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food & home

WINTER 2010



**COZY
CUISINE
32 LOCAL
COMFORT
OFFERINGS**

Roasted Squab
from Downey's
Photo by Ashley Renée



Photo by Lori Gold

At Home for the Winter

Comfort food notes

BY LYNETTE LA MERE

Pure Joy Catering Executive Chef

The term “comfort food” (added to the Webster’s Dictionary in 1972) is defined as foods consumed to achieve some level of improved emotional status, whether to relieve negative psychological affect or to increase positive. Comfort foods are also considered very trendy and are pretty darn hard to resist! They warm the hearth & the cockles of most mortal souls. You can tell if food is “comfort food” if your eyes close when you taste it (or sometimes even when you just think about it!). I love serving them in miniature so they don’t feel quite so naughty; they can be utterly adorable and just plain yummy!

Macaroni & Bay Scallops with Gruyere and Cheddar

Serves 6 – 8

Oh yea! Grown up mac & cheese; yes! You can have gooey and sophisticated at the same time and it’s oh so lovely.

- 12 oz. **macaroni**, boiled in salted water till tender, drained & rinsed to stop the cooking
- 2 oz. **butter**
- 1/3 of an **onion**, diced
- “Shy” 1/2 cup **flour** (take off about 1 Tb.)
- Salt & pepper** to taste
- 1 qt. **milk**, hot
- 2 pinches **nutmeg**
- 1 tsp. **dry mustard powder**
- 1 dash **Tabasco sauce**
- 1 lb. grated good **cheese** (gruyere, cheddar, etc.)

For the scallops:

- 1.5 oz. **butter**
- 1/2 lb. **bay scallops**

For the Topping blend together:

- 1.5 oz. melted **butter**
- 1.3 cups **bread crumbs**
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh **Italian parsley**

Melt the butter & over medium heat cook the onions till tender but not browned. Sprinkle in the flour and salt & pepper; whisk till sandy in color. Slowing whisk in the milk, nutmeg, mustard and Tabasco. Lower heat & simmer about 10 minutes or until thickened. Remove from heat & stir in the cook macaroni & grated cheeses, taste and adjust seasoning.

Sauté half of the scallops in butter about 5 minutes till cooked through then stir them into the macaroni and cheese, pour into a casserole & sprinkle with the topping. Bake at 350° for 35-45 minutes or until golden brown. Sauté the other half of the scallops in the butter and pile them on top of the golden casserole to serve.

Grilled Polenta & Thyme Triangles with Truffle Oil and Shaved Parmesan

Serves 6

One of our most requested recipes, this ridiculously popular menu item will become one of your go-to favorites. It’s also great with a good marinara sauce if you haven’t got truffle oil.

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- 3 Tb. **butter**
- 1.5 Tb. **olive oil**
- 1 tsp. **minced garlic**
- 1 pinch **crushed red pepper flakes**
- 1/2 tsp. **chopped fresh thyme**
- 1/4 tsp. **kosher salt**
- 1/4 tsp. **pepper**
- 9 oz. **chicken stock**
- 6 oz. **half & half**
- 6 oz. **milk**
- 3/4 cup **corn meal**
- 1/4 cup **parmesan cheese, grated**
- Olive or vegetable **oil spray**

Garnish with:

- 2 Tb. **truffle oil**
- parmesan cheese**, shaved with a vegetable peeler

Heat the oil & butter in a large sauté pan. Sauté garlic, both peppers, fresh thyme & salt for 1 min. Add the stock, half & half and milk, bring to a boil. Remove from the heat, sprinkle in the corn meal, whisking constantly. Cook over low heat stirring constantly for a few minutes until thick and bubbly. Off the heat stir in the grated parmesan. Pour into a vegetable oil sprayed 8.5 x 4.5 loaf pan and chill until cold. Cut in half length-wise then into 2' squares so you have eight total. Lift them out with a thin metal spatula and cut each diagonally into two triangles. Using a flat grill, griddle or hot sauté pan sprayed generously with olive oil sear both sides of the triangles to give them a bit of crust & color. Garnish with a drizzle of truffle oil & shavings of parmesan.

Vegetable Lasagna

Serves 6

Combat comfort food's bad rap with super lean & carb-less lasagna! I was surprised how very satisfying lasagna can be without pasta. Really any combination of vegetables would work well here, these are just suggestions.

