

LLI Proudly Presents
***QUICK CLASSICS FROM THE KITCHENS
OF LE CORDON BLEU***

The essence of this class is the combining of fresh and light produce with top-quality, ready-made foods in as little time as possible. All of the recipes are based on classic French culinary techniques, while contemporary kitchen aids and clever shortcuts ensure preparation and cooking times are kept to a minimum.

They range from hearty soups and warm salads to desserts. Some of these may take more time than others; however, we have included some chef's tips on preparing dishes ahead, which help in cutting down on time in the kitchen.

The recipes bring the reputation of one of the most famous cooking schools and the expertise of their chefs to your kitchen so that you may know that superb food can be prepared quickly with minimum effort for maximum effect, without compromising flavor. I hope you enjoy this class and do make some of these dishes.

Chef Cal

RECIPES

FRESH TOMATO AND PEPPER SOUP WITH BASIL

2 red bell peppers
1 pound tomatoes, preferably Italian plum
1 small onion
1 garlic clove
2 tbsp. olive oil
3 – 3½ cups hot vegetable stock
Good pinch of sugar
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Fresh basil leaves to serve

Roughly chop the bell peppers and tomato. Mince the onion and garlic, keeping all the vegetables separate.

In a large saucepan, heat the olive oil over low heat. Add the onion and stir for 2 minutes without coloring, then add the red peppers and cook for 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes and garlic, cook for 10 minutes, then pour in the stock. Add the sugar and seasoning to taste. Bring to a boil, cover and simmer over moderate heat for 10 minutes.

Puree the soup in a food processor or use a hand-held blender until smooth, then press through a fine strainer back into the pan. Bring back to a boil. Then lower the heat and adjust the seasoning to taste, if necessary.

To Serve – Pour into a soup tureen or individual bowls. Quickly shred the basil and sprinkle over the soup just before serving. Serves 4

CUCUMBER AND DILL SOUP

(Served chilled, in white bowls, it shows up the glorious green color)

1½ large cucumber
1 small handful of fresh mint
2 cups cold chicken or vegetable stock
2/3 cup plain yogurt

Salt and freshly ground pepper

To Serve:

4 tbsp. plain yogurt

Fresh dill and/mint sprigs

Trim the ends of the cucumber and discard then chop the cucumber into chunks and place in a food processor fitted with a steel blade. Add the mint and dill and process until finely chopped then add the stock through the feeder tube and process again until well mixed.

Press the soup through a fine strainer into a bowl, then gradually whisk in the yogurt until evenly blended; season to taste with salt and pepper. Cover and refrigerate for at least four hours.

To serve – Whisk the soup well and taste for seasoning. Pour into individual soup bowls, swirl a spoonful of yogurt in the center of each and garnish with mint and/or dill. Serves 4

Chef's Tip: Prepare the soup the day before, cover tightly with plastic wrap and keep in the refrigerator overnight. Put the tureen or soup bowls into the refrigerator at the same time so they will be chilled as well.

SPINACH SALAD WITH BACON, CROUTONS AND CHEESE

Nutritious main course salad for when you crave something crisp and fresh for supper. It is based on fresh ingredients that you can pick up at the supermarket on your way home from the office.

5-6 ounces small tender spinach leaves

¼ cup shredded or diced Cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese

1 tbsp. sunflower oil

8 ounces slab bacon, sliced

(90g) 3 oz. croutons

Dressing:

2 tbsp. red wine vinegar

Salt and freshly ground black pepper
6 tbsp. sunflower oil

Wash the spinach and remove the stalks. Drain and spin-dry spinach leaves, then place them in a large bowl. Add the cheese to the bowl and toss to mix.

Heat the oil in a non-stick skillet, add the bacon and fry over moderate to high heat for about 5 minutes until crisp. Toss the bacon and shake the pan constantly - remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.

Make the dressing. Pour the vinegar into the pan, add salt and pepper and stir over moderate heat until the salt has dissolved. Remove from the heat and slowly whisk in the remaining oil.

To serve –pour the dressing over the salad and toss to mix. Sprinkle the bacon and croutons on top and serve immediately. Serves 2 to 3

PASTA ALLA DIAVOLA

Alla Diaola means “Deviled,” a name sometimes used to describe dishes containing chilies. Often such dishes come from southern Italy and Sicily, a legacy from the days when the Arabs settled there.

