

ANGELINA'S BACHELORS

BY BRIAN O'REILLY

RECIPES BY VIRGINIA O'REILLY

Frangelico Chocolate “Dream” Cake

Serves 16

INGREDIENTS FOR PASTRY CREAM

3 cups whole milk
9 tablespoons cornstarch, sifted
¾ cup sugar
5 eggs
5 tablespoons cold butter, cubed
1½ teaspoons vanilla extract

INGREDIENTS FOR THE SIX-LAYER CHOCOLATE CAKE

1½ cups flour
1 cup Ghirardelli sweet ground chocolate powder
3 teaspoons baking powder
2¼ cups sugar
15 eggs, room temperature
6 tablespoons butter, room temperature
¾ cup milk, room temperature

INGREDIENTS FOR HAZELNUT FILLING

2½ cups sugar
1 teaspoon cream of tartar
½ cup Frangelico brandy
1¼ cups hazelnuts (coarsely crushed in a plastic bag with the side of a meat mallet)

INGREDIENTS FOR CHOCOLATE FROSTING AND GARNISH

⅛ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons Frangelico brandy
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups butter
1 cup heavy cream
1 cup Hershey’s Special Dark cocoa
6 cups sifted confectioners’ sugar
1 two-ounce bar white chocolate for shaving curls (such as Perugina) or ½ cup white chocolate chips (such as Ghirardelli)

METHOD FOR THE PASTRY CREAM

Pour ¾ cup of the milk into a large mixing bowl. Gradually sift in the cornstarch, whisking it into the milk as you go to create a slurry. Add half the sugar (¾ cup) and the eggs and whisk to completely combine.

In a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine the remaining ½ cups of the milk with the remaining ¾ cup sugar and stir to dissolve, about 2 to 3 minutes. Continue to stir constantly over

medium-low heat, until the temperature reaches between 160° and 165°F as measured with a candy thermometer, then remove from the heat. Temper the egg mixture with 1 tablespoon at a time of half of the hot milk mixture (about 21 to 24 tablespoons) whisking the egg mixture constantly as you do so. (This is done to equalize temperatures without cooking the eggs.) Return all the liquids to the pot and bring again up to 160°F over medium-low heat (be vigilant because at 170°F the eggs will begin to curdle), stirring frequently with a wooden spoon until you feel a drag on the spoon as the mixture begins to thicken. Cook for one minute. Remove the custard from the stove and whisk in the butter and vanilla extract. Pour into a mixing bowl and allow to cool to room temperature, then chill in the refrigerator for at least 4 hours.

METHOD FOR THE CAKE

Preheat the oven to 400°F and arrange two of the oven racks on the middle-most levels. So the batter will cling to the sides, line only the bottoms of six 9-inch round cake pans with parchment paper.

Sift together the flour, chocolate powder, and baking powder multiple times to remove clumps and to aerate. In a large mixing bowl, use an electric mixer set on high speed and very gradually let the sugar flow into the mixer blades as you beat the eggs until they become light lemony yellow in color and hold soft peaks, about 5 to 10 minutes, depending on the power of your mixer. Sift $\frac{1}{3}$ of the flour mixture onto the whipped egg mixture and fold it in. Repeat twice, folding in each addition before adding the next. Over medium-low heat, melt the butter in the milk in a heavy-bottomed saucepot. Immediately fold the hot milk/butter mixture into the egg/flour mixture, combining well but taking care not to overmix. Spoon the batter in even amounts into the six prepared cake tins, spreading as evenly as possible.

Bake until the top of the cake springs back when lightly prodded, and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, about 10 to 15 minutes. Remove the cakes from the oven and use a thin knife to loosen the sides. Let cool 10 minutes in the pan, then flip each one onto a plate and peel off the parchment paper, transferring each to a cooling rack as you do so. Let the cakes cool completely before attempting to fill and frost.

METHOD FOR THE HAZELNUT FILLING IN SYRUP

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Combine the sugar and cream of tartar in a heavy-bottomed saucepot. Add the Frangelico and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water, stirring constantly over medium-low heat only until the sugar is dissolved, about 10 minutes. Stop stirring and cook over very low heat until the syrup is hot and has the consistency of thick maple syrup, about 5 minutes. Meanwhile, spread the hazelnuts on a baking sheet and toast them for about 5 minutes. Sprinkle the hazelnuts over the surface of the syrup, remove it from the heat, and let it cool slightly, about 5 minutes.

To keep the cake plate clean while you are filling and frosting the cake, tear off about six 12-inch squares of waxed paper and fold them corner to corner twice to form wedges. Spoon a small amount of the hazelnut syrup in the center of the cake plate to act as an anchor for the bottom layer. Place the waxed-paper wedges daisy-petal style around the cake plate with the pointed end of each at the center of the plate. (The waxed paper wedges will be held in place by the dollop of syrup.) Then, place the bottom layer of the cake onto the plate and spoon a fifth of the hazelnut filling (about 2 or 3 tablespoons) in dollops onto 5 of the 6 layers (reserving the nicest layer for the top frosted layer), spreading it out evenly with a flat spatula. Let the layers stand with the hazelnut syrup while you prepare the frosting.

METHOD FOR THE FROSTING

In a large, heavy-bottomed saucepot, dissolve the salt in the Frangelico and vanilla. Add the butter and half the cream and sift in the cocoa over low heat, stirring continuously until the butter melts, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and transfer to a large mixing bowl. Gradually sift in the confectioners' sugar, mixing well with an electric mixer as you go and combining thoroughly before each addition of confectioners' sugar until smooth and soft peaks form. Let the frosting cool to room temperature.

ASSEMBLY

Divide the chilled pastry cream into 5 even shares and drop each $\frac{1}{3}$ - to $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup portion in dollops over the nut-topped base layer using an offset spatula to evenly spread it to within 1 inch of the edge. Layer the other nut-topped cake layers in turn, filling each the same way, and frost the sides and top of the assembled cake. Use a cheese plane or vegetable peeler to shave curls of white chocolate evenly onto the top of the cake. Keep refrigerated until ready to serve.

Stracciatella (*Roman Egg Drop Soup*)

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon butter
2 large garlic cloves, lightly crushed and minced
2 tablespoons flour
1 pint chicken broth
2 eggs
¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

METHOD

In a heavy-bottomed saucepot, heat the olive oil over medium heat until it begins to slightly shimmer. Melt the butter in the oil, add the garlic cloves, and cook them for 2 minutes, stirring frequently. Gradually whisk in the flour to make a roux and cook—stirring frequently—until the flour begins to toast. Whisk in the chicken broth a little at a time and bring to a boil. Beat the eggs and Parmesan in a small bowl and gradually add this mixture to the boiling soup where the liquid is breaking the surface so as to encourage the egg mixture to disperse in strands.

Remove from heat and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Aubergine Napoleons

Serves 6 to 8

INGREDIENTS

2 one-pound eggplants (aubergines)
Salt, to taste
1 cup milk
1 cup white-rice flour or all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon marjoram
1 teaspoon dried basil
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper plus a pinch for the dredging flour
2 to 3 eggs beaten with 1 tablespoon water, approximately, as needed for egg wash
1 cup millet flour or panko bread crumbs
1 tablespoon dried rosemary, ground to a powder with a mortar and pestle
⅛ teaspoon salt
6 to 8 portobello mushrooms, cleaned, trimmed, and bitter gills scraped away with the tip of a teaspoon
1 cup olive oil (*not* extra-virgin), approximately, 2 to 3 tablespoons to oil the portobellos, 1 tablespoon to sauté the portobellos, 1 tablespoon to sauté the mushrooms, and 2 to 3 tablespoons to sauté each side of eggplant in 2 to 3 batches
1 tablespoon butter
2 shallot cloves, minced
2 garlic cloves, lightly crushed and minced
6 ounces (about 3 cups) large white mushrooms, cleaned, trimmed, and sliced into ¼-inch-thick slices
½ cup tomato paste (a 6-ounce can)
½ teaspoon allspice
1 pound smoked fresh mozzarella, in ½-inch-thick slices
6 to 8 tablespoons sour cream
½ pound Gruyère cheese, sliced with a cheese plane
½ cup crème fraîche
6 to 8 small sprigs fresh basil

METHOD

Slice the eggplants crosswise into ½-inch-thick slices and sprinkle a smidgen of salt on each side as you do so, laying them on top of a double thickness of paper towels. Place a second layer of paper towels on the top of the salted pieces. Weigh them down with a heavy bowl or some canned goods set on a large cutting board and let them sit for 30 minutes. (This will remove any bitterness from the flesh and compress the slices so that they will not absorb too much oil during sautéing.)

Set up your breading station. Pour the milk into a shallow container such as a pie plate. Mix the flour with the marjoram, basil, and a pinch (¹/₁₆ teaspoon) ground black pepper and spread the mixture on a plate or flat work surface. Pour the egg wash into a separate shallow container. Have a large sheet of waxed paper spread out nearby on which to lay the coated eggplant. Dip each slice of eggplant into the

milk and then into the flour. Allow any excess flour to fall away, then dip into the beaten eggs and into the millet flour or crumbs, and place the coated eggplant on the waxed paper. Repeat for each slice of eggplant. Let the coated slices air dry for 30 minutes.

While the eggplant is air drying, mix the pulverized rosemary, salt and ¼ teaspoon black pepper in a small bowl. Rub the portobello mushrooms with 2 to 3 tablespoons of the oil, and rub some of the rosemary mixture into all surfaces of them. Melt the butter in 1 tablespoon of the oil over medium heat in a large sauté pan, reserving the rest of the oil. When the oil begins to shimmer, sauté each side of the rubbed portobellos, curved side down first, until they release their juices, about 3 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer the portobellos to a utility platter and pour the juices into a small heatproof bowl.

To the same pan add another tablespoon of oil and sauté the shallots, garlic, and white mushrooms over medium heat, stirring frequently to prevent burning, until the mushrooms begin to give up their juices but are still retaining their shape, about 5 to 8 minutes. Then, using tongs or a slotted spoon, transfer the white mushrooms to a small plate (to let cool to room temperature) and transfer the garlic, shallots, and pan juices to the bowl that contains the juices from the portobellos.

When the coated eggplant has air dried, clean out the sauté pan and heat enough oil to coat the bottom of the pan to a depth of about $\frac{1}{16}$ of an inch (about 2 to 3 tablespoons) over medium-high heat. When the oil begins to shimmer, add the slices of coated eggplant, leaving undisturbed for the first 2 minutes or so to let the coating integrate into the surface of the eggplant and to prevent “crusting off” of the breading. Flip the eggplant slices and cook the other side undisturbed in the same way, adding oil as needed, then transfer to paper towels to drain. Cook the eggplant this way in batches, wiping out the sauté pan between batches and replenishing with fresh oil for each new batch (about 3 batches in a 14-inch pan).