- 1 pound **zucchini**
- olive oil spray**
- 1 **onion**, diced
- 6 **garlic** cloves, chopped
- 1 cup sliced **mushrooms**
- 1 1/2 pounds **lean vintage natural ground beef**
- 2 cups grated **aged parmesan cheese**
- 25 ounces of **your favorite bottled marinara sauce**
- 8 sprigs **fresh oregano**, stemmed
- 1/2 bunch **fresh basil**, stemmed and torn

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Stem the zucchini and the slice length-wise in 1/6 inch wide long pieces. Spray with olive oil a standard 3 quart lasagna pan and then line the bottom with a layer of zucchini slices, season with salt & pepper. Sauté the diced onion in a hot pan sprayed with olive oil till translucent then add the garlic to the pan and remove after a few moments. Set that aside then spray more olive oil as needed and sauté the mushrooms then the beef seasoning well with salt and pepper as you go. As the beef browns break

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it up and add olive oil as needed. You'll find the lean vintage beef doesn't give off a lot of fluid as it cooks so it browns well & smells great.

Sprinkle 1/2 cup of the parmesan on top of the layer of zucchini, top with 1/3 of the marinara sauce then layer on the onions, garlic, mushrooms and fresh herbs.

Top that with the rest of your sliced zucchini, season with salt & pepper then the beef, marinara sauce and the rest of the cheese. Bake for about 40 minutes.

Chicken Provencal

Serves 4


This is chicken for mature audiences only. The grown-up, vivid flavors of olives, fennel, and citrus zest become rich, deep, and sexy when braised in an opulent red wine such as our local Foley Syrah. I love it with creamy parmesan infused polenta or roasted garlic mashed potatoes & a rustic salad. Even better made the day before.

- 2 slices of **bacon**
- 6-8 **chicken thighs**
- salt & pepper** to taste
- 1/2 cup **flour**
- 1 firm **orange**
- olive oil**
- 2 small **onions**, diced

- 3 cloves **garlic**, chopped
- 1 cup **Syrah**
- 6 **roma tomatoes**
- 2 **red or yellow bell peppers**
- 1 Tb. **fresh thyme**
- 1/2 tsp. **fennel seed**
- 1/2 tsp. **fresh rosemary**
- 1/2 tsp. **turmeric**
- 1/2 tsp. **red pepper flakes**
- 1/2 cup **kalamata olives** (you can get pitted ones if you prefer)
- 1/2 bunch **Italian parsley**

Trim the chicken as needed and season with salt and pepper, then dredge it in the flour. Thickly zest the orange with a vegetable peeler; reserve the orange itself for another use. In a large cast iron or heavy oven-proof skillet that you have a lid to slowly heat the bacon pieces until they begin to turn golden and give off their oil. Remove the bacon and sauté the chicken over high heat 5-7 minutes each side or until deep golden. Set the chicken aside and preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Sauté the onions in the pan until golden translucent, adding the garlic just at the end. To this return the chicken, the orange zest and all the ingredients except the olives and parsley. Bring to a boil on the stove top then cover it and pop into the oven for about 30 minutes.

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Roasted Garlic Mashed Potatoes

I enjoy the depth roasted garlic adds to most savory dishes, here's an effortless way to have it on hand. Cover a couple cups of peeled garlic cloves in a small baking pan half way with olive oil and cover the pan. Bake it at 350 degrees until golden and tender, about half an hour. Keep this in the refrigerator and use the oil or garlic to flavor many things, like this flawless side dish. (To skip this step however, you can buy roasted garlic paste).

- 5 lb. russet potatoes
- 6 oz. butter
- 1.5 cups half & half
- 1/4 cup roasted garlic (recipe above),
smashed to a paste
- Salt & pepper to taste

Boil a pot of salted water, add the peeled & quartered potatoes and move them around in the pot occasionally so the bottom ones don't go too fast, 25 to 30 minutes. Here's the big trick to making really great mashed potatoes; heat the butter and half & half in a small pot. When easily pierced with a fork, drain the potatoes in a colander. Do not use a food processor; pour them back in the same pot & smash them while piping hot, add HOT half & half and butter, whip / whisk till fluffy. Add the roasted garlic and salt & pepper to taste.

Brownies

Serves 8

I have tried all the brownie recipes you can imagine and these are still my favorite, and everyone else's too. Based on Katherine Hepburn's original brownie recipe these are truly glorious and oh so comforting. Once cooled, they hold very well and can be cut into simple squares or smaller bites.

- 8 oz. butter
- 5 oz. unsweetened baking chocolate
- 2 1/2 cups sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 "shy" cup of flour (take out 1 Tbl.)
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 Tbl. pure vanilla
- 3/4 cup of chocolate chips
or chopped chocolate bar
- 3/4 cup walnuts, toasted

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 10 inch baking pan. Melt gently over low heat in a small sauce pan the butter and unsweetened chocolate cubes. Take off the heat and add the sugar, eggs flour, salt and vanilla. Stir in the chocolate chips and walnuts. Fold together with a rubber spatula and then scrape out into the prepared pan and bake till just pulling away from the sides of the pan, about 25-30 minutes. Grandpa always said watch the food not the clock!

Lynette La Mere is also the proprietor of Pure Joy Catering, Inc (805) 963-5766 (www.PureJoyCatering.com) and a freelance writer who flourishes in Santa Barbara.



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