



Culinary Craftwork Newsletter: November 2011

Happy Holidays!

Introduction

Recipes: **Cider-brined Roast Capon with Gravy** (Page 3); **Apple-bread Dressing** (Page 5); **Maple Glazed Carrots & Parsnips** (Page 6); and **Creamy Pumpkin Custard Pie** (Page 7).

Culinary Craftwork is my business, which specializes in offering private and group cooking classes, as well as personal chef services and small-scale catering. The Culinary Craftwork experience is different in that the classes I offer are fully customizable to what you want. I teach the classes in your own home at a time that is convenient for you. And I do all the shopping.

It is my mission to give you the tools you need to prepare meals that will seduce you with savor and wow your guests.

My website contains many sample menus that focus on building different skills, but I am happy to partner with you and come up with something just for you. The classes are fun, informal, and informative—and you get to eat!

The Culinary Craftwork newsletter is a bi-monthly publication that focuses on seasonal fare with recipes and pictures. My newsletter also includes a section called “Ask the Chef,” so please don’t be shy—email me with your questions.

I invite you to view my previous [newsletters](#) and [recipes](#). The next newsletter will appear in January 2012.

Visit me on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)



Professional In-home Cooking Classes

Culinary Craftwork offers professionally taught in-home cooking classes by a chef with over 20 years' experience in restaurants and catering.

The classes are designed to build basic skills and boost confidence in the kitchen. I teach the classes in your own home, offer themed menus, cooking class parties and catered dinner parties.

Full class descriptions and prices are available on my website.

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Visit me on the web:

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Snap Restaurant Review: Tigelleria Organic Restaurant



76 East Campbell Ave.
Campbell, CA 95008
(408) 884-3808
www.tigelleria.com

This tiny gem of a restaurant in downtown Campbell is on the expensive side but offers some interesting and eclectic good eats. The overall structure of the menu is Italian, but when you are seated the waitress brings a trio of Mediterranean spreads and hot flatbread.

We began our meal with a delicious polenta 'flan' with sautéed mushrooms and gorgonzola followed by onion soup that was tasty though the cheese was a bit bland. The rosemary and lemon marinated wild boar wrapped in pancetta was a big hit. However, my pasta with duck ragu was disappointing—it just had no discernible 'duckiness'—the sauce was more of a classic Bolognese that could have been made with ground beef or pork.

The wait staff were very attentive, and the meal was nicely paced. We reviewed the dessert menu but were too full to sample any of the selections. All in all, we enjoyed our meal and would be happy to return for a special occasion.

[See what others have to say about Tigelleria Organic Restaurant on Yelp.](#)



I love the holiday season and Thanksgiving most of all. I get to spend time with my friends and family and cook for those I love. For many years, that was not possible because when I worked in restaurants I almost never had the day off.

I have happy memories of peeling orange segments for duck à l'orange with my mother as we followed Julia Child's classic recipe back in the 1970's. We were great fans of Julia Child. We never had turkey on Thanksgiving—we usually had capon instead, as they were superior to the turkeys available back then. Capons are minimally processed and more tender and juicy than industrially produced turkeys. Nowadays, better tasting natural and organic turkeys are widely available. But I have a special place in my heart for the capon.

This Thanksgiving I'll be cooking for my husband's family in San Francisco, and I'll be making the roast capon recipe in this newsletter, along with the dressing, gravy and mashed potatoes. I'm confident that this holiday meal will be a hit.

What's new with Culinary Craftwork?

Culinary Craftwork just participated in the [Jubilee CEOs](#) business mixer in Cupertino. It was an intense evening of networking and showcasing some of my cooking as a food sponsor. I received a number of recipe requests as well as follow-up emails. Networking really does work!

Coming in January, I'll be joining [SILVAR \(Silicon Valley Association of Realtors\)](#) as an affiliate to provide food for open house viewings. I'm also considering becoming a member of Silicon Valley Concierge.

Last week I catered dinner for 24 at the [Savvy Cellar Wine Shop](#) in Mountain View. This week I'll also be catering a mixer for the Fiducia Group of realtors and mortgage brokers in Santana Row.