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Mix the tomato paste and allspice into the bowl that contains the mushroom juices, garlic, and shallots.

Assemble each napoleon in a wide CorningWare or Pyrex baking dish such as a 10-inch-by-12-inch-by-2-inch-deep lasagna dish, greased with butter. The layering sequence from bottom to top for each napoleon is one portobello, a slice of mozzarella, and a slice of eggplant, topped by a tablespoon of tomato-paste mixture, 4 or 5 slices of white mushrooms, a second slice of eggplant, a tablespoon of sour cream, then 1 teaspoon more of the tomato-paste mixture and two 2-by-4-inch pieces of Gruyère. (If you have additional eggplant, place it on a baking sheet.) Cover the dish with foil and bake until the eggplant is cooked through, the cheese is heated through, and the napoleons are set, about 30 minutes, then remove the foil and bake for 5 more minutes. (Bake the extra eggplant at the same time.)

Remove from the oven and let the napoleons rest for 5 minutes.

PRESENTATION

Carefully place a napoleon in the center of each serving dish. Top with a dollop of crème fraîche and garnish with a sprig of basil. Serve extra eggplant on a platter as a supplement to the meal. This is delicious with a crisp chardonnay.

Lasagna Provençal

Serves 12

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons olive oil (1 to sauté and 1 to toss with the noodles)
2 shallot cloves, diced small
2 cloves garlic, lightly crushed and minced
One 16-ounce can diced tomatoes
1 teaspoon fresh rosemary leaves, very finely minced (from about 1 large sprig)
1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves minced (from about 6 to 12 sprigs depending on how densely the leaves have grown on the stems)
1 tablespoon fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, minced (from about 12 sprigs)
2 fresh sage leaves, finely minced
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
One 16-ounce package lasagna noodles (which contains approximately 16 to 20 noodles)
2 cups ricotta cheese
4 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, 2 ounces grated to yield 1 cup and 2 ounces cut into 24 two-inch-long, ¼-inch batonnets
8 ounces Neufchâtel cheese, cut into ½-inch cubes
2 large eggs, beaten
½ cup fresh chopped basil leaves, ¼ cup to layer over the tomato *fresca* (sauce) and ¼ cup for the top plus 12 tiny sprigs to garnish
2 tablespoons fresh oregano leaves, minced (from about 6 to 12 sprigs depending on density of leaves)
1½ cups oil-packed, sun-dried tomatoes, julienne cut, about an 8-ounce jar
2 cups shredded Gruyère cheese (about 8 ounces)
5-ounce package herbed Boursin cheese
½ cup crème fraîche

METHOD

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil for the lasagna noodles.

To make the tomato *fresca*, heat one tablespoon of the olive oil over medium high heat in a medium saucepot, and sauté the shallots and garlic until they become translucent. Add the diced tomatoes, rosemary, thyme, parsley, sage, and salt and pepper, and stir to combine. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer uncovered just until the flavors are integrated but before the tomatoes begin to break down, about 20 minutes, checking periodically to make sure the sauce doesn't burn.

Boil the lasagna noodles until al dente, about 10 to 15 minutes. Drain and transfer to a large bowl. Toss with the remaining tablespoon of olive oil so the noodles don't stick together. Let cool so you can handle them.

This lasagna will have 4 layers but two different types of cheese layers. One type of cheese layer will consist of ricotta, grated Parmesan, Neufchâtel, and egg to bind. Combine the ricotta and Parmesan in

a mixing bowl, stir in half of the cubed Neufchâtel (reserving half of the cubes until assembly), whisk in the eggs, and set aside briefly. Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Layer 4 to 5 lasagna noodles lengthwise side by side with edges overlapping in an ovenproof lasagna dish. Top with half of the cheese/egg mixture and arrange 12 of the Parmesan strips and half of the reserved cubed Neufchâtel evenly over it, reserving the rest of the Parmesan and Neufchâtel for the other layer. (It is easiest to drop evenly spaced spoonfuls of the cheese/egg mixture over the noodles, then spread it out.) Distribute 2 tablespoons of the fresh basil, half of the fresh oregano, and ½ cup of the sun-dried tomatoes over the cheese, then layer another 4 or 5 lasagna noodles over the cheese in the same fashion as the first layer of noodles.

The second type of cheese layer will consist of Gruyère and Boursin. Spread half of the Gruyère over the second layer of noodles and drop dollops of half of the Boursin cheese over the Gruyère. Distribute another ½ cup of the sun-dried tomatoes over the cheese. For the third layer, repeat the process with the noodles, remaining cheese/egg mixture, the remaining 12 Parmesan strips, remaining half of the reserved cubed Neufchâtel, 2 tablespoons basil, remaining oregano, and remaining sun-dried tomatoes. For the last (top) layer, spread out the final course of noodles, top with dollops of the remaining Boursin and dollops of the crème fraîche, and then ladle the tomato sauce over the top and finish with the remaining Gruyère.

Bake covered (with foil) in the oven for 30 minutes, remove the foil, and bake for 10 more minutes. Remove from the oven and let rest for 10 minutes before slicing into 12 squares. Sprinkle the surface with ¼ cup fresh-minced basil. Arrange a basil sprig next to the lasagna on each serving plate.

Eggs Benedict Florentine

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS FOR CANADIAN BACON

- 1 teaspoon canola or olive oil
- 4 half-inch-thick slices Canadian bacon

INGREDIENTS FOR CREAMED SPINACH

- ½ cup heavy cream
- ¼ teaspoon grated nutmeg
- 1 pound fresh spinach, soaked in salt water to remove grit and dried in a salad spinner
- Salt, if needed, and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, freshly grated from about a 2-ounce piece

INGREDIENTS FOR POACHED EGGS

- 4 eggs
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 2 English muffins, fork split
- Butter, as needed, for the English muffins
- ⅛ teaspoon paprika

INGREDIENTS FOR HOLLANDAISE

- 2 large egg yolks
- 1 tablespoon chilled white wine
- ⅓ teaspoon salt (a pinch)
- ½ cup butter (see note in method about this amount), fully melted but no longer steaming hot
- Juice of ½ a fresh lemon

METHOD FOR CANADIAN BACON

Heat the oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Lightly brown each side of the Canadian bacon. Remove it from the heat and cover it to keep it warm until needed.

METHOD FOR CREAMED SPINACH

Heat the cream and nutmeg over medium to medium-low heat in a heavy-bottomed saucepot, and reduce by three-fourths, about 5 minutes, monitoring to prevent burning.

Steam the spinach until it's tender but still bright green.

Remove the cream from the heat and mix well with the Parmesan, then fold in the spinach. Adjust the seasoning to taste with salt, if needed, and black pepper. Cover to keep warm, and set aside.

METHOD FOR THE POACHED EGGS

Poach the eggs before you begin the hollandaise, as hollandaise cannot sit long before it is served and will reheat the eggs it tops.

Add 1 tablespoon vinegar to a medium saucepan of gently boiling water over medium-high heat. Add the eggs one at a time so they don't cook into one mass.

The eggs should be cooked until the whites are set but the centers are still soft. Ideally, the eggs will float freely and independently without sinking to the bottom. But if an egg sinks to the bottom, wait until it's nearly set before attempting to work it loose, or the yolk will surely break. For food-safety reasons, remove the eggs from the pot with a slotted wooden or plastic spoon and place in another pot or bowl filled with water that has been heated to 150°F (hot enough to kill microorganisms without further cooking the eggs), cover, and let sit about 5 minutes, while you make the hollandaise, then drain them on a paper towel and pat them dry.

Toast and butter the English muffins.

METHOD FOR THE HOLLANDAISE

Combine the egg yolks, wine, and salt in a double boiler set over simmering water (in classical cooking, a simmer is *just below* a boil, a temperature that should be maintained to keep the eggs from curdling), and whisk constantly for about 2 minutes, then gradually begin adding melted butter in a slow, thin stream, continuing to whisk constantly until the mixture is emulsified and the sauce begins to thicken. (Important: If you achieve a pleasantly thickened sauce before all the butter has been added, don't feel compelled to use it all because attempting to do so may cause the sauce to break.) Whisk in the lemon juice, and remove the double boiler from the heat. Cover and keep the sauce in the double boiler (but not for long).

PRESENTATION

Make a circle of creamed spinach around the perimeter of each serving plate. Place a toasted and buttered English muffin in the center of each plate and top with a slice of Canadian bacon and a poached egg. Spoon some hollandaise sauce over the egg and sprinkle with paprika.

Veal Braciolo with Piccata Sauce

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

- 3 pounds sliced boneless veal
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ¼ pound prosciutto, cut into 24 pieces, each about 2 inches square
- ½ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley, minced
- 4 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, 1½ cups finely grated from about a 2- or 3-ounce piece, and the rest cut medium brunoise (¼-inch julienne, then crosswise) into ½-inch lengths
- 3 tablespoons to ½ cup canola oil, as needed
- 2 shallot cloves, minced (or one clove if they're large)
- ½ cup dry vermouth
- 2 cups chicken stock
- ½ teaspoon organic beef base (such as Better Than Bouillon brand, sold in an 8-ounce jar)
- 2 tablespoons white-rice flour or all-purpose flour
- 1 fresh lemon, zest grated off then juiced
- ¼ cup capers, about half of a 3-ounce jar
- 1 pound cooked linguine dressed with extra-virgin olive oil, freshly ground black pepper, and minced parsley (as an accompaniment)
- 1 pound steamed asparagus spears (as an accompaniment)

METHOD

Spread sheets of plastic wrap over the surface of a large cutting board, tucking the edges under to secure them. Lay the veal on the plastic wrap and season it with black pepper. Cover the meat with a second layer of plastic wrap to keep the mess down, and pound it down to an even thickness of ⅛ inch with a meat mallet. Slice the veal into 4-inch-by-6-inch sections to yield about 24 pieces. Lay a piece of prosciutto on each piece of veal, sprinkling each with a teaspoon of parsley and a tablespoon of the grated cheese. Top each with a few chunks of the cheese. Roll up the slices of meat, folding in the sides as you go and secure with toothpicks. (Keep count of the toothpicks so you can be sure to retrieve them all.) The veal will probably have to be seared in batches. For each batch, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat. When it begins to shimmer, place the veal rolls in the pan, seam-side down first, and sear for 1 minute undisturbed before flipping and searing the other side the same way. Transfer the seared rolled meat seam-side down to a baking dish and remove all the toothpicks. Cover with foil to let rest.

Preheat the oven to 300°F.

