to a wire rack to cool completely. If desired, dust them with additional confectioner's sugar.

The cookies can be stored in an airtight container, layered between sheets of parchment paper, and kept in a cool, dry place for up to 1 week.

Makes about 5 dozen cookies.

Resources

The Fullerton Arboretum - Check out our upcoming programs and classes! Visit our Facebook page for updates and pictures! You can also find us on Pinterest and Instagram @FullArboretum. www.fullertonarboretum.org
www.facebook.com/TheFullertonArboretum

OurLocaltopia - Our blog that explores local food resources, gourmet cooking and more!
www.ourlocaltopia.com

Edible Sunlight - Jonathan Duffy Davis's farm and food blog.
www.ediblesunlight.com

Thursdays in the Kitchen: Exploring the Autumn Harvest Cooking Series

10/24/13 - 11/21/13

Elevate your holiday menus with the Arboretum's "Thursdays in the Kitchen: Fall Harvest" series. As the holidays approach, our expert cooks will lead you through a culinary exploration of the autumn harvest and give you the tools needed to wow your friends and family with fabulous seasonal fare. Each class will include tasty make-and-take seasonal items, like jams, preserves, pickles and more! Come for the food, stay for the instruction and take home sweet and savory handmade goods to feed your whole family!

10/24 Class: Focus on Thanksgiving
11/21 Class: Focus on Christmas & New Years

\$75/ members & \$80/ non members
6pm to 9pm

Register at www.fullertonarboretum.com. Click on Classes.

