

**THANKSGIVING 2020**



**John Burgess, Santa Rosa Press Democrat**

The COVID-19 virus has changed how most of us think about Thanksgiving, my favorite holiday by the way. We are told that we shouldn't gather in large, non-familial groups, should avoid the classic buffet, use our own disposable utensils, etc. I'm so bummed. As I thought about it, a scaled down (since we aren't supposed to have BIG gatherings), easier to prepare Thanksgiving seems in order. So here are some recipes for a gathering of a few related folks that are pretty easy to do.

### **FRESH CRANBERRY RELISH WITH TANGERINE AND MINT**

Makes about 3 cups

This fresh, uncooked relish is excellent with roast turkey and ham, pork, and game. Try it with smoked meats and sausages too! Forget about the canned stuff.

12 ounces (3 heaping cups, usually 1 bag) fresh or frozen cranberries

2 unpeeled mandarins or tangerines, scrubbed

1/4 cup loosely packed fresh mint leaves

1-1/4 cups sugar, or to taste

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1 – 2 tablespoons Grand Marnier or other orange liqueur (optional)

1/2 cup chopped, lightly toasted walnuts (optional)

Fresh mint sprigs

Wash and pick over the cranberries. Cut the tangerines into eighths, peel and all, and remove and discard any seeds. Place all the ingredients (except walnuts) in a food processor and chop relatively finely in short bursts. Be careful not to over process, you still want some texture. Taste for sweetness and add more sugar if desired. Stir in walnuts just before serving, if using. Can also be sprinkled on top. Garnish with mint sprigs. Store covered in refrigerator for up to 5 days. Can also be frozen.



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## **SALT-CRUSTED POTATOES WITH SALSA VERDE**

Serves 6

This makes a wonderful appetizer on its own or served as a side for grilled meats or butterflied poultry.

### Salt-Crusted Potatoes:

2 1/4 pounds evenly sized waxy new potatoes, such as fingerling, scrubbed but unpeeled

Sea salt flakes

Salsa verde (recipe follows)

Put the potatoes into a wide, shallow pan in which they fit in a single layer. Add 2 tablespoons salt and 1-quart cold water (just enough to cover), bring to a boil, and leave to boil rapidly until the water has evaporated. Then turn the heat to low and continue to cook for a few minutes, gently turning the potatoes over occasionally, until they are dry, and the skins are wrinkled and covered in a thin crust of salt.

Pile the hot potatoes onto a plate and serve with the salsa, instructing your guests to rub off as much salt from the potatoes as they wish before dipping them in the sauce.

### Salsa Verde

Makes about 1 cup

2 cups coarsely chopped parsley  
1/2 cup chopped fresh basil or mint  
4 (or more) anchovy fillets in oil  
2 tablespoons drained capers  
2 tablespoons blanched or roasted garlic (see note below)  
1 tablespoon finely grated lemon zest  
2/3 cup or so fruity extra virgin olive oil  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Add the parsley, anchovies, capers, garlic, basil and zest to a food processor or blender. With machine running, slowly add the oil until just blended. Sauce should still have a little texture. Season with salt and pepper. Can be stored covered and refrigerated for a day.

## **RED CABBAGE GRATIN**

Serves 6

3 tablespoons softened butter  
9 cups thinly shredded red cabbage (1 small head)  
2-1/2 cups heavy cream  
1/2 cup chicken or vegetable stock  
1 teaspoon smoked paprika  
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground fennel seed  
1 teaspoon sugar  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
3/4 cups freshly grated parmesan  
3/4 cup finely chopped almonds  
3/4 cup panko breadcrumbs

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter a 3-quart oval baking dish with 1 tablespoon of butter, add cabbage and set aside. Combine cream, stock, paprika, fennel, sugar, salt, and pepper in a small saucepan and bring to a simmer. Do not boil. Pour cream mixture over cabbage and stir to combine.

In a medium bowl, toss together parmesan, almond and breadcrumbs. Sprinkle evenly over cabbage and dot the top with remaining butter. Cover the dish with aluminum foil and bake until cream is absorbed, and cabbage is tender, about 45 minutes. Remove foil, increase oven heat to 400 degrees and continue baking until topping is browned and crisp, about 15 minutes more. Cool for 10 minutes or so before serving.

## SLIGHTLY SPICY AND SEDUCTIVE TOMATO SOUP

Serves 6 – 8, Makes 7 cups or so

3 tablespoons olive oil  
2 cups white onion, cut in small dice (1 medium)  
1 tablespoon chopped garlic  
1 teaspoon each whole fennel and cumin seeds  
1 tablespoon pure medium chile powder such as Ancho  
2 tablespoons medium or short grained white rice  
1-28 ounce can crushed tomatoes with basil  
4 cups or so vegetable or chicken stock  
1/8 teaspoon crushed red chile flakes, or to taste  
1 teaspoon sugar  
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste  
Garlic croutons (recipe follows)  
Crème fraîche or whole milk yogurt

Heat oil in a soup pot over moderate heat and add onion, garlic, and seeds. Cook until just beginning to color. Add chile powder and rice and cook for a minute more. Add tomatoes, stock and red chile flakes and simmer partially covered for 20 minutes or until rice is very soft. Stir occasionally. Correct seasoning adding more stock if desired. To serve: Ladle soup into warm bowls and top with croutons and a swirl of crème fraîche.