In the same sauté pan, heat 1 tablespoon of oil over medium heat and sauté the shallots until they turn translucent, stirring frequently to prevent burning, about 2 minutes. Deglaze the pan with the vermouth and let most of the alcohol evaporate. Then add the chicken stock and heat to a gentle boil. Whisk in the beef base to blend, then gradually whisk in the flour. Lower the heat to medium and let cook about 5 to 10 minutes to allow the flavors to integrate and the sauce to thicken. Reduce the heat to low

and whisk in the lemon juice. Pour the sauce over the meat. Cover and place in the oven until the veal is infused with the sauce and very tender, about 50 minutes to 1 hour.

PRESENTATION

Place a bed of linguine in the center of each serving plate. Use two large spoons to carefully transfer 3 to 4 veal rolls to each plate, arranging them around the linguine. Spoon about 3 to 4 tablespoons of sauce over the veal and the pasta. Sprinkle one teaspoon of capers and a pinch of lemon zest on each piece of veal. Arrange several asparagus spears around the perimeter of the plate.

Mint Sweet Potato Bisque

Serves 6 to 8

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon canola oil
2 garlic cloves, lightly crushed and minced
2 shallot cloves, minced
1 quart vegetable stock
2 ½ pounds sweet potatoes peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
½ cup dry white rice
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 teaspoon cinnamon
2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 cup golden raisins, rinsed, drained, and chopped
½ cup packed fresh mint leaves, finely minced, plus 8 small mint sprigs
½ cup walnuts
1 fresh lime, zest micro-grated off and juiced
½ cup sour cream

METHOD

Heat the canola oil over medium heat in a large stockpot. When it begins to shimmer, sauté the garlic and shallots until they soften, stirring frequently to prevent burning, about 1 or 2 minutes. Pour the vegetable stock and 4 cups water into the pot, bring to a boil, and add the rice, sweet potatoes, chili powder, cinnamon, and salt and pepper to taste. Return to a boil, reduce the heat to low, cover and let cook undisturbed for 20 minutes. Remove the soup pot from the heat and let stand for 5 minutes before removing the lid.

Meanwhile preheat the oven to 350°F.

Use a hand masher to break up the sweet potatoes, then blend right in the pot with an immersion blender. Add the raisins and return to medium heat to soften the raisins, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the minced mint.

Spread the walnuts on a baking sheet and toast them in the oven for about 3 to 5 minutes, then crush them in a plastic bag using a rolling pin.

PRESENTATION

Ladle the soup into crocks and drizzle about 1 teaspoon of the lime juice over the surface of the soup in each. Spoon a tablespoon of sour cream into the center of each and top with a pinch of lime zest. Encircle the sour cream with a tablespoon of grated walnuts. Arrange a mint sprig in the sour cream.

Cherry Pear Pie

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS FOR THE PIE FILLING

½ fresh lemon, micro-zested and juiced
3 large, firm Bartlett pears
¼ cup sugar
¼ teaspoon salt (⅛ teaspoon for the pears and ⅛ teaspoon for the cherries)
⅛ cup whiskey
1 pint (about 1 pound) fresh black cherries, pitted with a cherry stoner and halved (cherry-pitting gadgets such as those made by OXO and Bialetti can be found at Fantes.com)
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon (½ teaspoon for the pears and ½ teaspoon for the cherries)
6 small cardamom pods ground in a spice mill and chaff removed
½ cup walnuts, coarsely crushed in a plastic bag with a rolling pin
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1 tablespoon butter

INGREDIENTS FOR THE PIE CRUST

3 cups all-purpose flour, plus some to flour the pastry cloth
⅛ teaspoon salt
4 tablespoons cold butter
4 tablespoons cold shortening
¼ to ½ cup water as needed to moisten dough (have a glass of ice water handy)
1 egg, beaten for an egg wash

TOPPINGS

2 ounces yellow or white mild cheddar cheese, thinly sliced with a cheese plane
1 pint vanilla ice cream
Fresh mint leaves

METHOD FOR THE PIE FILLING

Pour half the lemon juice into a large bowl. Slice the pears lengthwise into quarters (leaving the skin on because it is pretty and provides roughage) and remove the fibrous cores, seeds, and stems. Then further slice the pears into ¼-inch-thick wedges and cut the wedges crosswise into 1-inch lengths into the bowl of lemon juice, coating the pears as you go to prevent oxidation. Add ⅓ cup of the sugar, ⅛ teaspoon of the salt, and 1 tablespoon of the whiskey, mixing gently, but well.

In a separate bowl, combine the cherries with the remaining ⅓ cup sugar, ⅛ teaspoon of the salt, a tablespoon of the whiskey, ½ teaspoon of the cinnamon, and the cardamom.

METHOD FOR THE PIE CRUST

Place the flour and salt in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a dough blade. Add the butter and shortening and use the pulse button on the food processor to combine just until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Then, through the feed tube, add ice water a little at a time, pulsing until the dough just

comes together in a cohesive mass and using only the amount of water needed to make that happen. It is important to avoid overworking the dough so that it will remain as flaky and delicate as possible. If you use too much water you also run the risk of the dough becoming too sticky. Transfer the dough to a bowl and gently form into a ball. Slice the dough ball in half. Keep the bowl covered with a damp kitchen towel while you roll out the dough.

Flour a scrupulously clean pastry cloth or a large non-terry cloth kitchen towel (that has been laundered in chlorine bleach and allowed to air dry) and allow any excess flour to fall away. (For a two-crust pie such as this, it would be handy to have two cloths, one each for the top and bottom crusts.) Fold the towel crosswise in half and place half of the dough ball within the folded towel, pressing it into a mostly flattened disk. Use a rolling pin to roll the dough into a circle of about 11 inches in diameter, rolling from the center outward and turning the pastry cloth as you go to ensure an even shape.

Invert a 9-inch CorningWare or Pyrex pie plate on the rolled-out dough to use as a template, centering the dough to the plate and using a pizza cutter or butter knife to cut a clean-edged circle about one-inch larger all around than the pie plate. Set aside briefly to be used as the top crust.

Flour another pastry cloth, letting any excess flour fall away. Place the second half of the dough ball into the folded cloth as before, flatten into a disk, and roll into an 11-inch circle using the same technique. Trim the edges of the dough circle for neatness. Ever so gingerly slip your hand under the pastry cloth (so as not to tear the dough) and flip the dough circle into the pie plate, gently easing the dough into it.

METHOD FOR FILLING AND BAKING THE PIE

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Mix the walnuts with the brown sugar and spread over the base of the bottom crust. Spoon the pear filling into the pie crust, sprinkle with the remaining cinnamon, and spoon the cherry filling over it. Distribute the lemon zest over the top of the cherries. Divide the tablespoon of butter into quarters and dot the top of the filling with it. In a smooth motion, flip the second dough circle onto the top of the pie, fold the edges of the top circle of dough under the edges of the bottom circle of dough, and crimp the edges between your fingers by pinching every inch or so. Brush the crust with beaten egg and use a knife to slice six vents in a starburst pattern in the top crust. Place in the oven over a sheet of foil to catch drips. Bake until the fruit is soft and the crust is golden, about 45 to 55 minutes.

Let cool to room temperature before serving.

PRESENTATION

Cut the pie into approximately six wedges. Place each wedge on a dessert plate and garnish with 1 scoop of vanilla ice cream or with 1 or 2 small slices of cheddar, which has been melted by placing the cheese-topped wedge of pie briefly into a 250°F oven. Add small sprigs of mint.

Lavender-Spiced Leg of Lamb and Ratatouille Frittata

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS FOR THE LAMB

3-to-4-pound boneless leg of lamb, silver membrane removed
1 teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 teaspoon ground allspice
1 tablespoon fresh culinary lavender or rosemary, very finely minced
2 tablespoons canola or olive oil

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT FOR THE LAMB

2 yards of butcher's string or natural-fiber kitchen twine
2 to 3 disposable thin bamboo skewers (to secure the meat)

INGREDIENTS FOR THE RATATOUILLE FRITTATA

3 tablespoons canola or olive oil (1 tablespoon to sauté the onion and garlic and 2 tablespoons for the squash)
1 large red onion, diced medium
2 large garlic cloves, lightly crushed and minced
1 small zucchini squash, sliced into ⅛-inch-thick pieces
1 small yellow squash, sliced into ⅛-inch-thick pieces
1 tablespoon fresh cilantro, minced 1 teaspoon dried savory, ground to a powder with a mortar and pestle
12 eggs, beaten
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
2 ounces Gruyère cheese, thinly sliced with a cheese plane
6 tablespoons crème fraîche or sour cream
6 small fresh basil sprigs
6 squash blossoms (optional)

INGREDIENTS FOR THE WHITE SHALLOT SAUCE

4 shallot cloves, peeled and quartered
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
⅛ cup dry white rice
1 cup beef stock
¼ teaspoon poultry seasoning
¾ cup small-curd cottage cheese

METHOD FOR THE LAMB

Soak the lamb for 15 minutes in a bowl of cold water mixed with 1 tablespoon salt to remove residue, and pat it dry with paper towels. Combine the salt, pepper, and allspice and rub the mixture well into the outside surface of the lamb leg. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Distribute the lavender evenly over the inside surface of the meat, rubbing it well into the flesh. Tie the leg meat back together with the butcher's string, and, if needed, use skewers to secure any errant flaps of meat. Keep count of the number of skewers you use so you are sure to retrieve them all before service, breaking them flush with the outside of the roast so you can easily sear the lamb.

Heat the oil over medium-high heat in a large sauté pan with an oven-safe handle. When the oil begins to shimmer, brown the exterior of the rubbed meat on all sides, leaving each side undisturbed for 2 to 4 minutes to let the seasonings integrate into the surface of the meat.

Transfer the lamb to the oven to finish. If you wish the meat to be rare, roast to an internal temperature of 130°F, about 25 minutes per pound. For medium, roast to an internal temperature of 145°F, about 30 minutes per pound. For well-done, roast until an internal temperature of 160°F is reached, approximately 35 minutes per pound.

(Begin the frittata about 45 minutes before you expect the lamb to be finished. Begin the sauce about 30 minutes before service.)

Remove the lamb from the oven and let rest 5 minutes. Cut away the string and remove all the skewers before slicing.

METHOD FOR THE FRITTATA

Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil over medium heat in a 10-inch skillet with a lid, reserving the rest of the oil for the vegetables. When it begins to shimmer, add the onion and garlic and sauté until the onion turns translucent, about 2 to 3 minutes, stirring frequently to prevent burning. Transfer the cooked onion and garlic briefly to a small plate.

In the same pan, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of the oil over low heat, making sure the entire inside surface of the pan is coated. Quickly layer alternating slices of zucchini and yellow squash, in concentric circles with the edges overlapping. Distribute the sautéed onion and garlic over the surface of the squash and sprinkle with cilantro and savory. Cover the pan and increase the heat to medium. Cook until the squash begins to soften, about 10 minutes. (Be careful not to disturb the arrangement of the squash when checking on its progress.)