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When I was growing up, we never had turkey because my mother was allergic. So we feasted on capon or duck instead. I suspect she wasn't allergic to the turkey itself but to one of the many additives. Nowadays, it is easy to find all natural, organic birds.

Cider-brined Roast Capon with Gravy

Serves 8

Ingredients

- 4 quarts apple cider or fresh apple juice
- 1 ½ cups kosher salt
- ½ cup light brown sugar
- ¼ cup whole allspice berries, bruised
- 8 bay leaves
- 4 quarts cold water

- 1 10-12-pound capon or turkey
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 carrot, diced
- 2 sticks of celery, diced

- 2 cups apple cider or fresh apple juice
- 1 stick unsalted butter

[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)

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What is a capon?

Capons are castrated chickens, which are allowed to grow quite large. They are more tender and juicy than turkeys.



The chicks are surgically de-sexed at three weeks of age to neutralize the muscular development of the birds and contribute to the tenderness and flavor of mature birds.

The birds are well-fed for about 16 weeks until they weigh 8-10 lbs. This is double the life span of conventional chickens, adding to the cost, but making the birds more of a special dinner centerpiece.

Cooking capons takes the same attention and care as growing them! They are best slow roasted and make an ideal holiday treat.

Use a large, heavy duty brining bag for your capon or turkey.



Capons typically weigh between 10 and 12 pounds. I recommend using a heavy duty brining bag. Brining bags can be found in better grocery stores and gourmet shops, such as Williams-Sonoma and Sur la Table.

Brining ensures that meats and poultry are juicy and succulent. For more information on brining, see my newsletter from last year titled, [All About Brining](#).

Cider-brined Roast Capon with Gravy (Cont.)

For the Gravy:

- 1/3 cup all purpose flour
- 1/3 cup fat
- Drippings
- A sprig of thyme and sage
- ¼ cup applejack brandy
- 1 quart chicken stock
- ¼ cup heavy cream

Directions

1. Make the brine: Simmer 1 quart apple cider, salt, sugar, allspice, and bay leaves in 20-quart pot 5 minutes, stirring often. Cool completely. Add remaining 3 quarts cider and 4 quarts water. Place capon in brine. Cover and refrigerate overnight.
2. Drain capon and rinse. Arrange on several layers of paper towels in roasting pan. Refrigerate uncovered overnight (if possible).
3. Set rack at lowest position in oven; preheat oven to 350°F. Remove paper towels from roasting pan. Pat main and neck cavities of capon dry. Fill the cavities with diced onions, carrots, and celery. Place turkey on a rack, tuck wings under, and tie legs together loosely.
4. Make the glaze: Boil cider in saucepan until reduced to ¼ cup, about 15 minutes. Whisk in butter.
5. Roast capon 1 hour. Brush with some of glaze. Roast until beginning to brown, about 1 hour. Cover with foil. Roast until thermometer inserted into thickest part of thigh registers 170°F, brushing with glaze every 30 minutes and adding up to 1 cup water to pan if drippings begin to burn, about 2 hours longer. Transfer capon to platter; tent with foil. Let stand 30 minutes before carving.
6. Make the gravy: Pour pan juices into large measuring cup. Spoon off fat. Reserve 1/3 cup fat and degreased juices and drippings. Pour chicken broth into the roasting pan. Bring to a boil, scraping up browned bits.
7. Combine 1/3 cup of flour and 1/3 cup of fat in large, heavy saucepan; stir over medium heat till roux is the color of peanut butter. Whisk in broth from roasting pan and reserved drippings and herbs. Add applejack and cream and boil until gravy thickens slightly, whisking often, about 5-10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Strain gravy into a sauceboat.

[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)

Apple-bread Dressing



Dressing and stuffing are essentially the same thing; however, dressing is typically baked separately from the bird, while stuffing is stuffed inside the bird. My mother always stuffed the capon, but there is a risk of salmonella contamination, so I cook it on the side.

