

Welcome to Shop with the Chef Series 2007

Featuring Chef Andrew Cohen, Chef in Residence for MBCFM, Instructor and Consultant



Chef Andrew Cohen is well known around here, having been an avid supporter of the farmers markets long before it was 'fashionable' to do so. Andrew exemplifies the caliber of chef we have here in our neighborhood, with a culinary career that spans over thirty years. A graduate from the esteemed California Culinary Academy in San Francisco, Andrew interned at Chez Panise with celebrity chef and restaurant owner Alice Waters. Andrew was a Santa Cruz chef at the legendary India Joze, the Verandah, and Theo's, all exceptional restaurants. These and other notable restaurants provided the opportunity to experiment and to broaden his repertoire. Andrew was also a chef-owner at Surf Sushi, where his outstanding sushi skills were a focal point; some of his unique creations are still on sushi menus today. On occasion, Andrew is a guest chef for Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard, where he matches their fabulous wines to the region's culinary bounty.

Andrew currently writes a monthly food column "Fresh Picks at the Market" for Edible Paradise, the e-newsletter of the MBCFM, and serves as our honored Chef in Residence. Beginning next month,

Andrew will be writing a feature article for the food section of the Santa Cruz Sentinel newspaper once a month. In addition to teaching and writing, Andrew is a personal chef for his wife and two young children ("one of my hardest audiences ever!" he says with a twinkle in his eye) and can be sighted almost every weekend at the Aptos Farmers Market shopping for his family.

Persian Lamb

1 - 1 1/2 lbs. lamb leg steak
1/2 medium yellow onion (sliced through the root)
1/4 - 1/2 cup pomegranate syrup*
4 oz. heavy whipping cream
20 - 40 mint leaves**
Salt and fresh ground pepper to taste
Olive oil

- (1) Cut all silverskin and fat from the lamb. Remove the bone if it's there. Slice the lamb on the bias into 2 inch pieces that are about 1/4 inch thick.
- (2) Stack the mint leaves and roll into a cylinder, starting at the stem end and rolling up. Put something on top to hold in place and set aside. This will be used at the end of the dish.
- (3) Peel the onion and slice into half-moons, 1/4 inch thick.
- (4) Heat a large chefs pan (the ones that look sort of like a flat bottomed wok) or sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil to the pan and add the onions.
- (5) Sauté the onions until they are soft and just beginning to color. Remove the onions from the pan and set aside in a bowl large enough to hold them and the cooked lamb.
- (6) Turn the heat to high. When the pan is hot, add another tablespoon of oil (if it seems there is not enough oil for the lamb, add as much as needed to cover the bottom of the pan with a good film of oil) and when it is hot, add the lamb.
- (7) Wait for the lamb to brown a little at the edges, then stir rapidly so the lamb is just barely cooked to rare, toss a little salt and pepper on it and then dump on top of the onions.
- (8) At this point you can turn down the heat a little (say medium or

medium-high) to give yourself a little leeway and avoid breaking the sauce. As you become comfortable with the recipe you may not want to bother.

(9) Add the cream to the hot pan and stir to scrape the bits on the pan bottom. Watch for the cream to begin reducing. When it starts to thicken, add the pomegranate syrup to the cream. Reduce until the sauce just starts to leave a trail on a spoon back.

(10) Add in the onions and lamb. Give a quick stir and lower the heat to medium-low.

(11) Take the cylinder of mint leaves and chiffonade them. This means to finely slice across the leaf cylinder to yield very fine shreds.

(12) Season the dish with salt and pepper. Add the mint and give a good stir to incorporate the chiffonade into the dish.

(13) Taste for balance. You might need to add a little more pomegranate syrup or possibly cream and perhaps some pepper.

(14) Serve over basmati rice, pilaf, or bulgur wheat.

* Volume depends on how much you like pomegranate. I love it and use the full 1/2 cup. Pomegranate syrup is available at Middle-Eastern and Indian markets, health food stores, and on occasion at Trader Joe's.

** This depends on the size of your leaves and how much you like mint. It can be an accent or a large part of the dish. I love mint, and with the larger volume of pomegranate, the acid in the dish is raised, so the mint acts to cool the dish. Start lighter and then fine tune to your preference.

CHEF NOTES

This dish can be made using sliced mushrooms instead of lamb. Cut the mushrooms into slices of a similar size to the lamb pieces, then gently sauté until they are tender, seasoning with salt and pepper

and a hint of garlic if you wish. Since this could take longer than the meat, you could cook the mushrooms earlier in the day or the night prior. If you are doing this dish for company and are going to make a lot of this, cook the onions the night before and store with a little extra oil on them. Drain the oil before cooking and use it for cooking the dish at service time.