Pour the beaten eggs over the squash and season the surface of the eggs with salt and pepper. Cover and let cook undisturbed for about 5 to 10 minutes to allow the eggs to set up. Then, remove the lid and loosen the edges of the frittata carefully with a thin spatula. Place the uncovered skillet of eggs and squash in the oven (with the lamb) for about 10 minutes to allow the eggs to tighten up.

Remove the pan from the oven and top with the sliced Gruyère. Cover to keep warm and to melt the cheese a bit.

METHOD FOR THE WHITE SHALLOT SAUCE

Bring the shallots, salt, pepper, thyme, rice, beef stock, and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water to a boil in a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Reduce the heat to low and let simmer covered for 25 minutes. Pour into a blender with the cap to the feed opening removed and, while holding a clean kitchen towel firmly over the opening to allow the steam to vent, purée the sauce with the poultry seasoning and cottage cheese.

Reheat the sauce over low heat before service.

PRESENTATION

Slice the lamb into uniform $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch- or $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-thick slices. Cut the frittata into 6 wedges. Arrange slices of lamb and frittata on serving plates. Spoon 1 to 2 tablespoons of sauce over the lamb. Top each wedge of the frittata with a tablespoon of crème fraîche and sprinkle with fresh basil. Garnish with squash blossoms.

Ossobuco with Egg Noodles and Capers

Serves 8

INGREDIENTS

Eight 6-to-8-ounce pieces osso-buco-cut veal (cross section of shank cut into 1½-inch-thick pieces)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
½ teaspoon nutmeg, approximately, as needed to sprinkle on veal
3 tablespoons canola or olive oil (not extra-virgin)
2 shallot cloves, minced
1 large garlic clove, lightly crushed and minced
1 cup dry vermouth
1 quart chicken stock
12 peppercorns
4 large sprigs fresh thyme
2 bay leaves
2 fresh sage leaves
1 large carrot, peeled and diced small
2 tablespoons butter
4 egg yolks
1 pound egg noodles or fettuccine
½ cup heavy cream
1 fresh lemon, zested and juiced
2 tablespoons capers
1 tablespoon minced fresh dill leaves
2 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, minced

METHOD

Rinse the veal to remove residue and pat the meat dry with paper towels. Season each piece on both sides with salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil over medium-high heat in a large sauté pan, and sear the veal leaving undisturbed for about 2 to 4 minutes to allow the seasonings to integrate into the surface of the meat and to prevent tearing of the flesh. Add a second tablespoon of oil to the pan, flip the veal, and sear the other side in the same way, then remove to a utility platter. To the same pan, add the remaining tablespoon of oil and, over medium heat, cook the shallot cloves and garlic until the shallots turn translucent, stirring frequently to prevent burning, about 1 to 2 minutes. Deglaze the pan with the vermouth and allow most of the liquid to evaporate, about 5 minutes. Add the chicken stock and return the veal to the pan. Reduce the heat to low and add the peppercorns, thyme, bay leaves, and sage leaves. Cover the pan and let cook over low heat until fork tender, about 2 hours.

Sauté the carrots over medium low heat in the butter until tender, stirring frequently to prevent burning. Transfer the mixture to a small bowl, cover, and set aside until needed.

When the veal is tender, begin boiling the water for the egg noodles.

Carefully remove the veal to a platter keeping the osso buco pieces intact, and cover to keep warm. Strain the cooking liquids into a small bowl, wipe out the pan, and return the liquid to the pan to make the sauce. Increase the heat to medium high and allow the liquids to reduce to 1 cup, about 10 minutes.

In a small bowl, whisk the egg yolks until no streaks remain and they turn light yellow in color.

Meanwhile begin boiling the egg noodles until al dente.

When the pan juices have reduced, reduce the heat to medium low and whisk in the heavy cream to heat through. Remove the pan from the heat and, 1 tablespoon at a time, add the liquid to the bowl of egg yolks, whisking between additions. (This liaison will equalize the temperatures so the eggs don't coagulate.) When half of the cream mixture from the pan has been added to the egg yolks, pour the entire contents of the small bowl into the pan and whisk thoroughly to combine well. Add the lemon juice and capers, set the heat to medium low, and stir constantly until the mixture begins to thicken slightly and it reaches a temperature of 165°F as measured with a candy thermometer, 5 to 7 minutes.

Drain the egg noodles and toss with the butter/carrot mixture and fresh dill. Cover to keep warm.

PRESENTATION

Arrange a piece of veal alongside some egg noodles on each serving plate. Spoon about ¼-cup sauce over the veal and top with 1 teaspoon minced parsley and a pinch of lemon zest. Delicious served with steamed green beans that have been tossed with butter and sautéed minced garlic.

Marinated Unagi over Arborio Rice Patties

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS FOR THE MARINATED EEL

- ¼ cup soy sauce
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 pound freshwater eel fillets cut into 1-inch-by-2-inch pieces

INGREDIENTS FOR THE RICE PATTIES

- 1 quart beef stock
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, minced
- 2 cups arborio rice
- 1 cup tawny port, such as Sandeman
- 2 cups grated Asiago cheese (from a piece that is about 4 ounces)
- ¾ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- Salt, to taste
- 1 fresh lemon, zested with a micro-grater and juiced
- 1½ teaspoons Frank's Red Hot Original cayenne pepper sauce (use more if you like it hot)
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh basil leaves

METHOD FOR THE EEL FILLETS

Combine the soy sauce and balsamic vinegar in a mixing bowl. In a separate small bowl, whisk the cayenne pepper gradually into the olive oil. Then, whisking constantly, gradually pour the olive oil mixture in a slow thin stream into the soy sauce/vinegar mixture to create an emulsion. Place the eel fillets into a nonreactive container to be used for marinating the eel and coat each of them with the mixture. Cover and refrigerate overnight (at least 8 hours). (If the fillets do not fit in a single layer or are not immersed, flip them and recoat them periodically during the marinating.)

Shortly before service, brush a grill pan with a small amount of oil, and get it hot over medium-high heat, about 3 to 5 minutes.

Grill the marinated eel, until cooked through, about 3 minutes per side.

METHOD FOR THE ARBORIO RICE PATTIES

Begin cooking the rice about 40 minutes before service. Heat the beef stock and 2 cups water to boiling in a large pot, then reduce the heat to low so it will simmer. In a large pot, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Sauté the onion until it turns translucent, about 2 to 3 minutes. Add the dry arborio rice to the pot and stir to coat with the olive oil. Toast the grains of rice until they are just golden, about 3 minutes, stirring frequently to prevent burning. Add the port and stir until the rice absorbs it. Begin adding the hot beef stock about ½ cup at a time, allowing each addition of stock to become

absorbed in the rice before adding the next, stirring constantly so the rice doesn't stick to the bottom of the pot. When half the stock has been added this way, add the balance of it all at once and continue to stir until all of the liquid is absorbed into the rice and the rice is al dente. Do not allow the rice to become gummy. Total stirring time for the rice will be approximately 22 minutes; it is labor-intensive, but time well spent. When all the stock has been absorbed, and the rice is cooked but firm "to the bite," stir in the grated cheese, the black pepper, and the oregano. Add salt to taste, cover the pot, and remove from the heat.

(Begin grilling the eel only after the rice has been cooked.)

PRESENTATION

Using a 2 ½-inch circle cutter as a mold, firmly press even amounts of the rice (4 to 6 table-spoons) into 6 patties, one on each serving plate. Top with one or 2 slices of grilled eel, drizzle with 1 teaspoon lemon juice and ¼ teaspoon hot sauce, and garnish with minced basil and a pinch of lemon zest.

Caesar Salad with Batter-Dipped Smelts

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS FOR CROUTONS

½ baguette loaf (or any small loaf of crispy French or Italian bread), cut into ½-inch cubes
¼ cup olive oil
1 teaspoon garlic powder
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

INGREDIENTS FOR BATTER-DIPPED SMELTS

⅔ cup white rice flour or all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
Pinch salt (1/16 teaspoon)
¾ teaspoon canola oil
1 egg
⅔ cup milk
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 liter canola oil (or 2 to 4 liters if you are using a deep fryer)
1 pound boneless smelts, halved lengthwise (a pound will yield about 3 dozen halves)

INGREDIENTS FOR SALAD AND DRESSING

1 large head romaine lettuce, soaked in salt water to remove grit and dried in a salad spinner
2 large garlic cloves, peeled and quartered
1 pasteurized egg (these are identified in stores as “pasteurized” and although not cooked have been sufficiently heated for food safety)
½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
½ fresh lemon, micro-zested and juiced
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese (from about a ¼-pound chunk), plus some to shave over the salad
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
Salt to taste

METHOD FOR THE CROUTONS

Preheat the oven to 250°F. In a mixing bowl, toss the bread cubes with olive oil, sprinkle with garlic powder, salt, and pepper, and toss again to coat thoroughly. Place the bread cubes on a baking sheet and toast them until lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool.

METHOD FOR THE SMELTS

In a small bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, and salt and mix well. Whisk in the canola oil, egg, and milk, and season with black pepper. Heat the oil over medium-high heat in a large sauté pan until it shimmers or, if using a deep fryer, to 375°F (or according to the manufacturer’s instructions for similar foods). Dip the smelts in the batter to coat, allowing excess to drip away, and add them to the hot

oil, cooking until golden brown, turning with tongs to brown both sides, about 20 seconds for the first side and 10 seconds for the other side (or in the deep-fryer basket, if applicable). Drain on paper toweling and let cool to room temperature.

METHOD FOR THE SALAD AND DRESSING

Remove the large “spines” from the lettuce leaves and tear the tender portions of the leaves into bite-size pieces.

One at a time through the feed opening of a running blender, mix the garlic cloves, egg, Worcestershire sauce, and the lemon juice. Add extra-virgin olive oil in a slow, thin stream to emulsify. Transfer the dressing to a small bowl and mix in the grated cheese. Season with black pepper (and salt only if necessary since the cheese lends saltiness).

Just before service, toss the romaine lettuce and lemon zest in a mixing bowl with only enough dressing to coat.

PRESENTATION

Place some salad in the center of salad-size serving dishes and sprinkle with croutons. Garnish with shaved cheese and arrange 5 or 6 fried smelts around the perimeter of the plate.

