

Fun flavors of France and Italy



COOK'S CORNER

Laurie Locke

This week and next, I have some wonderful new recipes from a recent book club meeting at Jane Shepherd's after reading the coming-of-age short novel *Three O'Clock in the Morning*. The novel is set in France, with protagonists who are from Italy, so she fashioned a dinner menu that incorporated flavors from both countries. We started out with appetizers and wines from Italy and France. This easy and savory little dish started us off. Be sure to adjust the chili flakes to your own taste. This starts out smooth and sweet on your tongue and then the heat kicks in.

Jane's Ricotta with Hot Honey Spread

2 cups whole milk ricotta
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided
1/4 cup hot honey, warmed (recipe follows)
Freshly cracked black pepper
Coarse salt
Red chili flakes
Chopped parsley

Put ricotta into the bowl of a

food processor and blend until smooth. Add 2 T. of the olive oil and blend in. Put the ricotta in a bowl (or Jane spread it on an oval platter), drizzle with remaining olive oil and then pour the warm honey over it. Sprinkle it with pepper, salt, chili flakes and parsley. Serve with little toasts or crackers. Serves about 10.

Hot Honey:

1 cup honey
2 T. red pepper (or chili) flakes
2 t. hot sauce (pepper sauce or Tabasco)
2 t. apple cider vinegar
Mix all in a saucepan, melting honey with seasonings. Jane Shepherd.

The menu consisted of one other appetizer, and then the most wonderful chicken meatballs, an arugula salad, pasta with cauliflower, bacon and breadcrumbs, and finally a beautiful and rich Nova Scotia Blueberry Cream Cake. I'll share the meatballs and salad today, with the rest next week.

These flavorful meatballs were

baked in a tomato and Parmesan sauce that was comfort food with an elegant touch.

Italian Chicken Meatballs

5 T. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
5 garlic cloves, sliced thin
1 (28 oz.) can crushed tomatoes
1 (15 oz.) can tomato sauce
2 1/4 t. dried oregano, divided
1 1/2 t. table salt, divided
1/4 t. red pepper flakes
22 Ritz crackers
5 oz. Parmesan cheese, grated
1 large egg, lightly beaten
2 t. garlic powder
1 t. pepper
2 lbs. ground chicken
8 oz. whole-milk block mozzarella cheese, shredded (2 cups)
1 cup panko bread crumbs
1/4 cup torn fresh basil

Heat 3 T. oil in a large saucepan until it shimmers. Add garlic and cook for about 1 minute, stirring. Stir in tomatoes, tomato sauce, 1/4 t. oregano, 1/4 t. salt and the pepper flakes. Bring to a simmer and cook until slightly thickened, 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat.

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Crush crackers into crumbs, to make about 1 cup crumbs. Combine crumbs, 2 cups Parmesan, egg, garlic powder, pepper, 2 t. oregano and 1 t. salt in a large bowl. Add chicken and mix with your hands

until thoroughly combined. Divide mixture into 20 portions, about 1/4 cup each. Roll each portion into a ball and put into a greased 9x13-inch baking dish.

Pour sauce over meatballs, and sprinkle with mozzarella. Bake until meatballs register at least 160 degrees, and mozzarella is melted and beginning to brown, about 40-45 minutes. Let cool for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine the panko, 2 T. oil, and 1/4 t. salt in a bowl. Microwave until panko is light golden brown, 1 to 3 minutes, stirring every 30 seconds. Sprinkle meatballs with panko mixture, remaining 1/2 cup Parmesan and basil. Serve. Makes 20 meatballs. Jane Shepherd.

This light salad paired perfectly with the meatballs!

Arugula and Snap Pea Salad

1 garlic clove
1 t. salt
4 T. fresh lemon juice
2 T. white wine vinegar
1/2 t. lemon zest
freshly ground black pepper
3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Mince garlic and mash to a paste with the salt. In a bowl (or in a jar with a tight lid), whisk together garlic paste, lemon juice, vinegar, zest and pepper. Whisk

in oil until emulsified. (If using a jar, just shake it vigorously.) Make 1 day ahead and refrigerate. Bring to room temperature before using to dress salad.