Play with the balance of the cream and the pomegranate syrup. You will find that the desired balance will change with the weather. More cream when it's cold out, more pomegranate when it's hot. Later in the year when fresh pomegranate juice comes to market, you can try reducing the juice to make the dish. You may need to add a little sugar.

WARNING: friends tell me that this dish can be addictive.

Carrot Sauce

1 pint carrot juice (Odwalla or similar, homemade or from a local juice bar)

1/2 tablespoon neutral flavored oil or butter

1 medium shallot, minced

1/2 teaspoon Garam Masala (curry powder)

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon (Mexican style)

Salt and Pepper to taste

-OR-

In lieu of the Garam Masala and cinnamon, use—

1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves

1 tablespoon white wine (optional)

(1) In a tallish saucepan, warm the carrot juice over medium-high heat. When the juice begins to heat, you will see it clouding up. This will thicken and begin to form a “scum.” Push the pot to the side of the burner so one side of the pan is off the heat. This allows for the scum to not get boiled into the sauce.

(2) Using a fine mesh strainer, skim off the scum. When no more foam appears pour the juice through the cleaned strainer into a clean non-reactive bowl. I actually pour it through a cloth napkin I wet before hand with water to get out all the coagulants.

(3) Clean the pan or get a smaller saucepan out and heat over Medium heat. When the pan is hot, add the oil or butter, and as soon as it is heated, add the shallots and cook until translucent and fragrant.

(4) If you are going with the curry and cinnamon mix, add it now and stir to mix it with the oil. Wait for the color to deepen and the fragrance to come up. (OR- if you use the thyme version, add the thyme leaves and cook until the aroma comes up. Add the white wine and cook to reduce the volume by 90%.)

(5) At this point, add the clarified carrot juice to the pan and bring just to the boil. Immediately reduce the heat so the sauce just simmers. Reduce the sauce to a slightly syrupy consistency.

(6) Check the pan frequently as this happens and stir as needed to avoid scorching the sauce. A pan with a very small footprint is the

ideal for this to avoid the sauce reducing too fast and burning. The higher sugar content of the juice means these types of sauces may be more apt to burn when not watched.

(7) When the sauce reaches the desired consistency, season with salt and fresh ground pepper to taste. The sauce is now ready to use.

CHEF NOTES

This technique will work with many fruit and vegetable juices. Although it sounds odd, it is a refreshing change from the usual stock and butter sauces. The colors can be vibrant and the flavors intense (Think reduced beet juice with perhaps a touch of orange juice to mellow the earthiness.) A variety of juices can be found at juice bars and even in the grocery stores. The juices contain both pectin and sugars that act as thickeners when cooked. It is sometimes necessary to balance the sauce with a pinch of sugar or a dash of vinegar.

When the juice begins to heat up, you will see it start to cloud up, and then form a scum. These are proteins that can cause bitterness, and it is imperative to skim and filter these out. While these sauces are very low fat and high in minerals, many of the vitamins are lost in the process of cooking. These sauces are high in sugars and may not be good for those watching their blood sugar.

Haricots Verts Salad

1/2 lb. haricots verts

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar or sherry vinegar

1 teaspoon finely minced shallot

1/2 teaspoon finely minced thyme

A pinch of kosher salt

Fresh ground black pepper to taste

3-4 oz. heavy whipping cream

(1) Top and tail the beans, and cut into 2 inch lengths.

(2) Blanch the beans in a large pot of salted water until just done, about 3-5 minutes. Drain and dump the beans into ice water to immediately arrest the cooking. When cold, drain and dry, then set aside.

(3) Add the shallot, thyme, and salt and pepper, to the vinegar. Allow to macerate 5-10 minutes for flavors to infuse the vinegar.

(4) In a separate, non-reactive bowl, whip the cream until it starts to thicken and the whisk begins to leave a trail in the bottom of the bowl.

(5) Drizzle in the vinegar and seasoning, gently whisking all the while.

(6) When ready to serve, dress the beans with just enough dressing to coat the beans.

(7) Make the salad with soft whole butter lettuce leaves and chopped hazelnuts, or with young arugula and a scattering of diced heirloom tomatoes. Mixed sprouts are a nice topper for the beans as well.

BASIC FISH COOKERY

When cooking fish there are two things to remember: (1) “Fresh!” and (2) “Eight minutes to the inch.”