### Garlic Croutons

1/3 cup olive oil  
2 large cloves garlic, bruised with the side of a knife  
3 cups bread cubes cut in 1-inch cubes from day-old French bread  
2 tablespoons finely minced parsley  
1 teaspoon freshly grated lemon zest  
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Add oil and garlic to a sauté pan and sauté garlic over moderate heat till it just begins to color. Be careful garlic doesn't burn or it will become bitter. Toss bread cubes with oil and garlic and place on a rack on top of a rimmed baking sheet. Toast in a preheated 375-degree oven till bread is nicely golden on all sides, 10 – 12 minutes or so. Croutons should be toasty on the surface but still somewhat soft in the very middle. Remove and toss with parsley, lemon zest and salt and pepper while still warm. Store airtight if not using immediately.

## **DRY BRINED ROAST CHICKEN**

Serves 2 – 4

One of the best ways to cook a chicken (or most other birds for that matter) is to butterfly or spatchcock it, dry brine, season under the skin if you'd like and then roast it at fairly high temperature. This was a technique championed by the late Judy Rogers of the Zuni Café in San Francisco.

To spatchcock or butterfly a chicken: Place chicken, breast side down, on a cutting board. Using poultry shears, cut along both sides of backbone; remove and discard backbone (or save for stock). Turn chicken breast side up. Place your hand on the breast and press firmly against breastbone until it cracks and flattens.

Dry brining is done by sprinkling the spatchcocked bird on both sides with kosher salt (1-1/2 teaspoons per pound) and freshly ground pepper and then placed on a rack over a rimmed sheet pan to catch any drips. Refrigerate for 24 to 36 hours uncovered with skin side up. No need to rinse. You'll be amazed at the crispy skin.

3- 4 pound or so dry brined and spatchcocked chicken, preferably organic and free range  
Rosemary or thyme sprigs  
Lemon slices

Place the rosemary and lemon slices under the chicken and place it in a preheated 450-degree oven. Roast until the chicken is golden brown and skin beautifully crisp. An instant read thermometer inserted into the thigh should read 160 degrees.

Remove chicken to a cutting board and allow it to rest for 5 – 10 minutes before carving.

## **GREEN BEANS WITH BACON AND EGG**

Serves 4 – 6

This is a simple dish and delicious. Everything can be made ahead and assembled at serving time.

1-pound green beans, stem end removed  
5 ounces diced pancetta or bacon  
Walnut or lemon flavor olive oil  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper  
2 peeled hard boiled eggs, sliced  
Flaky salt such as Maldon's (optional)

Blanch the green beans in lightly salted water until crisp tender. Immediately plunge into cold water to stop the cooking. Meanwhile cook the pancetta in a sauté pan over moderate heat until browned and crisp. Drain on paper towels.

To serve: Toss the green beans with the walnut oil and seasoned to your taste with salt and pepper. Top with pancetta and sliced egg and a little flaky salt.



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## WINTER SQUASH COCONUT PANNA COTTA

Makes 6 servings

Use any of the sweet, dense winter squashes such as pumpkin, butternut, red kuri or kabocha. If you want to serve the panna cottas unmolded, use 6-ounce ramekins or glasses, and lightly oil them before pouring in the pumpkin mixture. To unmold, run a thin sharp knife around side of each ramekin to loosen, then dip ramekin briefly in a small bowl of very warm water, about 10 seconds. Invert panna cotta onto a plate and gently lift off ramekin.

1 packet unflavored gelatin

1/3 cup water  
1 cup heavy cream  
1 3/4 cups unsweetened coconut milk (a 13.5 ounce can)  
1 cup pure pumpkin or other winter squash  
1/2 cup sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1 teaspoon freshly grated lime zest  
Pinch of salt  
3/4 cup sweetened flaked coconut  
Fragrant honey such as orange blossom or chestnut

Sprinkle gelatin over water in a small saucepan and let stand 3 minutes to soften. Heat over medium heat, stirring with a heat proof spatula, until gelatin is dissolved, and then remove from heat.

Blend coconut milk, cream, pumpkin, sugar, vanilla, lime zest and salt in a blender briefly to combine, then add gelatin mixture and blend until smooth. Strain mixture through a fine sieve into a bowl with a spout or transfer to a 4-quart measuring cup. Pour mixture into bowls and chill until firm, at least 4 hours. Cover with plastic wrap if not using immediately.

Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350°F with rack in middle. Spread coconut on a rimmed sheet pan and stirring once or twice and bake until golden, 6 to 8 minutes. Cool. Just before serving, sprinkle desserts with coconut and drizzle with a little honey. Panna cottas can be made up to 3 days ahead and stored refrigerated.

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