8 ounces spaghetti or other pasta of your choice
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Flesh from a few cloves of Roasted Garlic
8 tbsp. olive oil
¼ to ½ tsp. crushed dried chilies or to taste
Freshly grated Parmesan cheese, to serve

Cook the pasta in salted boiling water as directed on the package. Meanwhile put the mashed garlic flesh in a bowl with the olive oil and mash with a fork.

Drain the pasta. Heat the garlic oil in the pan in which the pasta was cooked. Add the pasta and chilies and quickly toss together. Taste for seasoning.

To Serve: Divide the pasta equally between 2 warm bowls and serve immediately topped with Parmesan. Serves 2

SCRAMBLED EGGS WITH SMOKED SALMON

For a quick and nutritious after-work supper, nothing beats scrambled eggs on toast. Here they are given a luxurious touch with smoked salmon and cream. Serve them moist and creamy to contrast with the crispness of the toast.

4 ounces smoked salmon
1 small of fresh chives
6 large eggs
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 tbsp. heavy cream
2 tbsp. butter

Cut the smoked salmon into thin strips, snip the chives finely with scissors, reserving the whole stems for the garnish. Break the eggs into a bowl, season, and then add the cream. Whisk lightly, just enough to break up the yolks a little.

Heat the butter until foaming in a medium non-stick skillet or wide shallow saucepan. Add the eggs and cook over low heat, stirring constantly and slowly with a wooden spatula until the eggs are only just beginning to set. They should still be creamy and moist. Remove from the heat and gently stir in the smoked salmon. Taste for seasoning.

To serve: Spoon onto toasted and buttered rye bread, muffins or bagels; garnish with the reserved chives, a grind of black pepper and serve immediately. Serves 2

Chef's Tip: Look for packets of smoked salmon trimmings in your supermarket. They are less expensive than whole slices

WARM POTATO SALAD

Classic French recipes often include a raw egg in their dressings. Here a little ready-made mayonnaise is used instead to create a salad dressing which has a similar texture and flavor.

1¼ pounds salad potatoes
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 celery stalks
1 small handful of fresh cilantro
5 ounces lardons or diced Canadian bacon or pancetta
2-3 tsp. Dijon mustard, to taste
4 tbsp. olive oil
Juice of ½ lemon
1 tbsp. bottled mayonnaise

Cook the potatoes in their skins in salted boiling water for 15-20 minutes until tender. Meanwhile, dice the celery and chop the cilantro. Drain the potatoes well and leave until cool enough to handle, then peel off the potato skins and thinly slice the potatoes or cut them into chunks. Put the potatoes in a warm bowl.

Quickly sauté the lardons, bacon or pancetta in a dry non-stick skillet until browned and crispy. Then remove with a slotted spoon and add to the potatoes.

Whisk together the mustard, oil, and lemon juice in a bowl and pour into the skillet and stir over high heat to deglaze. Pour immediately over the potato mixture and shake the bowl so the dressing is evenly distributed. Add the celery and mayonnaise and half the cilantro. Fold gently to mix. Taste and add salt and pepper, as needed. You can add more mustard, if desired.

To serve: Tip the salad into a serving bowl and sprinkle the remaining cilantro. Serve as soon as possible, while warm. Serves 4

Chef's Tip –For salads, waxy potatoes are best. They hold their shape better than mealy potatoes. In some supermarkets, waxy varieties are described as French-style or continental style-potatoes.

CHICKEN BREASTS WITH WILD MUSHROOMS

This rich and creamy dish is ideal for an after work support party. Serve it with fresh pasta such as tagliatelle, or boiled basmati rice. Follow this with a mixed green salad tossed with a light Vinaigrette.

3 shallots
1-2 cloves garlic
2 tbsp. Sunflower oil
1 tbs. butter
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 skinless-boneless chicken breasts, each weighing about 6 ounces
2 cups sliced mixed wild mushrooms
1 ¼ cups hot chicken stock
¼ cup heavy cream
Fresh chives, chervil, or Italian parsley, for garnish

Chop the shallots finely and crush the garlic. Heat the oil and butter in a skillet. Season the chicken breasts, place them in the pan and cook them over low to moderate heat until they are lightly golden, about 3 minutes on each side. Remove the chicken breasts to a plate and set aside.