How to Choose Fresh Fish

Always check fish for freshness. Smell the fish, look closely at it, and when buying whole fish, touch it. Fresh fish should smell of the sea, but never “fishy.” The flesh should be firm and the grain of the fish should be tight. If the flesh looks watery or desiccated, or if there is gapping in the grain, pass it by. Fish should be firm, not mushy. Fish are waterproof on the outside, not on the inside. Avoid fish that are “top-iced” directly on the flesh. The ice can dent the flesh and the water will soak the fish and make it soggy. When looking at whole fish, the eyes should be firm, not shriveled. The gills should have a clean look to them, and when you gently touch the side of the fish it should spring back, not leave a dent.

How to Cook Fish

Now, for cooking it. When cooking fish, remember this mantra: “Eight minutes to the inch.” Whether cooking it on the stovetop, oven, poacher, or broiler, fish cooks up in eight minutes for each inch of thickness, roughly. Eight minutes for the first inch, then break it down from there.

The average store bought piece of salmon runs about 1 1/2 inches thick, top to skin. This fish takes 12 minutes to cook. Fillet of sole usually runs around 1/4 - 1/2 inch. It might take only 6 minutes, but it will probably be closer to 8. Keep in mind that the thinner pieces of fish are more delicate, so you don’t want to be cooking them over high heat anyway unless you want them to disintegrate in the pan. Swordfish and tuna steaks are usually 1 inch thick, so cook for eight minutes. If you like your fish more well done, you may want to cook it a minute or two more. The eight-minute to the inch rule assumes oven temperature of 400°F or pans over medium-high heat. If poaching, liquid is at a bare chuckle (barely rolling simmer).

Sturgeon with Carrot Sauce

1 lb. sturgeon
Salt and fresh ground black pepper
Olive or grape seed oil
Pinch of cinnamon and curry powder
OR

1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, stemmed and chopped
1 recipe of Carrot Sauce (See accompanying recipe)

(1) Cut the fish into even pieces. Depending on the shape of the piece you get, this will either be slices or *paves* (French for square paving stones pieces roughly 3 x 3 inches). If slices, try for 4 slices about 1 1/4 inch thick, for paves, 3 x 3 x 1 1/4 inches is ideal. Whatever you do, try for even sized pieces. Remember the cooking time is dictated by the size.

(2) Lightly coat the fish pieces with a small amount of oil. Either dust with the curry/cinnamon mix or the thyme leaves. Season the

fish with salt and pepper.

(3) Heat a good-sized sauté pan (10-12 inches) over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, add enough oil to just coat the bottom of the pan.

(4) When the oil is heated through, add the fish and cook, searing the fish and giving it a light crust. Shake the pan, and when the pieces move freely, flip them over carefully with a thin bladed spatula or tongs.

(5) When the fish is crusted on the other side the fish should be done. When poked it should feel firm. If you wish, cut it to check for uniform color. REMEMBER: Fish takes 8 minutes to the inch of thickness. If the fish is cut 1 1/4 inches, it should take about 10 minutes.

(6) Place the fish on a plate and nap with the carrot sauce.

CHEF NOTES

Sturgeon is a sustainably grown fish farmed on the Sacramento River. The farming of sturgeon came about when caviar became expensive when the US had embargoed Iraqi imports, and people also wanted to repopulate the Sacramento River with what is an indigenous fish. Sturgeon were at one time so numerous in American waters that caviar was used as a bar snack—literally put out in bowls on the bar with bread as snack food. Nice salty snack food. . .

Sturgeon has a nice meaty texture with flesh that is fairly fatty. This makes it a forgiving fish in the pan and less likely to stick. However, cooking it over high heat will sometimes make the fish tough, so better to use a medium heat and maybe take a little longer to cook it.

About Shop with the Chef Series at Aptos Farmers Market

Shop with the Chef Series 2007 features professional chefs from local restaurants, caterers and cookbook authors who will be giving cooking demonstrations throughout the year at the Aptos Farmers Market, beginning in May and continuing through November. Join each of the chefs as they shop for fresh, seasonal ingredients that will be highlighted in the cooking demonstration and discover how to select perfect produce like a pro! Come meet and visit with the farmers who grow our food and learn how to use fresh seasonal produce in your everyday menus. Taste delicious creations, ask questions and leave with new recipes each month from the best chefs in the Monterey Bay area.

See www.montereybayfarmers.org for complete line up of chefs for upcoming programs and recipes from each program. If you would like to suggest a chef for a future cooking demo, please send email akeller@montereybayfarmers.com.