**Celebrate Spring**

with Good Friends and Good Food

May 11, 2019 6:30 PM

**Bon Appetit**



Assignments

Couple One: Tuna with Orange, Ginger and Lemongrass Sauce

Couple Two: Appetizer: Crab Towers with Avocado and Gazpacho Salsa

Couple Three: Nutted Wild Rice

Roasted Asparagus with Goat Cheese and Bacon

Couple Four: Best Chocolate Tart

Host Couple: ….Wine, and Coffee

**CRAB TOWERS WITH AVOCADO AND GAZPACHO SALSAS**

Serves 6. **(Increase recipe to serve 8)**

You can prepare the crabmeat salad and gazpacho salsa for this appetizer several hours ahead of serving, but the avocado salsa should be prepared just before assembly.

CRABMEAT SALAD

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon champagne vinegar

1 teaspoon minced or grated lemon zest

1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1/2 teaspoon table salt

1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper

2 tablespoons mayonnaise

12 oz. lump or backfin Atlantic blue crabmeat, carefully picked over to remove cartilage and shell fragments

GAZPACHO SALSA

1 small yellow bell pepper, cored, seeded, and cut into 1/8- inch pieces (about 1/2 cup)

1/2 small cucumber, peeled if desired, seeded, and cut into 1/8-inch pieces (about 1/2 cup)

1 medium plum tomato, cored, seeded, and cut into 1/8-inch pieces (about 1/2 cup)

1 small celery rib, cut into 1/8-inch pieces (about 1/2 cup)

1/2 small red onion, minced (about 1/4 cup)

1/2 small jalapeno chile, stemmed, seeded, and minced

1 tablespoon minced fresh cilantro leaves

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 tablespoons sherry vinegar

3/4 teaspoon table salt

1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

AVOCADO SALSA

3 ripe avocados, pitted, peeled, and diced into 1/4-inch pieces

2 tablespoons juice from one lime

1/4 teaspoon ground coriander

1/2 teaspoon table salt

1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper

GARNISH

1 cup frisee (curly endive)

1. FOR THE CRABMEAT SALAD: Whisk the olive oil, champagne vinegar, lemon zest, mustard, salt, and pepper together in a small bowl. Measure 3 tablespoons of the vinaigrette into a medium bowl and mix with the mayonnaise. Add the crabmeat to the mayonnaise mixture and toss to coat. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until needed. Set the remaining vinaigrette aside.

2. FOR THE GAZPACHO SALSA: Toss the bell pepper, cucumber, tomato, celery, red onion, jalapeno, cilantro, olive oil, sherry vinegar, salt and pepper in a medium bowl and set aside.

3. FOR THE AVOCADO SALSA: Toss the avocados, lime juice, coriander, salt, and pepper in a medium bowl and set aside.

4. TO ASSEMBLE: Use a 3-inch-wide round biscuit cutter (or a tunafish can with both ends removed) to assemble each tower. Place the biscuit cutter in the center of an individual plate. Press 1/3 cup of the Avocado Salad into the bottom of the cutter, using the back of a soup spoon. Lift the cutter off of the plate slightly to reveal some but not all of the avocado. Holding the cutter in this slightly-raised position, press 1/3 cup of the Crabmeat Salad evenly into the cutter on top of the avocado. Again, lift the cutter slightly to reveal some but not all of the crab salad. Again holding the cutter in this position, use a soup spoon to press 1/3 cup of the Gazpacho Salsa evenly into the center on top of the crab. Gently lift the cutter up and away from the plate to reveal the crab tower. Repeat procedure for each of the remaining 5 plates, using the rest of the ingredients.

5. Dress the frisee with the remaining champagne vinaigrette. Place a few sprigs of the dressed frisee on top of each crab tower. Serve immediately.