Add the shallots to the pan and cook, stirring, for 3-5 minutes until softened but not colored. Add the mushrooms and garlic and toss over moderate to high heat for 2 -3 minutes

Pour in the stock and bring to a boil, stirring. Return the chicken to the pan with any juices that have collected on the plate, cover and cook over low heat for 10 minutes. Uncover the pan, remove the chicken to the plate again and keep hot. Cook the sauce for 8 – 12 minutes more over moderate heat, then season to taste and mix in about 4 tbsp. of the cream. Return the chicken and any juices to the pan and simmer for another 1-2 minutes, turning once.

To serve: Transfer the chicken to warm plates and spoon the sauce over so that the mushrooms nestle on top of the chicken. Spoon 1 tbsp. cream over each portion then garnish with herbs. Serve immediately. Serves 4

Chef's Tip: A mixture of chanterelles, ceps and horns of plenty, is a good choice of mushrooms for this dish. If these are out of season or otherwise unavailable a mixture of shitake, oyster or button mushrooms would be good

FISH SOUP

This is a very special main-meal soup with a delicate taste, but absolutely full of flavor. It can be spooned over boiled rice in deep soup plates, or served solo with crusty bread.

1 small onion
2 small carrots
2 medium leeks (white and pale green leaves only)
1 tbsp. butter
1 tbsp. olive oil
1 cup dry white wine
1 large pinch saffron threads or 1 sachet saffron powder
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 pound skinless thick cod haddock fillet
1 pound skinless thick salmon fillet
6-8 large sea scallops
8 ounces raw shelled jumbo shrimp, thawed if frozen

To serve:

2 tbsp. chopped fresh dill
4 tbsp. sour cream or crème fraîche

Thinly slice the onion carrots and leeks. Melt the butter with the oil in a large saucepan or Dutch oven. Add the sliced vegetables, cover and cook over low heat for 15 minutes. Stir occasionally during this time. Stir in the wine and bubble briskly until evaporated, then add 3½ cups of water and the saffron. Bring to a boil. Season, cover and simmer for 15 minutes

Cut the white and salmon into 21-inch cubes. Separate the corals from the scallops then cut off and discard the rubbery muscles. Cut the scallops in half. Add the white fish and salmon to the soup and barely simmer for 3 minutes. Add the shrimp, scallops, and corals and simmer for 3 minutes only.

To serve: Sprinkle in half the dill and add the cream. Shake the pan gently to mix without breaking up the fish. Serve hot, sprinkled with remaining dill.

Serves 4

Chef's Tip: This is the perfect dish for entertaining because the cooking liquid actually improves in flavor if made the day before. Cook it up to the end of step

2, let it cool, then cover and refrigerate overnight. Before serving, all you need to do is bring the liquid to a simmering point and continue from the beginning of step 3.

SOLE WITH SMOKED SALMON

This is an impressive and elegant dish for a special dinner party. Serve it with a plain accompaniment such as boiled new potatoes tossed with butter and chopped herbs, and a simple green vegetable like zucchini or snow peas.

2 large shallots
A knob of softened butter
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
12 sole or flounder fillets, skinned
4 – 6 tbsp. finely chopped fresh herbs
5 – 6 ounces sliced smoked salmon
1¾ cups dry white wine
1¾ cups heavy cream
Fresh herbs, for garnish

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Finely chop the shallots. Brush the inside of large flameproof casserole with butter, and then sprinkle with the chopped shallots and a little salt and pepper.

Trim off any ragged edges from the sole. Using the flat side of a large chef's knife, lightly pound each fillet on the skinned side. Sprinkle this same side with pepper and herbs.

Cut the salmon into narrow strips and fit them on top of the sole fillets, over the herbs. Roll up each fillet from the broadest end and secure with a wooden toothpick. Stand the rolls upright in a prepared casserole, pour the wine over and bring to a boil over moderate heat. Quickly cover with buttered baking parchment or foil, then the casserole lid. Cook in the oven for 12 minutes.

Remove the fish with a slotted spoon, cover with the parchment or foil and keep hot. Place the casserole on the stove and bring the cooking liquid to boil. Add the cream and boil, stirring, until reduced to your liking. Taste for seasoning.