Boston Custard Puff-Pastry Pie

Serves 6 to 8

INGREDIENTS FOR PASTRY CREAM FILLING

1½ cups whole milk
9 tablespoons sifted cornstarch
¾ cup sugar
6 eggs
1½ cups heavy cream
2 vanilla beans or 3 tablespoons vanilla extract
6 tablespoons cold butter, cubed

INGREDIENTS FOR *VOL-AU-VENT* (PASTRY SHELL)

2 sheets of puff pastry dough, completely defrosted to prevent cracking (these are often sold in 17- or 18-ounce packages containing two 9- or 10-inch-square sheets of puff pastry)
1 egg, beaten (for egg wash)

INGREDIENTS FOR WHIPPED-CREAM FILLING

2 cups heavy cream
2 tablespoons sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

INGREDIENTS FOR GANACHE (CHOCOLATE ICING)

½ cup (about 4 ounces) semisweet dark-chocolate pieces *or* finely chopped chocolate squares
⅓ cup heavy cream

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

A pastry brush
A pastry bag or syringe fitted with a medium star tip (such as the Wilton Dessert Decorator Pro with star tip #1M)

METHOD FOR THE PASTRY CREAM FILLING

Pour ¾ cup of the milk into a large mixing bowl and gradually sift in the cornstarch, whisking as you go to make a slurry, and ensuring that all the lumps are whisked out. Add half the sugar (¾ cup) and the eggs to the slurry, and further whisk to completely combine.

In a medium-heavy-bottomed saucepan, over medium-low heat, combine the rest of the milk with the remaining ¾ cup of the sugar and stir constantly to dissolve the sugar, about 2 to 3 minutes. Add the heavy cream and scrape the seeds from the vanilla bean into the pot (or add vanilla extract). (If using vanilla beans, put the vanilla pods in the pot as well.) Stirring frequently, bring to a temperature between 160°F and 165°F as measured with a candy thermometer. Create a liaison to temper the eggs by adding 1 tablespoon at a time of the heated milk mixture to the bowl while whisking constantly, until half of the milk mixture (about 24 tablespoons) is incorporated. (This will equalize the temperatures of the liquids in the mixture to avoid making them into scrambled eggs!) Pour the liaison into the milk already in the pot,

and bring the temperature up again to 160°F over medium-low heat (use care in maintaining the temperature because at 170°F the eggs will begin to curdle), stirring frequently with a wooden spoon until you feel a drag on the spoon as the mixture begins to thicken. Then, cook for one minute. Remove the custard from the stove and gradually whisk in the cold butter, incorporating each addition before adding the next. Allow the custard to cool to room temperature, about 15 minutes, then refrigerate until it is well chilled, for at least 4 hours, but preferably 8 hours or overnight.

Remove the vanilla pod, if any, and discard it.

METHOD FOR THE VOL-AU-VENT

Make the *vol-au-vent* (tart pastry) early in the same day you will be serving it, leaving enough time for it to cool completely. Before beginning, completely defrost the puff pastry so it won't crack, about 45 minutes. Arrange the oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the temperature to 400°F. Grease the bottom only of a 9-inch Pyrex or CorningWare pie plate.

Unfold the sheets of puff pastry dough on a lightly floured pastry cloth or floured board and stretch them out so you will be able to cut two circles, using the inverted pie plate as a template.

With a pizza cutter, make a dough circle about 11½ inches in diameter (cut it 1 inch larger than the template dish all the way around).

From the other sheet of pastry, cut a second dough circle exactly along the edge of the pie plate so that the diameter will measure 9 inches plus whatever the width of the lip is, usually ½ inch to ¾ inch. Then, create a circular band of dough from this piece that is exactly the width of the lip of the pie plate (usually ½ to ¾ inch in width). Do this by cutting a concentric circle within this smaller dough round and removing the 9-inch diameter piece from the center. (Reserve the center circle as well as all the dough scraps in the refrigerator or freezer for another recipe.)

Ease the larger (11½-inch) circle into the greased pie plate so that the edge lies flat on the rim. Brush the entire surface with egg wash. Carefully place the half-inch-wide band of dough on top of the large dough circle, matching up the edges at the perimeter. Brush egg wash over the surface of this ½-inch-wide band as well. Then press the edges of the two dough pieces together and use a fork to prick *through* the dough band and *into* the accompanying round beneath it. Place in the oven and bake until golden brown, about 20 to 25 minutes. The bottom round will rise to form a dome.

Remove the pastry from the oven and place it on a cooling rack to let cool completely.

METHOD FOR THE WHIPPED-CREAM FILLING

In a large mixing bowl, combine the heavy cream, sugar, and vanilla. Use an electric beater to beat until stiff peaks form, then chill well.

METHOD FOR FILLING THE PIE

Use a thin bamboo skewer to poke small holes in 8 evenly spaced places around the dome of the cooled pastry shell and 1 hole in the center top. Fill the pastry syringe with the chilled pastry cream and pipe the custard into the shell.

Wash and dry the pastry syringe, and use it to pipe the whipped cream into the pie in the same way.

METHOD FOR APPLYING THE GANACHE

Place the chocolate in a small heatproof bowl. Bring the cream to just under a boil in a small saucepan. Pour the cream over the chocolate and let sit for a few seconds. Stir gently with a rubber spatula until the chocolate is melted and smooth. If the chocolate is not melting readily, nest the bowl in another bowl of hot tap water.

Spoon the icing as a glaze over the surface of the filled pastry (pie).

Let the icing cool on the surface of the pastry for about 10 minutes, then chill the completed pie well before serving, at least 4 hours.

PRESENTATION

Use a sharp, finely serrated knife to cut wedges of the pie so as not to crush the layers of puff pastry. Serve with coffee or espresso.

Philadelphia Tea Sandwiches

Serves 4 to 6

RULES FOR MAKING THE PLEASING PLATTER OF TEA SANDWICHES

- Use really fresh bread.
- Provide for variety in color and taste of the fillings, and make them fine in texture.
- Use a good fine-tooth knife (which won't squash the bread) to slice off the crusts of the sandwiches after they're assembled.

BREAD COMPONENTS

1 loaf fresh white bread (every two slices of bread yield 4 tea sandwiches)
1 loaf fresh pumpernickel bread (every two slices of bread yield 4 to 6 tea sandwiches)
12 to 18 small parsley sprigs for garnish

INGREDIENTS FOR WATERCRESS/CREAM CHEESE FILLING

(green in color with bitter finish to the sweet cheese)
4 ounces whipped cream cheese
½ cup fresh watercress, finely minced
Pinch salt
Dash ground black pepper

INGREDIENTS FOR THE EGG SALAD FILLING

(yellow in color with a mustardy/salty finish)
2 hard-boiled eggs, peeled while still warm, and chilled
½ teaspoon Colman's dry mustard
1 tablespoon mayonnaise
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Dash paprika

INGREDIENTS FOR THE BEET/MASCARPONE SALAD

(pink with a sweet quality)
2 ounces mascarpone cheese
One 4-ounce can beets, drained, patted dry with paper towels, and cut fine brunoise (tiny cubes)
Pinch salt
Dash ground black pepper

INGREDIENTS FOR THE CURRIED CHICKEN SALAD

(yellowish hue with a pungent quality)
Two 6-ounce chicken breasts
1 teaspoon curry powder
2 tablespoons mayonnaise
1 tablespoon fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, minced
1 stalk celery, minced
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

INGREDIENTS FOR THE TUNA WALDORF SALAD

(bits of red from the apple and a sweet flavor)

Two 6-ounce cans water-packed albacore tuna, well drained and finely minced

1 red apple, skin on, stem and seeds removed, and cut fine brunoise into a bowl of lemon juice

2 tablespoons mayonnaise

1 tablespoon walnut meats, finely chopped

Salt, to taste

Dash black pepper

½ cup white seedless grapes, quartered lengthwise and thinly sliced

METHOD FOR THE WATERCRESS/CREAM CHEESE SANDWICHES

Mix the cream cheese and watercress in a small bowl. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

METHOD FOR THE EGG SALAD FILLING

Slice the eggs crosswise into ¼-inch-thick slices, then chop finely. Mix in a small bowl with dry mustard, mayonnaise, salt and pepper. Sprinkle the paprika over the surface of the egg salad after spreading it on the bread.

METHOD FOR THE BEET/MASCARPONE SALAD

In a small bowl soften the cheese with a fork, then use a wooden spoon or rubber spatula to thoroughly and gently mix in the cubed beets. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

METHOD FOR THE CURRIED CHICKEN SALAD

Season both sides of the chicken breasts with the curry powder, rubbing the seasoning well into the flesh. Place the chicken into a shallow pan and fill with enough water to cover, being careful not to disturb the seasoning too much. Poach over medium heat until the chicken is cooked through (the juices run clear and it is fork tender), then transfer to a utility platter to let cool to room temperature. Chop the cooled chicken finely and refrigerate to chill, about 1 to 2 hours. Mix with mayonnaise, parsley, and celery, and season with salt and pepper.

METHOD FOR THE TUNA WALDORF SALAD

Mix the tuna, apple, mayonnaise, walnuts, salt, and pepper in a small bowl. Layer the sliced grapes on top of the layer of tuna salad after spreading it on the bread as directed below.

ASSEMBLY OF TEA SANDWICHES

Spread the filling on a slice of white or pumpernickel bread in an even ¼-inch thickness, and cover with a second slice of bread (repeating as desired for each group of tea sandwiches) and cut off the crusts. If the bread has a generally square cross section, cut the sandwiches into four 2-inch triangles by making perpendicular diagonal cuts. Some bread, such as pumpernickel, may be oblong in cross section. For sandwiches made with such bread, you can cut them into approximately 6 uniform squares rather than triangles.