**TUNA WITH ORANGE, GINGER, AND LEMONGRASS SAUCE**

Serves 8

1 ¾ cups fresh-squeezed orange juice, separated

2 teaspoons cornstarch

1/4 cup olive oil

1/2 cup finely chopped onion

1/4 cup minced peeled fresh ginger

1/4 cup minced fresh lemongrass

2 tablespoons minced garlic

1/2 teaspoon dried crushed red pepper

1/2 cup chicken stock or canned low-salt chicken broth

2 tablespoons soy sauce

8 6-7-oz. tuna steaks

Additional olive oil

1/3 cup sesame seeds

Whisk 1/4 cup orange juice and cornstarch in small bowl to blend. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in medium nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion, ginger, lemongrass, garlic and crushed red pepper; saute until onion is light golden, about 3 minutes. Add remaining 1 ½ cups orange juice, chicken stock and soy sauce and boil until reduced to 1 ½ cups. Whisk in cornstarch mixture; boil 1 minute. Remove from heat. Season sauce to taste with salt and pepper.

Brush tuna steaks with olive oil. Coat each side of each tuna steak with 1 teaspoon sesame seeds, pressing gently to adhere. Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in large nonstick skillet over high heat. Add four of the tuna steaks (do not crowd) and cook until opaque in center, about 3 minutes per side. Remove from pan and keep warm. Heat another tablespoon of olive oil to skillet and cook remaining four tuna steaks.

Bring sauce to a simmer. Transfer tuna to plates. Serve with sauce.

**NUTTED WILD RICE**

Serves 6 **(*I*ncrease recipe to serve 8)**

1 cup (1/2 pound) raw wild rice

5 ½ cups defatted chicken stock

1 cup shelled pecan halves

1 cup yellow raisins

grated rind of 1 large orange

1/4 cup chopped fresh mint

4 green onions, thinly sliced

1/4 cup olive oil

1/3 cup fresh-squeezed orange juice

1 ½ teaspoons salt

Freshly ground black pepper to taste

1. Put rice in a strainer and run under cold water; rinse thoroughly.

2. Place rice in a medium-size heavy saucepan. Add stock and bring to a rapid boil. Adjust heat to a gentle simmer and cook uncovered 45 minutes. After 30 minutes, check for doneness; rice should not be too soft. Place a thin towel inside a colander, turn rice into the colander and drain. Transfer drained rice into a bowl.

3. Add remaining ingredients to rice and toss gently. Adjust seasonings to taste. Let mixture stand for 2 hours to allow flavors to develop. Serve at room temperature.

**ROASTED ASPARAGUS WITH GOAT CHEESE AND BACON**

Serves 6 **(Increase recipe to serve 8)**

Roast the asparagus and drizzle with the lemon juice and oil before coming to the gourmet dinner. Once there, rewarm the asparagus in the host’s oven or microwave; then arrange on

the plates and sprinkle with the cheese and bacon.

6 bacon slices

2 pounds medium asparagus, tough ends trimmed

2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons olive oil

1 3 ½-to 4-oz. log soft goat cheese, crumbled

2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

1 teaspoon grated lemon peel

Cook bacon in heavy skillet over medium heat until brown and crisp. Transfer to paper towels and drain. Crumble bacon; set aside.

Position rack in center of oven and preheat to 500 degrees. Arrange asparagus on large rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons oil and turn asparagus to coat well. Sprinkle generously with salt and pepper. Roast asparagus until crisp-tender when pierced with a knife, about 7 minutes. Arrange asparagus in a single layer on a platter, drizzle with lemon juice and remaining 2 teaspoons oil. Sprinkle with grated lemon peel. Cover with plastic wrap and let stand at room temperature.

When ready to serve, heat asparagus in oven or microwave until warm, arrange on plates, and sprinkle with bacon and goat cheese.

**BEST CHOCOLATE TART**

Use good-quality dark chocolate containing a cacao percentage between 60 and 65 percent. Let tart sit at room temperature for 30 minutes before glazing in step 6. Garnish if desired with a flaky coarse sea salt.

CRUST

1 large egg yolk

2 tablespoons heavy cream

1/2 cup sliced almonds, toasted

1/4 cup sugar

1 cup all-purpose flour

1/4 teaspoon salt

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch pieces

FILLING

1 ¼ cups heavy cream

1/2 teaspoon instant espresso powder

1/4 teaspoon salt

9 oz. bittersweet chocolate (such as Ghirardelli 60% Cacao Bittersweet Chocolate), chopped fine

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into thin slices and softened

2 large eggs, lightly beaten, room temperature

GLAZE

3 tablespoons heavy cream

1 tablespoon light corn syrup

2 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped fine

1 tablespoon hot water

GARNISH

Make lightly-sweetened whipped cream for a garnish, flavored with cognac.

