



TAILORED TASTE TIDBITS

VOLUME IV, ISSUE III JULY 2009 FOOD NEWS FROM TAILORED TASTE PERSONAL CHEF SERVICE

Salt

In the April newsletter, I wrote about the balance of our four taste sensations – salty, sweet, sour and bitter. Here I'm focusing on the first of those: salt, or chemically speaking, sodium chloride which is essential to human life.

Beyond keeping a balance in our bodies, salt helped shape history. Preserving food using salt allowed humans to travel and explore. The Dead Sea, Salzburg, coastal towns from Venice to the Guerande peninsula in France, and British towns ending in 'wich' (meaning salt) all flourished from time to time as sources of salt and places of trade.

Governments recognized that control of salt led to control of people. China sold salt to fund the building of the Great Wall of China. Salt taxes (gabelle) in pre-revolutionary France fueled unrest leading to the downfall of the monarchy. Along with port blockades during the US Civil War, Union soldiers blew up Confederate salt-works to starve the South. In 1930s India, Gandhi protested British rule with his 240-mile walk to the sea to gather salt. These are but a few examples of salt in our history.

At a recent salt tasting, I was amazed at the differences among the natural salts sampled. From a pyramid-shaped Cyprus salt to a mild Australian Pink, the unique characteristics of each were obvious. Hawaiian Red which is mined with local clay tasted of pretzels to me and nuts to others. French Grey Sea Salt evoked that surprise mouthful of a wave at the beach.

Moving into flavored salts such as chardonnay-smoked, Thai ginger, and black truffle opens up a world of possibilities for seasoning fish, chicken, meat and even sweets. Who can resist that little sprinkling of sea salt atop a caramel?

Volumes have been written about salt in history, in language, in cooking, and in sustaining life. I've only scratched the surface. For more info (a LOT more) take a look at *Salt: A World History* by Mark Kurlansky. To find some of the salts mentioned above, try Williams-Sonoma stores or Saltworks (www.saltworks.us). After you play with them, let me know which ones you prefer.

Stay tuned for the next issue featuring **sweet!**

Bison

On a drizzly day in May I joined a group of personal chefs for a fieldtrip to a bison ranch in Monkton, MD. Gunpowder Bison & Trading Company is a family-owned and operated business where the bison (175+ at any given moment) enjoy grazing among the property's 70 acres, living free of hormones and stimulants.

Bison is a healthy alternative to beef. With twice the protein and half the fat, this other red meat is finding its way onto many a dinner plate. While most local grocery stores stock ground bison, Gunpowder offers cuts including short ribs, NY strip, tenderloin, T-bone, sirloin, roasts, and more. There are also processed meats such as sausage (hot, sweet, and breakfast), kielbasa, hot dogs, and sweet bologna. Don't forget your pup who'll love the bison chow & marrow bones.



Many of you, my clients, have tasted my grill-ready Smoky Bison Burgers, Bison Meatloaf "Muffins" and Bison Cheese-Burger Pizzas as I explore this healthy meat's many possibilities. Gunpowder's products are available through mail order and at many local Farmer's Markets in metro DC and Baltimore. For more info, check out www.gunpowderbison.com or better yet, take a day-trip to the ranch yourself.

5 Years & Counting

Wow - it's been 5 years since I made the decision to quit a 'normal' job and jump with both feet into my personal chef business. There have been ups and downs as with anything in life, but the ups have far outnumbered the downs.

One of the unexpected pluses has been the expansion of my world. I've met a most diverse collection of people – some I never would have encountered in my previous existence. Healthy, sick, young, older, food lovers and the food averse have all crossed my path. I have learned from each and every one.

Some challenge me culinarily, especially those with severe allergies and/or food restrictions. Some help me hone my dinner party skills, plate presentations and buffet styles. Others are now friends who enrich my personal life.

My professional circle expanded as well via the US Personal Chef Association, Women Chefs & Restaurateurs, and the Capital Area Food Bank. Each group has offered me benefits and opportunities through the expansion of my food-related network.

I thank you all.

Tomato Salt Samplers

Not a recipe per se, but a fun way to try various salts other than one pinch at a time straight up.

2 heirloom tomatoes
½ teaspoon each of 4 different salts

Slice the tomatoes (at least 4 slices per tomato) and divide slices between 2 plates. Lightly sprinkle each slice with about ¼ teaspoon of one of the 4 salts – make sure you remember which slice has which salt! Grab a cold beverage, sit down with a friend and decide which salt you like best.

2 servings

Favorite Dishes

I'm often asked "What is your favorite food to cook?" Hmm... that's a hard question since I like to cook just about anything. So I decided to see what your favorite dishes are **to eat** – those most-requested 'repeats' I've had during the last 5 years. Some are liked by all; some are loved by a few who ask for them time and time again; and each has made someone very happy. Here they are, in no particular order. Is your favorite on the list?

Thai Chicken Potstickers

Thai dumplings filled with ground chicken, ginger, and green onion in a coconut milk-basil-curry sauce

Chicken with Lemon-Basil Cream Sauce

Seared chicken breasts topped with a luscious lemony cream sauce scented with fresh basil

Baked Pecan-Crusted Salmon

Oven-roasted salmon fillets topped with a mustard-pecan crust

Gingered Tilapia in Foil

Oven-roasted tilapia fillets seasoned with fresh ginger root, garlic, sesame oil and cilantro

Fish en Papillote with Julienned Veggies & Truffle Oil

Fresh seasonal fish with thinly-sliced vegetables steamed in individual packages and finished with a drizzle of truffle oil

Bacon-wrapped Barbeque Shrimp

Spicy shrimp wrapped in bacon, dusted with chipotle powder and oven-roasted

Feta-Spinach Stuffed Salmon

Butterflied fillet of salmon stuffed with a feta-spinach filling

Keema

A spicy Indian dish of ground lamb and peas with freshly minced ginger

Almond-Crusted Chicken (or Chicken Fingers)

Chicken breasts or tenders lightly crusted in a flavorful mix of ground almonds and spices

Honey-Mustard Pork Tenderloin with Grilled Veggies

Seared pork medallions marinated in a sweet-tangy sauce, accompanied by seasonal grilled vegetables

Ziti with Grilled Gazpacho Sauce

Veggies from traditional Gazpacho are grilled & turned into a sauce to top pasta; sometimes served with grilled sausage or chicken

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