*Caraway-Sage Chicken-Pork Sausages
with Braised Cabbage in Individual Boules*

Serves 8

INGREDIENTS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL BOULES

2 tablespoons sugar
2 quarter-ounce packets fresh fast-acting yeast
8 cups all-purpose flour, plus some extra to knead the dough
2 tablespoons salt
½ cup melted butter plus some to grease the crocks
1 pound sliced provolone cheese

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT FOR THE BOULES

8 individual ovenproof crocks, such as 8-ounce onion-soup bowls

INGREDIENTS FOR THE SKINLESS SAUSAGES

¼ cup canola oil (1 tablespoon to sauté the vegetables and 3 tablespoons as needed to sauté the sausages)
1 red bell pepper, stem and seeds removed and cut small brunoise
4 fresh sage leaves, minced
3 shallot cloves, minced
1 large apple, a firm variety such as Cortland or Braeburn, skin left on but cored and cut small brunoise
1 pound ground chicken, chopped in a food processor until smooth
1 pound ground pork, chopped in a food processor until smooth
2 teaspoons salt
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
2 teaspoons caraway seeds, 1 teaspoon left whole and 1 teaspoon ground to a powder with a spice mill or a mortar and pestle
½ cup sorghum or millet flour
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

INGREDIENTS FOR THE BRAISED CABBAGE

1 tablespoon canola oil
1 tablespoon butter
3 large cloves garlic, lightly crushed and minced
16 fingerling potatoes (about ¾ to 1 pound), scrubbed
1 large head green cabbage, cored and cut into ¾-inch-thick wedges
3 large carrots, peeled and cut small brunoise
1 teaspoon crushed red pepper
1 teaspoon salt
⅛ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
⅜ cup minced fresh dill

METHOD FOR THE BOULES

Dissolve the sugar and the yeast in 3 cups of warm water between 100°F to 115°F, as measured with a candy thermometer (any hotter than this will kill the yeast; any cooler than this will prevent the yeast from being activated). Allow the yeast to proof. If it is viable, in about 15 minutes it will develop a foam that looks like the head of a beer. If it doesn't proof after 30 minutes, the yeast is dead and should be discarded and replaced with a fresh batch. Place the flour in a food processor fitted with a dough blade and add the salt. (This may have to be done in two batches depending on the capacity of the food processor.) Through the feed tube with the food processor running, slowly pour the proofed yeast mixture in a thin, constant stream, until the dough comes together and is a cohesive mass. Transfer the dough to a large bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and allow the dough to rise, so that it roughly doubles in volume. (This will take about 30 minutes to an hour. The dough has risen enough if you can make an indentation with your finger and it does not spring back.)

(Meanwhile, begin the sausages.)

Punch the dough down and allow it to rise again. (Allowing the dough to rise a second time gives it a finer texture. Note that it will not rise as much the second time.)

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Grease a crock for each loaf. Divide the dough into 8 even portions, and transfer each portion in turn to a lightly floured board while keeping the balance covered. Shape each dough portion into a circle by pulling from the side and pushing the dough under and up from the bottom to form a dome, rotating to make it circular, and transfer the dough balls to their respective crocks. Repeat for each section of dough. Brush the loaves with melted butter and bake until the crust is golden brown and crispy and until the bread sounds hollow when tapped, approximately 30 to 35 minutes. Remove the loaves from oven and let cool 5 to 10 minutes (in the crocks).

While the bread is still warm, slice the tops off the *boules* and remove a sufficient amount of the interior bread to make a large enough cavity to hold some braised cabbage, potatoes, and sausages. (Reserve this interior bread for use as bread crumbs in another recipe.)

Line the inside of the *boules* with several slices of provolone cheese. This cheese will be melted to provide a tasty barrier between the bread and the braising juice so that the bread does not get completely saturated.

METHOD FOR THE SKINLESS SAUSAGES

Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a skillet over medium heat. Sauté the bell pepper, sage, shallots, and apple until the peppers are tender and the shallots turn translucent, stirring frequently to prevent burning, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and let cool.

(Begin the braised cabbage.)

Add the ground chicken, pork, salt, pepper, and whole caraway seeds (reserving the ground caraway) to the cooled bell-pepper mixture and mix well.

Combine the sorghum flour thoroughly with the ground caraway and cayenne and spread onto a flat surface.

Form the meat into 1-inch spheres or patties or 2-inch-long, uniformly sized 1-inch diameter cylinders and coat these sausages with the flour mixture.

Heat the remaining oil over medium heat in a large skillet, and when it begins to shimmer, sauté the coated sausages on all sides, leaving each side undisturbed for a minute or so to allow the flour and seasonings to integrate into the surface of the meat. As the sausages finish searing, use a slotted spoon to transfer them to the pot of braising cabbage.

METHOD FOR THE BRAISED CABBAGE AND FINGERLING POTATOES

In a 6-quart sauté pan with a lid, heat the oil over medium heat and melt the butter in it. Add the garlic and cook until it becomes tender, stirring frequently to prevent burning, about 2 or 3 minutes. Stir in the fingerling potatoes to coat with the butter/garlic mixture. Add the cabbage, carrots, and 4 cups water. Season with crushed red pepper, salt, and pepper. Reduce heat to low and let slowly come to a simmer.

(Return to the sausages.)

Cook covered over medium-low heat until the potatoes and cabbage are tender and the sausages are cooked through, about 45 minutes to one hour.

PRESENTATION

Place each crock containing a cheese-lined *boule* onto a dinner plate. Ladle some braised cabbage, 1 or 2 potatoes, and 1 or 2 sausages into each *boule*. Sprinkle with minced fresh dill and place the top piece of bread back on each like a “lid.” Arrange any additional sausages and finger-lings around the perimeter of the dinner plate. Serve the rest of the sausages, potatoes, and cabbage in the broth in a large soup tureen.

Veal Medallions with Butternut Squash Ravioli

Serves 6 with 8 ravioli each (48 2-inch ravioli)

INGREDIENTS FOR THE BUTTERNUT SQUASH SAUCE

One 1-pound butternut squash
1 tablespoon canola oil
2 shallot cloves, minced
½ cup white wine (such as a Sauternes or Monbazillac)
2 cups chicken stock
1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves, minced
1 bay leaf
¼ teaspoon ground allspice
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
3 cardamom pods, ground in a spice mill and chaff removed
½ cup heavy cream
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
2 tablespoons minced fresh basil leaves

INGREDIENTS FOR THE PASTA DOUGH

4 cups flour
4 eggs at room temperature
2 teaspoons olive oil

INGREDIENTS FOR THE RAVIOLI FILLING

1 cup shelled pecans
2 to 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
¼ cup golden seedless raisins
⅛ teaspoon salt
¹⁄₁₆ teaspoon black pepper

INGREDIENTS FOR THE VEAL MEDALLIONS

3 pounds thinly sliced veal, cut into 2-inch medallions
1 cup flour
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 cup milk
2 to 3 cups fine, dried bread crumbs, as needed
4 to 6 eggs as needed for an egg wash
½ cup canola oil, as needed to sauté
1 stick butter, as needed to sauté
2 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, minced

PREPARATION OF THE SQUASH

Early in the day or as many as three days before, preheat the oven to 325°F. Line a baking sheet with heavy-duty aluminum foil and bake the whole squash until a knife pierces the flesh easily, about 1 hour.

Allow to rest until cool enough to handle, then slice the squash open and remove and discard the membrane containing the seeds. Scrape out the pulp and let stand in a colander placed over a pie plate to allow any excess liquid to drain away. Purée until smooth in a food processor or blender. Retrieve 1 cup of pulp. Any extra can be stored in the freezer for a pie or other use.

METHOD FOR THE PASTA

Mound the flour in the center of a clean room-temperature work surface such as a large wooden cutting board. Create a well in the center of the mound. Crack the first egg into the center of the well and add ½ teaspoon of the olive oil. With a fork, gently begin to scramble the mixture within the confines of the well, while integrating the flour from the sides of the well as you carefully beat the egg. Once the first egg is mostly mixed in, shore up the sides of the mound again with flour, maintaining the mounded shape. Repeat the process with the 2nd egg and another ½ teaspoon of olive oil, and again with the 3rd and 4th eggs and remaining olive oil in half-teaspoon increments. Start kneading the dough with your palms, allowing the warmth of your hands to impart elasticity to the dough. Knead until you feel you have created a cohesive mass, for a count of about 400 strokes. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and allow it to rest for about 30 minutes.

METHOD FOR THE RAVIOLI FILLING AND ASSEMBLY

Place the pecans in a blender and with the blender running, add enough of the olive oil in a slow, thin stream through the feed opening to make a paste. Transfer to a bowl and mix in the raisins. Season to taste with salt and black pepper.

Have a bowl of water handy to moisten and seal the dough. Divide the dough into thirds and work with ⅓ of the dough at a time, keeping the balance wrapped in plastic wrap to prevent it from drying out. Divide the first ⅓ of the dough in half. Use a pasta machine to gradually roll down each of these sections, successively reducing the setting on the machine until it is at its thinnest setting, and lay the sheet of dough onto a floured dough board. Spoon a rounded ½ teaspoon of the filling at 4-inch intervals on the pasta dough. Dip your fingers into the bowl of water and moisten the area surrounding the filling. Cover the filling with the other rolled-out piece of dough and press gently around the filling to seal, being careful not to flatten the filling or tear the dough. Using a pastry or pizza cutter, cut the filled dough into ravioli squares. Remove each ravioli to a floured surface, pressing the edges firmly together as you do so. Cover the ravioli with a clean (non-terry) kitchen towel and set aside for 30 minutes while you begin making the sauce.

METHOD FOR THE BUTTERNUT SQUASH SAUCE

Heat the oil over medium-high heat in a large sauté pan. When it begins to shimmer, add the shallot cloves and cook them until they turn translucent, stirring frequently to prevent burning, about 2 minutes. Deglaze the pan with the wine and allow most of it to evaporate. Then add the chicken stock,

thyme, bay leaf, allspice, cloves, and cardamom, and allow the chicken stock to reduce to 1 cup, about 15 minutes. (This is a good time to begin tenderizing the veal.)

Strain the sauce into a large bowl and wipe out the pan. Whisk the pureed squash into the sauce. Strain again into the pan pushing the squash through the sieve. Add the cream and heat through over medium heat. Season to taste with salt and pepper, cover, and reheat just before service if needed.

METHOD FOR THE VEAL MEDALLIONS

Cover a large cutting board with lengths of plastic wrap, tucking the edges under the board to secure. Lay the veal on the plastic and cover with additional lengths of plastic wrap to help keep the mess down as you tenderize, tucking the edges under in the same way. Use a meat mallet to pound the veal thin. You will have to do this in batches.

(This is a good time to strain and finish up the sauce.)

Mix the flour with salt and pepper, and spread on a flat work surface such as sheets of wax paper. Dip the veal slices in milk to moisten them and dredge them in the flour allowing any excess flour to fall away.

Spread the bread crumbs on a flat work surface. Beat the eggs in a shallow bowl and dip the floured veal in the eggs, then into the bread crumbs to coat, allowing any excess to fall away.

Heat 2 tablespoons of the canola oil over medium heat in a large skillet and melt 2 tablespoons of the butter in it. Sauté both sides of the breaded veal, leaving each side undisturbed for 2 minutes or so to let the coatings integrate into the surface of the meat and to prevent “crusting off.” You will need to do this in batches, using 2 tablespoons of butter melted in 2 tablespoons of oil for each batch. Transfer the veal to paper towels to drain as you finish cooking them. Cover them with a large pot lid or aluminum foil to keep them warm. (The covered veal can be stowed for a short while in the oven heated on its “warm” setting.)

COOKING METHOD FOR RAVIOLI

Bring a large shallow pan of water to a boil.

Salt the now boiling water, add the ravioli in batches, reducing the heat and cooking gently just until the dough sets up and the filling is heated through, about 5 minutes, then remove the ravioli with a slotted spoon, transferring them to a utility platter.

