



Culinary Craftwork Newsletter

Light & Healthy for 2010

Introduction

This is the third newsletter from [Culinary Craftwork](#), a new company that specializes in offering private, semi-private, and group cooking classes. Some of you may remember me from when I taught cooking classes at Williams-Sonoma in Los Gatos. I am grateful to all of you who encouraged me to branch out on my own!

This issue of the newsletter focuses on my recent trip to Estonia, located in North Eastern Europe, with light and healthy recipes that are the perfect antidote to all that rich holiday food, as well as the latest news from [Culinary Craftwork](#).

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 new. The classes are fun, informal, and informative — and you get to eat!

The Culinary Craftwork newsletter is a monthly publication that focuses on seasonal fare with recipes and pictures. Future newsletters will also include a Q & A section, so please don't be shy—[email me](#), and I'll do my best to answer your questions and address any other issues that you may bring up.



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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Light & Healthy for 2010

Nothing says the holidays are over like the sight of discarded Christmas trees along the curb waiting for pickup. Some people breathe a sigh of relief, while others feel sadness at letting go.

The gyms are filled to capacity with people who made honorable New Year's resolutions and are trying to work off the extra pounds they put on with all the rich holiday foods (on the average most people gain 8–10 pounds).

I'm there with them, and I'll be there when they have gone because I, too, have extra pounds to lose—but at least I didn't gain anything over the holidays.

As a chef I have to be careful about what I eat, but I lack self discipline and find a multitude of excuses to make an exception to the rule. Today, I find myself craving cheesecake, but I'm not going to go there.

Now is an appropriate time to focus on lighter, healthier dishes—I've included two recipes that are simple and healthful.

This new outlook comes on the heels of my recent trip to Estonia, where my brother and his Estonian wife live, and the recipes were inspired by the meals that my brother prepared for me. He is a very good cook!

Valentine's Day is Sunday, February 14th . Why not surprise the love of your life with a Gift Certificate from Culinary Craftwork – private cooking classes or a chef prepared meal for two?

Old Town Wall

Tallinn, Estonia



Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is fast approaching: according to romantic legend this holiday is based on a kind-hearted Roman Catholic priest who married young Christian couples against the wishes of Emperor Claudius II. The holiday commemorates St. Valentine's martyrdom on the 14th of February. It wasn't until the Middle Ages when "courtly love" was in fashion that the anniversary of St. Valentine's death began to be celebrated as a day of romantic love. Today, the holiday is celebrated around the world with flowers, greeting cards and chocolates.

Why not surprise the love of your life with a gift certificate for a cooking class from Culinary Craftwork? The gift certificates are good for 2 years and can be redeemed at any time, so you don't have to book an event on Valentine's Day in order to enjoy a Valentine's Day treat. Gift certificates for a chef prepared dinner for two are also available. Please contact me for further information.

A Visit to Estonia

Estonia sits on the edge of the Baltic Sea bordered by Latvia and Lithuania to the south, Russia and Finland to the north. Although the country has been occupied in the past by Danes, Dutch, Swedes, Germans and Russians, it is now an independent nation with a Scandinavian feel. I've only been to Estonia once before—and that was during summer for my brother's wedding.

I had my doubts about visiting at the peak of winter, but it turned out that winter is just as beautiful as it is cold, with snow drifts and icicles hanging from the trees. It is a veritable "winter wonderland." I hate bundling up to go outside, but this transplanted Californian found the change of climate to be refreshing, to say the least.

Traditional Estonian meals are typically quite heavy with lots of pickles, preserves, and jellied meats. My brother and his wife, however, eat very simply; for the most part, meals are prepared at home with healthful ingredients (no dairy, few red meats, and little in the way of carbohydrates). Thankfully, this was one vacation that failed to pack on the pounds.



I was anxious to see some Estonian markets, but unfortunately the farmers markets had closed for winter so I had to make do with perusing the supermarkets, which were fascinating in their own way.

To my surprise, there were only a few types of salad greens available—mostly iceberg lettuce, but occasionally some others, such as mâche (lamb's lettuce) and baby red leaf lettuce. There was a variety of produce imported from Spain and elsewhere, such as mandarin oranges, melons and pineapple. Estonians, like their Scandinavian neighbors, eat a lot of pickled foods and smoked fish, and there was a lot of space devoted to them in the aisles.

One of the highlights of my trip was a visit to a cooking school in Tallinn (Estonia's capital), simply called "Kook" (which means "cook" in Estonian). The cooking school is housed in an attractive, historic building, and the chef took time to chat with me before a chocolate making class. The following links contains a wealth of information on traditional Estonian foods: <http://www.kook.fi/en> is the link for the cooking school, and http://www.culinate.com/columns/blog_feed/nami_nami is an Estonian food blog in English.