1. FOR THE CRUST: Beat egg yolk and cream together in small bowl. Process almonds and sugar in food processor until nuts are finely ground, 15-20 seconds. Add flour and salt; pulse to combine, about 10 pulses. Scatter butter over flour mixture; pulse to cut butter into flour until mixture resembles coarse meal; about 15 pulses. With processor running, add egg yolk mixture and process until dough forms ball, about 10 seconds. Transfer dough to large sheet of plastic wrap and press into 6-inch disk; wrap dough in plastic and refrigerate until firm but malleable, about 30 minutes. (Dough can be refrigerated for up to 3 days; before using, let stand at room temperature until malleable but still cool.)

2. Roll out dough between 2 large sheets of plastic into 11-inch round about 3/8 inch thick. (If dough becomes too soft and sticky to work with, slip it onto a baking sheet and refrigerate until workable.) Once dough is rolled out, place dough round (still in plastic) on baking sheet and refrigerate until firm but pliable, about 15 minutes.

3. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Spray 9-inch tart pan with removable bottom with vegetable oil spray. Keeping dough on sheet, remove top layer of plastic. Invert tart pan (with bottom) on top of dough round. Press on tart pan to cut dough. Using both hands, pick up baking sheet and tart pan and carefully invert both, setting tart pan right side up. Remove baking sheet and peel off plastic; reserve plastic. Roll over edges of tart pan with rolling pin to cut dough. Gently ease and press dough into bottom of pan, reserving scraps. Roll dough scraps into 3/4-inch rope (various lengths are OK). Line edge of tart pan with ropes and gently press into fluted sides. Line tart pan with reserved plastic and, using measuring cup, gently press and smooth dough to an even thickness (sides should be about 1/4 inch thick. Using paring knife, trim any excess dough above rim of tart; discard scraps. Freeze dough-lined pan until dough is firm, about 20-30 minutes.

4. Set dough-lined pan on baking sheet. Spray 12-inch square of aluminum foil with oil spray and press foil, sprayed side down, into pan; fill with 2 cups pie weights. Bake until dough is dry and light golden-brown, about 25 minutes, rotating sheet halfway through baking. Carefully remove foil and weights and continue to bake until pastry is rich golden brown and fragrant, 8-10 minutes longer. Let cool completely on baking sheet on wire rack.

5. FOR THE FILLING: Heat oven to 250 degrees. Bring cream, espresso powder, and salt to simmer in small saucepan over medium heat, stirring once or twice to dissolve espresso powder and salt. Meanwhile, place chocolate in large heatproof bowl. Pour simmering cream mixture over chocolate, cover, and let stand 5 minutes to allow chocolate to soften. Using whisk, stir mixture slowly and gently (so as not to incorporate air) until homogeneous. Add butter and continue to whisk gently until fully incorporated. Pour beaten eggs through fine-mesh strainer into chocolate mixture; whisk slowly until mixture is homogeneous and glossy. Pour filling into tart crust and shake gently from side to side to distribute and smooth surface; pop any large bubbles with toothpick or skewer. Bake tart, on baking sheet, until outer edge of filling is just set and very faint cracks appear on surface, 30-35 minutes; filling will still be very wobbly. Let cool completely on baking sheet on wire rack. Refrigerate, uncovered, until filling is chilled and set, at least 3 hours or up to 18 hours.

6. FOR THE GLAZE: Thirty minutes before glazing, remove tart from refrigerator. Bring cream and corn syrup to simmer in small saucepan over medium heat; stir once or twice to combine. Remove pan from heat, add chocolate and cover. Let stand for 5 minutes to allow chocolate to soften. Whisk gently (so as not to incorporate air) until mixture is smooth, then whisk in hot water until glaze is homogeneous, shiny, and pourable. Working quickly, pour glaze onto center of tart. To distribute glaze, tilt pan and allow glaze to run to edge. (Spreading glaze with spatula will leave marks on surface). Pop any large bubbles with toothpick or skewer. Let cool completely, about 1 hour.

7. Remove ring from tart pan. Insert thin-bladed metal spatula between crust and pan bottom to loosen tart; slide tart onto serving platter. Cut into wedges and serve after placing a dollop of cognac-flavored whipping cream on each wedge.