PRESENTATION

Place several pieces of veal in the center of each serving plate. Arrange 6 to 8 ravioli around the veal. Spoon about ¼ cup of the butternut squash sauce over the ravioli, and sprinkle each serving with 1 teaspoon minced fresh basil leaves. Sprinkle minced parsley over the veal medallions.

Flan with Sauternes Caramel

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

¾ cup sugar (½ cup for the caramel and ¼ for the custard)
¼ cup Sauternes or Monbazillac wine
⅜ teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 cup condensed milk
½ cup evaporated milk
½ cup whole milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 egg yolks

EQUIPMENT

6 individual-size, lightly buttered flan tins or custard cups (these should have a ½-cup capacity and be about 3 inches in diameter)

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

Spread ½ cup of the sugar in an even layer in a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan. Evenly pour the Sauternes onto the sugar. (Have a tray of ice water ready into which you will be able to immerse the pot to stop the cooking.) To chill the custard cups, prepare a second roasting pan or baking dish filled with ice water so that the level rises halfway up the sides of the custard cups. (This will also serve as your bain-marie baking vessel.) Stand the empty cups in this pan. Stir the sugar and wine over medium heat, stirring constantly until you don't see any cloudiness or sugar crystals. Do not let the syrup boil *until* you see that the sugar has dissolved. You may have to remove the pot from the heat periodically to keep it from boiling before the syrup is clear. Once the sugar has entirely dissolved, do not stir again (as this will leave crystallized streaks in the syrup). Cover the pot, increase the heat to medium high, and once it begins to boil, cook covered for 2 minutes. Remove the lid and continue to cook until you see that the syrup is beginning to darken. When it becomes deep amber, remove the pot to the bowl of ice water you have standing by. Working quickly (and carefully due to the extreme heat of the hot sugar), immediately spoon a teaspoon of the caramel into each custard cup and use the tip of the spoon to swirl the strands in a random pattern to coat the sides of the custard cups. Sprinkle a pinch of cinnamon (¹/₁₆ teaspoon) onto the bottom of each cup and place them back into the roasting pan of ice water.

Pour the condensed milk, evaporated milk, and milk into a separate medium heavy-bottomed saucepan and add the vanilla. Over medium-low heat slowly bring to a boil, then remove from the heat and let cool to room temperature. In a large bowl, whisk the egg yolks until no streaks remain and they turn lemon yellow, then gradually add the remaining ¼ cup sugar, whipping constantly until you see another change in color. Create a liaison by incorporating half of the milk mixture, 1 tablespoon at a time, into the egg-yolk mixture, whisking continuously as you go. (This will equalize the temperature to prevent the eggs from curdling.)

Pour even amounts of the custard into the caramel-coated custard cups and place them into a roasting pan. Prepare a bain-marie by adding hot water to the pan so that the water level is halfway up the sides of the flan tins, taking care to avoid splashing any water into them. Bake the custard in the oven until a butter knife inserted in the center comes out clean, about 90 minutes. Carefully remove the custard cups from the bain-marie, allow to cool to room temperature, then refrigerate for at least 4 hours before serving.

PRESENTATION

Just before serving, remove the custard cups from the refrigerator and allow them to warm up a little. Loosen the edges of each with a butter knife, then invert each custard from the molds onto chilled dessert dishes.

Sweet Corn Bisque with Crab “Soufflé”

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS FOR THE BISQUE

2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons canola oil
1 large white onion, chopped
3 stalks celery, chopped
2 quarts chicken stock
1 large sprig fresh tarragon
2 bay leaves
½ teaspoon Spanish paprika
¼ teaspoon cayenne
1 teaspoon curry powder
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 cup white rice
2 pounds frozen sweet corn
1 fresh lemon, micro-zested and juiced
2 tablespoons minced fresh basil leaves

INGREDIENTS FOR THE CRAB “SOUFFLÉ”

4 tablespoons mayonnaise
½ teaspoon ground coriander
1 large sprig fresh thyme, leaves stripped off and minced
1 large sprig fresh oregano, leaves stripped off and minced
1 pound fully-cooked lump crabmeat, picked over for shells
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 teaspoon Old Bay Seasoning
1 tablespoon minced fresh garlic chives

METHOD FOR THE BISQUE

In a large pot, melt the butter in the oil over medium-high heat and add the onion and celery, stirring frequently until the onion turns translucent. Add the chicken stock, tarragon, bay leaves, paprika, cayenne, curry powder, salt, pepper, rice, corn, and 1 cup of water and return to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover, and let simmer 20 minutes, undisturbed. Remove from the heat and let stand another 5 minutes before removing the lid of the pot. Uncover the pot, stir to loosen the rice, and return to medium heat and cook until the corn is very soft, and all flavors are integrated, another 10 minutes or so. Discard the tarragon sprig and the bay leaves. Remove from the heat and purée right in the pot with an immersion blender, adding water if necessary to achieve the consistency of a thick soup. Season to taste with salt and pepper and cover to keep warm over low heat.

METHOD FOR THE CRAB “SOUFFLÉ”

In a medium mixing bowl, combine the mayonnaise, coriander, thyme, and oregano. Gently fold in the crabmeat while trying to avoid breaking up the lumps of crab. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

PRESENTATION

Ladle the soup into wide bowls. Scoop a rounded tablespoon of the crab mixture into the center of the soup and sprinkle with a little Old Bay Seasoning and top with a pinch of garlic chives and lemon zest. Drizzle 1 to 2 teaspoons of lemon juice and sprinkle 1 teaspoon minced basil over the surface of the soup.

***Filet Mignon in a Grand Marnier Reduction
with Chestnut Mashed Potatoes and Green Beans Amandine***

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS FOR THE STEAK AND SAUCE

Four 4-to-6-ounce beef filet mignon steaks
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
2 tablespoons dried savory, ground to a powder with a mortar and pestle
5 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into cubes
1 tablespoon olive oil (not extra-virgin)
1 shallot clove, minced
2 garlic cloves, minced
½ cup Grand Marnier liqueur
1 cup beef stock
2 bay leaves

INGREDIENTS FOR THE GREEN BEANS AMANDINE

2 tablespoons butter
½ cup blanched, sliced almonds
1 pound fresh green beans, trimmed and cut
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

INGREDIENTS FOR THE CHESTNUT MASHED POTATOES

4 large potatoes, peeled, cut into 1-inch cubes, and placed in a pot of enough water to cover
4 tablespoons butter
½ cup jar packed chestnuts (such as Haddon House brand), minced, plus 4 left whole for garnish
1 cup heavy cream
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

METHOD FOR THE STEAKS

Rinse the steaks and pat them dry with paper towels. Season to taste with salt and pepper, and rub the savory into all surfaces of the meat. Let sit while you cook the sauce and vegetables.

Just before service, preheat the grill or grill pan over medium-high heat.

Place the steaks on the grill or grill pan and place approximately 1 teaspoon butter on top of each filet. Grill the steaks for about 5 minutes leaving undisturbed to let the seasonings integrate into the surface of the meat. Flip the steaks and place another teaspoon of butter on other side of each steak and grill undisturbed in the same way.

Let rest for 5 minutes while you reheat the sauce.

METHOD FOR THE GREEN BEANS AMANDINE

In a large sauté pan, melt the butter over medium heat and cook the almonds for about 5 minutes until the butter emits a slightly nutty fragrance. Transfer them to a small bowl, cover, and keep warm. (Use this same sauté pan to begin cooking the steak sauce.)

Once the potatoes are cooked, steam the green beans until tender but still bright green, about 5 minutes.

Stir the almonds into the steamed green beans and season to taste with salt and pepper. Cover and keep warm.

METHOD FOR THE GRAND MARNIER REDUCTION (SAUCE)

In the same sauté pan in which you cooked the almonds, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat and sauté the shallots and garlic until the shallots turn translucent, stirring frequently to keep them from burning, 2 to 3 minutes.

Deglaze the pan with the Grand Marnier and let most of it boil off, about 3 minutes.

Add the beef stock and the bay leaves and allow the liquid to reduce by half, about 8 to 10 minutes.

(Now would be a good time to begin boiling the potatoes.)

Strain the sauce, return it to the pot, and cover to keep it warm.

(Return to drain the potatoes.)

While the steaks are resting, gently reheat the sauce without further cooking it, remove it from the heat, and gradually whisk in the remaining 2 tablespoons of cubed butter, allowing each addition to melt before adding the next. Season the sauce to taste with salt and pepper.

METHOD FOR THE CHESTNUT MASHED POTATOES

Boil the potatoes until tender, about 10 minutes. (Attend to the sauce while they're cooking.) Preheat the oven to its "warm" setting (175°F to 200°F).

Drain the potatoes well, add the butter to the pot to allow it to melt. Add the chestnuts to the pot, cover, and keep warm (while you begin steaming the green beans).

Mash the potatoes and chestnuts together by hand, then add the cream and whip with an electric beater. Season to taste with salt and pepper, cover, and place in the oven to keep warm.

(Begin grilling the meat once the vegetables are done.)

PRESENTATION

Spoon some sauce into the center of each serving plate and place a steak on it. Spoon some chestnut mashed potatoes around the steak encircled by green beans amandine. Garnish with a whole chestnut.

Gorgonzola Beef Tenderloin in a Barolo Reduction

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS FOR THE BAROLO REDUCTION (SAUCE)

4 tablespoons unsalted butter (2 tablespoons to sauté and 2 tablespoons cubed and kept cold, to finish the sauce)
2 shallot cloves, minced
2 large garlic cloves, lightly crushed and minced
1 large sprig fresh oregano, leaves stripped off and chopped
1½ cups Barolo wine (such as Sordo 2007, Pio Cesare 2004, or Renato Ratti 2004)
2 bay leaves
1½ cups beef stock
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

INGREDIENTS FOR THE MEAT

Six 4-to-6-ounce beef filet mignon steaks
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
2 tablespoons (about 1 ounce) Gorgonzola cheese (such as Mountain Piccante, Galbani, Klin, Lodigiani, or Mauri) cut into 6 sections

METHOD FOR THE SAUCE

In a large sauté pan, melt 2 tablespoons of the butter over medium heat. Add the shallots, garlic cloves, and oregano and cook until the shallots turn translucent, about 2 to 3 minutes, stirring frequently to prevent burning. Deglaze the pan with the Barolo, add the bay leaves, and let reduce by two-thirds, about 8 minutes. Add the bay leaves and beef stock and let reduce again by two-thirds. Remove from the heat, cover, and keep warm while you grill the steaks.

Just before service, reheat the sauce and strain. Remove from the heat and whisk in the remaining 2 tablespoons of cold cubed butter, a little at a time, letting each addition melt before adding the next. Adjust the seasoning to taste with salt and pepper.