My brother also took me to a popular eatery at a multi-level indoor shopping center. The food was offered cafeteria style, but each dish was made to order at one of the cooking stations. For example, there was a pizza station with a wood-fired oven, a pasta station, a dessert station, and a variety of other stations encircling a large room with tables and chairs. You place an order at each station, receive a chit, and then pay for everything at the cashier's station. It was a very clean and efficient system.



Tallinn, Estonia





Cooking Tip

Use a Grill Pan

During the winter months, it is more convenient to grill inside using a grill pan than to barbecue or use a gas grill.

I prefer using a well-seasoned cast iron pan, but non-stick pans work just fine.

When using a non-stick grill pan, it is important not to overheat the pan, or the non-stick coating will degrade. In addition, you don't want to use a cooking oil spray, such as Pam, which contains silicone and binds to the surface of the pan leaving a sticky residue. Look for a "pure" oil spray or make your own using a pump bottle.

Cast iron pans are ideal because they can be heated to a blistering temperature. Just apply a thin coat of oil on a towel immediately before setting the fish down. Do not wash cast iron pans with soap. Hot water and a scrub brush are just fine.



Pan-grilled Citrus Marinated Salmon



Ingredients (Serves 4)

4 boneless salmon fillets (approximately 6 oz. each), skin on
 1 orange
 1 lemon
 2 Tbs. fresh minced dill
 ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

Directions

Grate 1 Tbs. each of the orange and lemon rind, then squeeze the juice into a bowl. Whisk the zest and the juice together. Then whisk in the olive oil and dill. (Reserve a bit of the marinade to drizzle over the fillets after they are cooked.) Place the salmon fillets in a shallow baking dish, skin side down and pour the marinade over. Let marinate for 20 minutes at room temperature. Meanwhile, prepare the salad.

Preheat a cast iron or non-stick grill pan on top of the stove over medium-high heat. Remove the salmon fillets from the marinade, brushing off excess juice. Sprinkle the salmon with salt and freshly ground pepper.

Brush the grill pan with a little oil and place the salmon fillets, skinned side down (meaning the skin will be on the top). Grill the salmon over medium high heat until one-third of the salmon appears opaque from the side, usually about 3 minutes. With a spatula, turn over the salmon and grill until the meat adhering to the skin is opaque and the center of the fillet is just barely done (medium rare).

Plate the salmon and drizzle with the reserved citrus marinade; serve the salad alongside the fish.

Mâche, with Red Onions, Cucumbers and Cherry Tomatoes & Red Wine Vinaigrette



I enjoyed this salad, or a variation of it, nightly at the home of my brother and his wife.

Ingredients (4 Generous Servings)

For the vinaigrette:

- 3 Tbs. of good red wine vinegar, such as cabernet vinegar
- ¼ tsp. sea salt
- 1 Garlic clove, smashed
- 4 Tbs. extra virgin olive oil

Fresh mâche (lamb's lettuce) – enough for 4 generous servings

Baby red leaf and/or butter lettuce – just a bit to add “fluff” and color to the salad

- ¼ cup thinly sliced red onion
- ¼ cup sliced scallions (green onions)
- 8–10 Cherry tomatoes, halved
- ½ cup Cucumber, peeled, quartered and sliced
- ½ cup Yellow bell pepper, cut in strips
- ¼ cup pitted Kalamata olives

Directions

In a small bowl, whisk together the vinegar and salt till dissolved. Whisk in the olive oil and the garlic. Set aside and prepare the salad. Assemble the salad ingredients in a large bowl.

*Do not dress the salad until the salmon is done. When the salmon is cooked, toss the salad quickly and gently with the vinaigrette, salt and freshly ground pepper.



Mâche

Also known as lamb's lettuce, mâche is a delicate and tender green, which was once considered a weed. It can be found in the produce section of the better groceries. It has a mild flavor and is well suited for salads. The leaves are bunched together in small clumps like rosettes. It also makes an attractive garnish.

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Find us on the Web:
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A New Look for the Website is on the Way!

I recently met with a very cool web design team to create a new and more dynamic look for my website. It will be some time before the new site is up and running, but it will look much more professional and offer greater functionality. The new site will also include some wonderful photos of my more popular dishes.

The following photos are just two of my favorites, which will appear on the new website. (Special thanks to Tshell Depaepe, the photographer who took these photos.)

Provençal Apple Tart



This light and lovely apple tart was one of the first things I learned from Celebrity Chef Steve Lyle at Manhattan's **Quatorze** restaurant back in 1986. Granny Smith apples are layered over a thin, buttery crust, baked for 20 minutes and then glazed with apricot preserves. This tart is easy to make and is one of the recipes that I teach in my classes.

Rack of Lamb with Ratatouille & Grilled Polenta



This dish is something that I make at home frequently (it is one of my husband's favorite meals). Each herb crusted lamb rack serves two people with two double-rib chops. It is another dish that I teach in my classes. Lamb is one of the healthier red meats, high in protein, mild in flavor (not gamy at all), and exquisitely tender.