Apple-bread Dressing

Makes 6-8 servings

Ingredients

- 1 stick of unsalted butter
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored & diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 1 tsp. fresh thyme, chopped
- 1 tsp. fresh sage, chopped
- 1 Tbs. chopped parsley
- 4 cups of dry bread cubes
- 1 ¼ cups chicken broth, heated
- Salt & freshly ground pepper to taste

Directions

1. Heat the butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onions, celery and apples; cook for about five minutes, covered, until the onion is soft and translucent. Add the herbs.
2. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl and add the cubed bread and hot chicken broth. Toss to combine and season heavily with salt and pepper. Transfer the stuffing to a buttered baking dish. Bake the stuffing at 350°F for 30 to 40 minutes until golden brown on top.

[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)

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Cook the bread dressing in a separate baking dish to avoid risk of salmonella contamination.



Fresh herbs are less pungent than dried.



Fresh sage



Fresh thyme

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Carrots come in a variety of colors.



Check your local farmers' market for colored carrots.



Carrots with their greens attached are fresher, sweeter, and more tender than bulk carrots.



Parsnips, a root vegetable, are sweet and lend themselves to soups and stews.

Maple Glazed Carrots & Parsnips



I don't tend to eat a lot of root vegetables, but these tender, sweet carrots and parsnips are a perfect accompaniment to a roast. Even my husband (who doesn't like many vegetables) likes these.

Maple Glazed Carrots & Parsnips

Makes 6-8 servings

Ingredients

- 1 ¼ lb. carrots, peeled and cut on the bias, ½ inch thick
- 1 ¼ lb. parsnips, peeled and cut on the bias, ½ inch thick
- 4 Tbs. unsalted butter
- ½ cup chicken broth
- 1 tsp. fresh thyme
- 3 Tbs. maple syrup
- 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- Salt & freshly ground pepper to taste
- 1 Tbs. chopped parsley

Directions

1. In a large sauté pan melt 2 Tbs. butter over medium-high heat. When the foaming subsides, add the carrots and cook without stirring till lightly browned on one side. Transfer to a bowl and repeat process with parsnips.
2. Add the carrots back to the pan, stir in the broth, thyme and 2 Tbs. of maple syrup. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Cover and cook until the vegetables are just tender, 7 to 8 minutes.
3. Uncover and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until most of the liquid has evaporated and the vegetables are glazed. Stir in the lemon juice and remaining 1 Tbs. of maple syrup. Sprinkle in the chopped parsley.

[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)

Creamy Pumpkin Custard Pie



For this recipe, canned pumpkin puree works better than fresh cooked pumpkin, which can be watery. Be sure to use 100% pumpkin puree and not “pumpkin pie filling”—the cans look very similar. This recipe is adapted from James Beard’s *American Cookery*.

Creamy Pumpkin Custard Pie

Serves 8-10 (9-10 inch pie)

Ingredients

- 3 eggs
- 1 cup canned pumpkin puree
- 1 ¼ cups light brown sugar
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. ground ginger
- ¾ tsp. cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp. ground cloves or allspice
- ½ tsp. ground nutmeg
- 2 – 2 ½ cups heavy cream or evaporated milk

Pie Crust:

- 1 1/2 cups all purpose flour
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 3 oz. chilled sweet butter
- 4 oz. chilled shortening
- 1 egg yolk + 1 tsp. white vinegar
- approximately ¼ cup ice water

[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)

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Homemade pie crust makes a difference.



Roll out the dough using plenty of flour to keep the fats from sticking. Gently lay the dough into the pie pan, pressing firmly into the pan. Crimp the edge on top of the rim. Line the pie shell with foil or parchment paper, and fill with weights.



Use a pastry bag with a star tip to decorate the pie when thoroughly cool.



Creamy Pumpkin Custard Pie (Cont.)