METHOD FOR THE STEAKS

Preheat the oven to 400°F, and heat a grill pan over medium-high heat, or a grill to High. Season the steaks with salt and pepper, and sear undisturbed to begin caramelization and to prevent tearing of the flesh, about 4 minutes on each side. Continue to cook until cooked to your desired level of doneness, paying attention to creating desirable “grill marks.” For medium-rare/medium, this will be to an internal temperature of 112°F to 115°F as measured with a meat thermometer, about 7 minutes per side (depending on the thickness of the steak). Transfer to a baking sheet and cut small slits in the top surface of the steaks, tucking the Gorgonzola cheese into the slits. Place in the oven and let the cheese melt, for about 2 minutes but no more than 5 minutes. Remove from the oven and let rest while you finish the sauce.

PRESENTATION

Spoon 2 tablespoons of the Barolo reduction into the center of each serving plate and place a steak on top of the sauce.

Pistachio-Crusted Salmon with a Cointreau Glaze and Cranberries

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS FOR THE CRANBERRIES

1 fresh lemon, zested and juiced
1 tablespoon sugar
½ cup Craisins (dried cranberries)

INGREDIENTS FOR THE SALMON

Four 4-to-6-ounce salmon fillets
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
3 tablespoons canola oil
2 shallot cloves, minced
1 cup dry white wine
1 fresh lemon, micro-zested and juiced
¼ cup Cointreau liqueur (you can use the 50 ml airplane-size bottle)
½ cup shelled pistachios, rubbed in a clean towel to remove covering, toasted for 5 minutes in a 250°F oven, and crushed in a plastic bag with a rolling pin

ACCOMPANIMENT

Scalloped Potatoes
Fresh Steamed Asparagus with Lemon Butter

METHOD FOR THE CRANBERRIES

Add 3 tablespoons water, the lemon juice, and the sugar to a saucepot. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Add the cranberries and lemon zest and return to a boil. Turn off the heat, cover, and let stand for about 10 minutes. Remove the pot from the stove and allow to cool to room temperature.

METHOD FOR THE FISH

Season the salmon with salt and pepper, rubbing the seasonings into the flesh. In a medium skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of the canola oil over medium heat. Add the shallots and sauté until they turn translucent, stirring frequently to prevent burning, about 1 minute. Transfer the shallots briefly to a utility plate. Increase the heat to medium high and add the remaining canola oil to the pan. When the oil begins to shimmer, sear the salmon with the skin side up, leaving the fish undisturbed for 3 or 4 minutes to allow caramelization to begin. This will prevent any tearing of the flesh or “crusting off” of the seasonings. Flip the fish to sear the other side in the same way. After 2 minutes, pour ¼ cup of the wine into the pan. Cook briefly (about 2 more minutes) to allow the flavors to integrate, then transfer the salmon fillets to a platter, drizzle the lemon juice over them, and cover to keep warm and to let carryover cook.

Return the shallots to the pan and add the remaining wine, allowing the liquids to reduce to ½ cup over medium-high heat, about 3 to 5 minutes, monitoring to prevent burning. Strain the liquid, wipe out

the pan, and return the juices to the skillet. Add the liqueur and allow to further thicken to a approximately ¼ cup of glaze, about 2 more minutes.

PRESENTATION

Place a fillet in the center of each serving plate, spoon two or three teaspoons of the warm glaze over the entire surface of each fish fillet, and sprinkle each with 1 to 2 tablespoons toasted pistachios, covering all of the top surface. Place a tablespoon of the cranberries next to the fish and top with a pinch of lemon zest. Serve with scalloped potatoes and 3 or 4 asparagus spears as an accompaniment. For a treat serve with a French white wine. Try a Grand Cru burgundy such as Corton-Charlemagne, Louis Jadot 2005.

Toasted-Nut Chicken Breasts with Dried-Fruit Wild Rice and Amaretto Sauce

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS FOR THE DRIED-FRUIT WILD RICE

- 2½ cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 1½ cups wild-rice mix (such as a blend of long-grain brown, sweet brown, whole-grain black, etc.), briefly soaked in 3 to 5 changes of enough cold water to cover and rinsed with clear water through a fine-mesh strainer
- ¾ cup mixed dried fruits (apricots, apples, pears, plums, and/or currants, such as Woodstock Farms brand unsulfured), cut into ¼-inch pieces
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ½ cup cashews lightly crushed (place them in a plastic bag and crush with a rolling pin)

INGREDIENTS FOR THE CHICKEN

- 1 cup dry-roasted walnuts (about 4 ounces), such as Emerald brand
- ½ cup millet or sorghum flour
- Six 6-ounce boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 eggs, beaten
- ½ cup milk
- 2 to 4 tablespoons canola oil, as needed to sauté
- 3 to 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, as needed to sauté
- Juice of 1 fresh lime

INGREDIENTS FOR THE AMARETTO SAUCE

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 shallot clove, minced
- ½ cup Amaretto di Saronno liqueur (100 ml or 2 airplane-size bottles)
- 1½ cups low-sodium chicken stock
- ¼ cup dry-roasted almonds (about 3 ounces), crushed, such as Blue Diamond or Emerald brand
- 2 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into cubes
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

METHOD FOR THE DRIED-FRUIT WILD RICE

Bring the stock plus 1¼ cups water to a boil in a medium saucepot. Stir in the rice, dried fruit, butter, and salt. Return to a boil, reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook undisturbed for 50 minutes.

Remove from the heat and let stand for 5 minutes, then stir in the crushed cashews.

METHOD FOR THE TOASTED-NUT CHICKEN

Through the feed opening of a running blender or food processor, add the walnuts and the millet flour and chop them finely. Set aside briefly.

Lay plastic wrap over a large cutting board, tucking the edges under the board to secure it. Season both sides of the chicken breasts with salt and pepper and place them in a single layer on the plastic wrap. Cover the seasoned chicken with another layer of plastic wrap, tucking the edges under in the same way to keep the mess down while you tenderize them. Pound the chicken with a meat mallet to integrate the seasonings into the surface of the chicken.

Spread the flour/nut combination in a shallow pie plate or on a clean, flat work surface. Whisk together the eggs and milk, using the mixture to moisten each piece of chicken before coating them with the flour/nuts.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. In a large sauté pan, melt 2 tablespoons of the butter in 1 tablespoon oil over medium-high heat and sauté the coated chicken, curved side down first, leaving undisturbed for the first 4 minutes or so to allow the coating to integrate into the surface of the flesh and to prevent “Crusting off.” Melt another tablespoon of butter in a tablespoon of oil and flip the chicken breasts, cooking the other side in the same way. (You will probably have to sauté the chicken in batches.) Place the pieces of chicken into a roasting pan or onto a baking sheet. Bake in the oven until the flesh is fork tender and no longer pink, about 25 to 35 minutes.

METHOD FOR THE AMARETTO SAUCE

Make the sauce in the same pan in which you sautéed the chicken. Heat the oil over medium-high heat until it shimmers and cook the shallot until it turns translucent, stirring frequently to prevent burning, about 1 minute. Deglaze the pan with the amaretto, allowing most of it to evaporate, about 3 minutes. Then, add the chicken stock and allow it to reduce by half, about 5 minutes. Remove this sauce from the heat, strain it, and return it to the pan with the almonds, letting it reduce over medium heat to about ½ cup.

Remove the pan from the heat and use a small whisk or fork to gradually whisk the butter into the sauce, allowing each addition to melt before whisking in the next. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

PRESENTATION

Spoon ¾ cup rice into the center of each serving plate. Top with a chicken breast, spoon some sauce with almonds over it, and drizzle 1 teaspoon lime juice over each piece of chicken.

Stracotto (*Italian Pot Roast*)

Serves 6 to 8

INGREDIENTS

3-to-4-pound beef round or rump roast
3 large garlic cloves, lightly crushed and sliced in half lengthwise
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon dried thyme
½ teaspoon dried rosemary
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
2 tablespoons canola oil
1 large white onion, diced
2 cups white mushrooms, cleaned, trimmed, and quartered
1½ cups dry red wine
2 large carrots, peeled and cut into 1-inch slices
1 celery stalk, cut into 1-inch pieces
2 bay leaves
2 tablespoons tomato paste
2 cups beef stock
One 29-to-32-ounce can whole plum tomatoes
½ teaspoon celery seed
½ teaspoon fennel seed
6 medium potatoes (about 1½ to 2 pounds)
2 tablespoons unsalted cold butter, cubed
2 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, minced

METHOD

Rinse the roast to remove impurities and pat dry with paper towels. Make slits in the meat and firmly insert the garlic cloves. Mix together the oregano, thyme, rosemary, salt, and black pepper and, using a mortar and pestle, pulverize to a powder. Rub the herb mixture into the meat.

Heat one tablespoon of the oil over medium-high heat in a sauté pan that is 4-quarts or larger. When the oil begins to shimmer, sear the meat on all sides, leaving each side undisturbed for about 3 minutes to allow the seasonings to integrate into the surface of the meat and to prevent the flesh from tearing. When the roast has been browned on all sides, temporarily transfer it to a utility platter.

Add the remaining oil to the same pan over medium heat. When it begins to shimmer, sauté the onion until it turns translucent, stirring frequently to prevent burning, about 2 minutes. Add the mushrooms and sauté them until they give up their juices, about 7 minutes. Deglaze the pan with ½ cup of the red wine and allow most of it to evaporate. Then, add the carrots, celery, and bay leaves, and stir in the tomato paste. Add the beef stock, tomatoes, celery seed, fennel seed, and the rest of the wine and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Return the meat to the pan, reduce the heat to medium low, cover, and let cook slowly until the meat is fork tender, but still intact, about 2 to 2½ hours.

In the last 20 minutes of cooking time, peel the potatoes and slice them into ¼-inch-thick slices into the pot. Cover and cook until tender.

Remove the meat to a platter. Discard the bay leaves and, using a slotted spoon, transfer the carrots, celery, tomatoes, and potatoes to the same platter. Cover to keep warm and let rest.

Pour the cooking liquids into a clear heatproof container, such as a Pyrex measuring container, and refresh the pan. Spoon or pour off any layer of fat that forms at the top of the cooking juices and strain what remains back into the pan to make a sauce. Over medium-high heat, reduce the juices to about 1 cup of liquid, about 5 to 8 minutes. Just before serving, remove the sauce from the heat and gradually whisk in the butter, allowing each addition to melt before adding the next. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

PRESENTATION

Slice the roast into ¾-to-1-inch-thick slices using a sharp knife. Spoon about ½ cup potatoes into the center of each serving plate and top with a slice of meat and some carrots and celery. Spoon some of the sauce over and sprinkle with parsley leaves.