To serve: Remove the toothpicks from the dish and arrange the fish rolls on warm plates. Spoon the sauce over and garnish with fresh herbs. Serve immediately.
Serves 4-6

Chef's Tip: Any thin flat fish fillets can be used for this recipe. Dover sole is the classic choice, but founder or bluefish work well.

SALTIMBOCCA

Literally translated, Saltimbocca means "jump in mouth," and these bite-size nuggets of veal wrapped around sage and prosciutto seem delicious enough to do just that. Serve them Italian style, with zucchini, broccoli or beans.

4 thin slices of veal round, each weighing about 5 ounces

Black pepper

1 small bunch of fresh sage

3 ½ ounces prosciutto

3 – 4 tbsp. olive oil

1 cup of dry white wine

Salt

Fresh sage sprigs for garnish

Place the veal between sheets of plastic wrap and pound thin. Cut each scallop into small squares or rectangles, making 10 pieces in all. Grind pepper over the veal, then place 1-2 small sage leaves on top of each piece.

Cut the prosciutto into small pieces and arrange over the sage. Roll up each piece of veal and secure with a wooden toothpick.

Heat the oil in a large skillet over moderate to high heat. Add the saltimbocca in batches and cook for no longer than 2 – 3 minutes, until browned on all sides. Remove and keep hot. Add the wine to the pan and boil until reduced, stirring to loosen any browned bits from the bottom of the pan - Season to taste.

To serve: Remove the toothpicks from the saltimbocca and arrange the veal on a warm serving platter. Pour the sauce over and garnish with fresh sage and serve immediately. Serves 4

Chef's tip: Although the preparation seems long the cooking time is short. The rolls can be prepared up to 24 hours in advance and kept covered in the refrigerator.

GRATIN DAUPHINOIS

This is the perfect potato dish for entertaining because it cooks by itself in the oven while you are busy with other things. Here it is made speedy by using ready prepared potatoes, a trick often used in France.

1 pound thinly sliced potatoes
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 tbsp. softened butter
1 garlic clove
1 ¼ cups heavy cream
1 cup shredded Emmenthal, Gruyere or Jarisberg cheese

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Toss the potatoes in salt and pepper. Brush the inside of an oven-to-table baking dish with the butter and spread the potatoes out in it.

Cut the garlic clove in half and put it in the pan with the cream. Heat just to boiling point and immediately strain over the potatoes. Sprinkle with the shredded cheese and bake for 30 minutes.

To serve: Remove from the oven and let stand for 5 minutes. Serve straight from the baking dish. Serves 4

Chef's tip: Ready prepared potatoes are sold in vacuum packs or cellophane bags in the fresh chilled sections of some supermarkets.

ASPARAGUS WITH SOY AND WASABI DRESSING

An excellent salad for an early summer barbecue since the distinctive flavor of Japanese wasabi, which is usually served with sushi and sashimi, goes particularly well with grilled fish.

2 bunches of green asparagus, each weighing about 12 ounces
Salt
1 bunch scallions
1-2 tbsp. Toasted sesame seeds for garnish (optional)

FOR THE DRESSING:

2 – Inch piece gingerroot
4 tbsp. soy sauce
Juice of 1 lemon
½ - 1 tsp. wasabi, to taste
6 tbsp. soy bean oil or other vegetable oil

Trim off the woody ends of the asparagus, then scrape or peel the bottom of the spears. Cut each spear into 3 equal pieces, each about 1 ½ inches long, separating the tips from the stems.

Cook the stems in salted boiling water for 3-5 minutes until tender. Remove with a slotted spoon to a colander and refresh under cold water. Drain, then leave to dry on paper towels. Add the tips to the boiling water and cook for 2 minutes, then drain, refresh, and dry as for the stems.

Make the dressing. Peel the ginger, grate it into a bowl and add the soy sauce, lemon juice and ½ tsp. wasabi. Whisk well together, then whisk in the oil a little at a time. Taste and add more wasabi if you like.

Thinly slice the scallion on the diagonal and toss then into the dressing. Add the asparagus stems and turn gently to coat. Spoon the asparagus stems in the center of a serving platter and arrange the tips around the outside. Drizzle some of the dressing from the bowl over the tips. Sprinkle with sesame seeds, if you like. Serve at room temperature. Serves 6-8