Directions

1. Make the pie crust pastry: combine the flour, sugar, and salt in the bowl of a food processor. Mix well. Add the butter and shortening and pulse 10-15 times to combine. You should see pea-sized bits of butter and shortening. Transfer the mixture to a medium-sized mixing bowl to finish making the pie crust by hand.
2. Combine the water, egg yolk and vinegar. Make a well in the center of the flour and add about 2/3 of the water mixture. Using two forks, toss together the liquids and flour mix, adding more water, if needed, until dough just holds together when pressed lightly.
3. Press the dough into a ball and wrap in plastic, pressing down to form a disk. Chill the dough for about half an hour before rolling out.
4. Roll out the dough and fit it in a 9 or 10-inch pie pan. Trim the edges to about ½-inch over the rim of the pie pan. Tuck the edges under and press together, crimping to form a fluted edge. Chill the pie shell in the refrigerator or freezer until firm.
5. Line with parchment paper or foil and fill with pie weights, rice or beans. Bake at 425°F for 15 minutes, or until edge is set.
6. Remove the parchment paper or foil and continue baking until the bottom of the pie shell is set and lightly golden. Remove from the oven and let cool thoroughly before filling.
7. Make the pumpkin custard filling: in a mixing bowl, beat the eggs and sugar. Add the spices and the pumpkin puree. Whisk in the cream.
8. Pour the pumpkin custard into the pre-baked pie shell and bake at 425°F for 15 minutes, then reduce the temperature to 325°F and bake about 30 minutes longer, or until the filling appears set when the pie is shaken gently, except for about an inch at the center, which will remain loose but will firm up as the pie cools. Decorate the top with real whipped cream when thoroughly cooled.

[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)

Ask the Chef (Q&A)

Making mashed potatoes

Larry asks, "Our family always argues about which kind of potato is the best for making mashed potatoes. I think it is Yukon Gold, but my sister insists that any old white potato will do as well. What do you think?"

Reply: This is a matter of personal taste—Yukon Gold potatoes are great for mashed, but so are russet potatoes. Yukon Gold potatoes are denser and creamier (as well as sweeter) than russets. Steaming the potatoes (you can use a pressure cooker to do this) retains more of the starch than boiling the potatoes in water. Use a potato ricer to process the potatoes into uniform creaminess.

Pros and cons of induction cooking

Carol asks, "My friend is raving about the new induction burner she just bought. What are the advantages and disadvantages of an induction burner?"

Reply: An induction range is faster and more energy-efficient than a traditional electric range. Because induction heats the cooking vessel itself, the possibility of burn injury is reduced; the surface of the cook top is only heated from contact with the vessel. There are no flames or red-hot electric heating elements as found in traditional cooking equipment.

Induced current can heat any type of metal, but the magnetic properties of a steel vessel concentrate the induced current in a thin layer near the surface, which makes the heating effect stronger. In non-magnetic materials like aluminum, the magnetic field penetrates too far. Practical induction cookers are designed for ferromagnetic pots that will stick to a magnet.

Personally, I have never used an induction range, but my brother has one and loves it; unfortunately, he had to ditch his anodized aluminum cookware set as it was not compatible.

Choosing the right pie plate

Nancy asks, "What kind of pie plate is best—glass, ceramic, or metal?"

Reply: My personal favorite is glass, so I can see how the bottom is cooking. I also use a 10-inch glass pie plate for making upside-down apple tarts. Glazed ceramic pie plates are excellent, conducting heat evenly. Aluminum pie plates conduct heat too quickly and should be avoided.

Using Salty Marinades

Arlene asks, "When making a marinade, should I put salt in it?"

Reply: There are thousands of recipes for liquid marinades. Most frequently it is a mixture of salty ingredients, acid ingredients, oil, herbs and spices. Salt in marinades has multiple effects. It tenderizes the meat, makes it juicier, and helps to increase absorption of flavors from herbs and spices. Soy sauce is often used in place of salt.

Ask the Chef



I love hearing from people who have read the newsletter or taken one of my classes.

I enjoy the opportunity to answer your questions in this general forum, and I hope that my advice is helpful.

Please continue to send me your questions, comments and ideas. They really make my day.

And don't forget—you can post your questions on the Culinary Craftwork [Facebook fan page](#).



Thank you!

Alyssa