



TAILORED TASTE TIDBITS

VOLUME VI, ISSUE I WINTER 2011 FOOD NEWS FROM TAILORED TASTE PERSONAL CHEF SERVICE

Old Year/New Year

January is aptly named for the forward- and backward-facing Roman god Janus who oversees doors, gates, beginnings and endings. In January we reminisce about the year just past and look forward to the clean slate of the one just beginning. There have been years in all our lives that we were more than happy to see end and some we wish would continue forever.



Looking back for me I realize that 2010 was largely about family – a new great-nephew born in May and some sudden, unexpected and sad farewells later in the year. Happily, milestone birthdays arrived and were celebrated in style.

Business boomed and my family of clients grew. I “adopted” an elementary school as part of the White House *Chefs Move to Schools* initiative. What I thought would be a handful of kids turned out to be an after school Chef’s Club of 36 high-energy students that I cook with twice a month in a state of semi-controlled chaos. They are enthusiastic and anxious to chop and stir and mix – hopefully they are learning some nutrition along the way.

Looking forward to 2011, I hope for another successful year doing what I love – cooking. I intend to start a small garden with the Chef’s Club kids concentrating on early plants such as lettuce and peas and herbs. We will celebrate another family member’s milestone birthday. I want to carve out more time for reading and traveling. And of course, I’d like to find more time to play with the great-nieces and nephews in my life.



My family
By Chapman Photography

I hope when you reflect back and plan forward this January that most of the past brings smiles and the thought of the near future brightens you with anticipation.

Happy New Year!

Stranger than Fiction

An odd thing happened while cooking one day. Late in the afternoon as I was finishing up the service, I noticed that whenever I took a bite of something, I experienced a bitter taste in the back of my mouth. That evening my glass of wine was undrinkable. The next morning my beloved coffee was nearly intolerable. By late that afternoon, I feared something was seriously wrong.

So I did what any sensible person would do, I Googled “*bitter taste when I eat*” and was stunned at the top 20 websites that popped up. All related similar tales and fears. And in all cases, the common denominator was the consumption of pine nuts. Sure enough, I’d eaten a whopping five pine nuts the previous day.

Pine nuts from China appear to be the culprit; Mediterranean pine nuts don’t seem to cause this. It’s not clear if there is a pesticide used on the Chinese pine nuts or if the problem is with the nuts themselves. Also odd is that two people can share a dish made with Chinese pine nuts and only one will experience what’s been dubbed “pine mouth.” Hmm.



Since I was about to start a vacation that revolved heavily around fine dining I was not pleased to read that the problem may last anywhere from three days to six weeks! I’m happy to report that my symptoms lasted only four days but sad that a beautiful Scallop with Lemongrass Rice dish ordered on Day 3 was a victim of my Pine Mouth.

Recipe for New Year's Luck

In many parts of our country, especially the South, it's a firmly held belief that you must start the year with black-eyed peas for good luck. So in that vein, here's my simple twist on a black-eyed pea salad, which is good any day of the year.

Black-Eyed Peas & Hearts of Palm Salad

- 1 can black-eyed peas, drained & rinsed
- 1 can hearts of palm, drained & sliced
- 1 jalapeno, minced (seeds optional)
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 tablespoon scallions, minced

- ½ cup mango nectar
- 1 tablespoon champagne vinegar
- 2 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce

Place first 5 ingredients in a large bowl and toss. Place remaining ingredients in a small bowl and whisk to blend.

Dress salad with about half the dressing. Add remaining dressing if needed or reserve for another salad.

Enjoy.

Add to Your Culinary Calendar

Jan 17-23, 2011 – Restaurant Week in Washington, DC

Feb 15, 2011 – Ovarian Cancer National Alliance annual *Turn Up the Heat! With Women Chefs* event at the Ritz Carlton on 22nd Street, NW in DC. Info at www.ovariancancer.org.

Mar 26, 2011 – Cherry Blossom Festival activities begin. Search for specifics at www.nationalcherryblossomfestival.org.

Apr 4, 2011 – Share Our Strength's Taste of the Nation at the National Building Museum. Details at www.strength.org.

Some 2010 Food Photos



Cheeses of Canada with Ice Wine



My husband's freshly baked bread



Vegetarian "paella"



Summer watermelon



Bison-stuffed peppers



Blue cheese tasting

Dent & Scratch

Originally this section was going to be about kale – how it's sweeter this time of year, stands up well to vinaigrettes, is incredibly nutritious (Vitamins A and C, iron, calcium and potassium) and tastes great in its raw form. But as I was chatting with a client yesterday about pots and pans, he said something that struck a chord for me.

He was discussing buying two large skillets – the sizes I generally bring with me – so that I wouldn't have to lug them in the future (thank you Andrew!). The conversation took place as I was vigorously scrubbing my crusty skillet after making hash browns. I said, "Are you sure you want me to treat your skillets this way – I may scratch them." He replied, "Sure, they're not for show and it's like people – we all end up with dents and scratches along the way."

What a good analogy! None of us makes it through life unscathed. Some of the scratches are physical and some emotional, but that's what living is all about. The scratches give us our character, toughen us a bit, and hopefully make it easier to face the future.

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