



Christmas Day 2004

Assorted Appetizers

Escargot in Puff Pastry

Paired with Trimbach Pinot Gris Réserve 2001

Smoked Pekin Duckling with Cranberry-Orange Chutney

Paired with Chateau Ste. Michelle Reserve Merlot 1997

And Trimbach Gewürztraminer 2001

Pan-Seared Asparagus

Bourbon-Spiced Sweet Potatoes

Crème Brûlée

Paired with Trimbach Riesling Cuvée Frédéric Émile 1999

(Recipes serve two)

Escargot in Puff Pastry

- 12 large escargot
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter
- 2 shallots, finely chopped
- 1 cup wild black mushrooms (Portabello, morels, or chanterelles)
- 3/4 cup dry white wine
- Kosher salt and black pepper to taste
- 3/4 cup veal stock
- 2 prepared puff pastry shells, baked according to directions

Rinse escargot and pat dry. Preheat oven to 425° F. Place pastry shells on a cookie sheet and set aside.

Melt butter in large saucepan. Add shallots and cook until wilted, about five minutes. Add snails and mushrooms; cook for three minutes. Add wine, salt, and pepper; simmer for three minutes. Add veal stock; simmer for five minutes. Remove from heat.

Place six snails, along with mushrooms and shallots, in each pastry shell. Put filled shells into oven until browned, about three to four minutes. Serve hot.



Smoked Pekin Duckling with Cranberry-Orange Chutney

There is probably nothing more elegant than a crispy-skin smoked duck. Duck accompanies sweet and fruity flavors very well. For a variation, try flavoring duck with orange juice, apple cider, or citrus peels. Whole cloves, fresh ginger, and Asian spice are also good with duck. (This recipe requires at least one day advanced preparation.)

1 (5- to 6-pound) Pekin duckling
1/2 cup kosher salt
1 cup pineapple juice
1 cup orange juice
1 bunch fresh thyme
6 cloves garlic, minced

Combine salt, pineapple juice, orange juice, thyme, and garlic in a large non-reactive container. Mix well to dissolve salt.

Remove giblets and neck from the duck. Score the duck skin in several areas without cutting the meat. Place the duck in a large resealable food bag or oven roasting bag and add the marinade. Marinate the duck, refrigerated, for four to six hours. Drain and rinse duck, reserving marinade. Pat duck dry with paper towels and allow to air dry in the refrigerator, uncovered, for at least eight hours.

Now comes the choice... how to cook the duck. Outdoor cooking, either smoking or grilling, is ideal for a duck. Whatever method you use, a drip pan is necessary to catch all the rendered fat. For me, a smoked duck is the way to go.

To smoke a duck: Prepare the Grill Dome for indirect cooking with a drip pan under the duck. Prepare the smoker and bring it to a temperature of 225° F. to 250° F. Butterfly the duck by removing backbone with kitchen shears and lay flat. Smoke-cook the duck for about three to four hours adding apple or cherry wood chunks throughout the cook. When done, the duck breast should have an internal temperature of 160° F.

Although smoking will add great flavor to the duck, the skin won't be crispy because of the low cooking temperature. If you want crispy skin on the smoked duck, prepare the grill for high-heat indirect cooking. Grill the duck, turning often, until the skin is crispy, about 10 to 15 minutes. (Alternatively, put the duck in a preheated 500° F. oven for about 15 minutes.)

To grill the duck, place a drip pan under the duck to catch the fat drippings. Prepare the grill for medium-high (325° F.) rotisserie cooking. Balance the duck on the rotisserie spit and cook for two to three hours or until the breast meat has an internal temperature of 160° F. (The thigh temperature should be 170° F.)

Tent the cooked ducked with aluminum foil and allow it to rest for 10 minutes before carving.



Cranberry Orange Chutney

- 1 (12-ounce) bag whole cranberries
- 1 cup chopped yellow onions
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup cider vinegar
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 3/4 cup brown sugar, firmly packed
- 1 tablespoon finely grated orange peel
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves

In large saucepan, stir together cranberries, onion, raisins, vinegar, granulated and brown sugars, orange peel and juice, salt, cinnamon, ginger, and cloves; bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, stirring often, for 20 minutes or until thickened. (This may be prepared two days ahead and held, covered and refrigerated. Bring to room temperature before serving.)

Pan-Seared Asparagus

- 20 thin asparagus spears
- 1 teaspoon olive oil (for cooking)
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon good-quality balsamic vinegar
- 1/2 cup shaved Parmesan cheese
- Freshly ground black pepper

Heat sauté pan over medium high heat; brush the asparagus with a little oil and cook for about five minutes turning occasionally.

When asparagus is crisp-tender, drizzle asparagus with extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Season to taste with pepper. Sprinkle Parmesan shavings over asparagus.



Bourbon-Spiced Sweet Potatoes

2 medium sweet potatoes
1/4 cup unsalted butter
1 egg, lightly beaten
1/4 cup heavy cream
2 tablespoons brown sugar
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons bourbon
1/4 cup seasoned bread crumbs

Preheat oven to 400° F. Rinse the sweet potatoes, pierce in several areas with a chef's knife, and bake on a shallow sheet pan until tender, about 45 minutes to 1 hour. Remove from oven and allow potatoes to cool.

Cut potatoes in half and scoop the pulp into a medium mixing bowl. Mash the potatoes; then add the butter, egg, cream, and sugar. Continue mixing. Gradually add the cinnamon, nutmeg, salt, and bourbon and continue mixing until ingredients are thoroughly incorporated. Place potato mixture into a buttered casserole dish. (Potatoes may be prepared to this point one day in advance and held, refrigerated and covered. Bring to room temperature before continuing.)

Preheat oven to 350° F. Bake potatoes for 20 to 30 minutes or until completely warmed through. Prior to service, preheat broiler and sprinkle casserole with bread crumbs. Broil until golden brown, about five minutes.



Crème Brûlée

4 egg yolks
4 tablespoons granulated sugar
2 cups heavy cream
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
4 tablespoons brown sugar

Preheat oven to 300° F.

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, heat the cream almost to a boil and stir in the sugar.

Beat the egg yolks until light and pour the hot cream over them slowly, stirring constantly. Stir in the vanilla extract and strain the mixture into four individual ramekins or custard cups. Place the ramekins in a 1 1/2-inch hot water bath and bake until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean, about 40 minutes. Do not over bake; bake until the custard is set around the edges but still loose in the center. It will continue to cook after being removed from the oven. Cool to room temperature and the chill at least two hours. (Recipe may be prepared to this point and held, refrigerated and covered, for two days. Bring to room temperature before continuing.)

Before serving, preheat broiler and sprinkle the custard with the brown sugar. Set the ramekins on a bed of cracked ice and broil until the sugar is brown and melted, about five minutes. (Alternatively, use a chef's torch to melt the brown sugar.) Serve immediately or re-chill again and serve cold.