Salad: Equal parts arugula, chopped sugar snap peas, shredded purple cabbage, finely chopped carrots and toasted pine nuts....combine in a large bowl and toss lightly. Dress with the above dressing and toss again. Jane Shepherd.

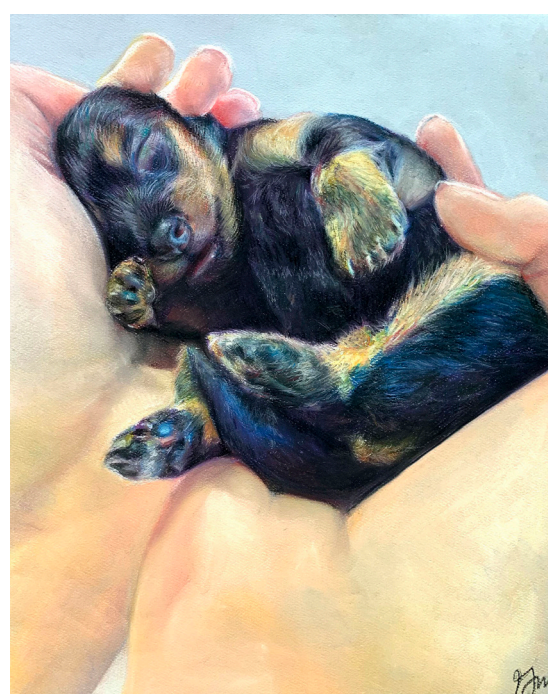
It looks like spring is here, unless I'm badly mistaken. I worked a deal with brother Stephen Benold and he agreed to spade up my little garden if I make him chicken spaghetti. What a great deal for me! I think I'll plant flower seeds instead of veggies this year and see if I have any better luck...no green thumb here.

Last weekend, some friends who also have February birthdays got together for our annual (except for last year) dinner out and went to City Post Chophouse to celebrate. It was my first time there for dinner, and although the menu is still rather limited, every single dish I tasted was really outstanding. How lovely to have a new white-tablecloth fine dining spot in Old Town.

Thanks to Jane for sharing this week and next...enjoy!



Artwork by Emily Cuevas, Grace McCartney, Juan Jose Serrano, and Victoria Yakesch will be included in the annual GISD Annual Districtwide Student Art Exhibit scheduled for March 29-April 7 at the Georgetown Public Library.



Hey, it's Saint Patrick's Day

In celebration of Saint Patrick's Day, let's pay homage to the humble spud. The potato was not native to Ireland. It made its way from South America to Europe. English adventurer Sir Walter Raleigh introduced the veggie to Ireland around 1585.

Farmers found that, by growing potatoes, they could grow double the food on the same land. As the potato acclimated to the Irish climate, it became the main food for farmers. Excess was sold and much of Ireland became dependent on the potato, which was eaten at most meals.

The Irish Potato Famine began in 1845, when a fungus spread rapidly throughout the country. Up to one-half of the potato crop was ruined that year, and even more over the next seven years. Roughly one million Irish died from starvation and related causes, and another million left Ireland.

Using DNA extracted from museum specimens dating back to 1845, researchers concluded a previously unknown strain, HERB-1, caused the blight. HERB-1 originated in the Americas before spreading to Europe. The strain was likely responsible for hundreds of other potato crop failures around the world. Potato varieties that proved resistant to HERB-1 were later introduced and scientists believe the strain is now extinct.

In Ireland, there are monuments to the Great Famine. During his time as British Prime Minister, Tony Blair issued a formal apology for the U.K. government's poor handling of the crisis at the time. Cities where the Irish emigrated offer commemorations to lives lost and a Great Hunger Museum was established in Hamden, Connecticut. The Glasgow Celtic soccer team in Scotland, founded by Irish immigrants, has a commemorative patch on its uniform.

Ireland is no longer a big potato producer, but more potatoes are still eaten in Ireland than in most other countries.

Boxty is an authentic Irish dish that originated in the 1700s. It was once a staple in Irish households. The potato pancake is made with grated potato, flour, baking soda and buttermilk. Its name likely comes from the Irish arán bocht tí, meaning "poor-house bread."

There's an old Irish saying, "Boxty on the griddle, boxty in the pan, if you can't make boxty, you'll never get your man."

Maggie Sullivan, whose grandparents immigrated from Ireland, is familiar with boxty.

"My Mom made them with grated onions, mashed potatoes and a little milk," the Georgetown resident recalls. "Sometimes she used her larger skillet and made a very large cake and cut it into pieces."

Maggie faithfully celebrates Saint Patrick's Day each year. "I will again be boiling corned beef and cabbage for the block party and then on Saturday my family is coming for a combination St. Patrick and St. Joseph's Day celebration. The mighty Italians face the merry Irish," she said.

Maggie and her husband, Pat, raised 10 children and traveled to Ireland several times to visit relatives.

This recipe comes from Christina's Cucina website.

Traditional Boxty

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp kosher or sea salt
1 cup mashed potatoes, boiled in salted water
1 1/2 cups grated, raw potato
1 cup buttermilk (more if needed)
butter for the pan

In a small bowl, place the flour, baking powder and salt; set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the mashed potatoes with the grated raw potato, then add the flour and mix well.

Slowly add the buttermilk and stir gently (do not over mix).

The mixture should be like a very firm, thick batter; almost like a dough, add more buttermilk if needed.

Heat a nonstick frying pan over medium-high heat, and add a pat of butter, just before scooping out some of the boxty batter onto the pan.

Flatten and shape into a nice, round pancake shape and fry until golden brown on the bottom.

Turn and continue to cook until golden brown on top too, turning the heat down if they are browning too quickly (remember, the raw potatoes need to cook).

Continue to add a little butter and fry the boxty until all the batter is finished. Serve hot.

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Student art exhibit is on the way

Every year since 2008, the Georgetown Public Library has partnered

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with the Georgetown Independent School District to offer an annual art exhibit. Last year's exhibit of student artwork was virtual only, but this year hundreds of works of art by K-12 students will fill the library once again.

It is always rewarding and eye-opening to see the creative work being done by students of all ages under the guidance of the 27 visual arts teachers

in Georgetown's 16 schools, and we are happy to welcome the show back this year.

This exhibit celebrates the creativity of student art and demonstrates the robust art programs in all GISD schools. Students in GISD explore and refine their skills in a wide variety of media and techniques including photography, ceramics, painting, printmaking, drawing, sculpture and textiles.

Art students in GISD also have opportunities to experience art through service-learn-

ing projects, collaborative art in the form of community murals, capstone projects and college and career readiness.

The exhibit opens March 29 and will remain up through April 7. Come see the surprising range of work students are doing, and if you come to the exhibit reception March 30 from 5-7 p.m., you can thank the creative and engaged visual arts teachers who guide the students' efforts every day.

Dana Hendrix coordinates art exhibits and serves as the Technical Services Librarian at the Georgetown Public Library

Art in the library

- Through March 24: Artists of Central Texas (first floor Café Gallery)
- Through March 24: Karen Limbaugh: My Favorite Place (second floor Bridge & Hall Galleries)
- Through March 26: Sun City Clay and China Club: Ageless Pottery and Ceramics
- March 29-April 7: GISD Annual Districtwide Student Art Exhibit (first and second floors)
- March 30, 5-7 p.m.: Reception for GISD Art Exhibit
- April 10-May 24: Sue Bishop and Lisa L. Miller: Points in Time exhibit (second floor Bridge & Hall Galleries)
- April 10, 2-4 p.m.: Reception for Sue Bishop and Lisa L. Miller (second floor Bridge & Hall Galleries)
- April 10-July 3: Dave Werner: The Many Faces of Texas Festivals exhibit (first floor Café Gallery)
- May 15: Open call for 2023 art exhibit proposals closes (see library.georgetown.org/art)

For more information about library art exhibits, visit library.georgetown.org/art or call 512-930-3551.