

COOKING AT REN

January 29, 2012

Cauliflower Soup **with Crispy Chorizo** **Bread Crumbs**

4 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 medium onion, cut into small dice
3 garlic cloves, crushed
3 thyme sprigs
1 bay leaf
2 medium heads of cauliflower (3 3/4 pounds), cut into 2-inch florets
6 1/2 cups chicken stock or low-sodium broth
1/2 cup heavy cream
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 ounces Spanish chorizo, finely chopped
3/4 cup panko (Japanese bread crumbs)

In a large soup pot, melt the butter. Add the diced onion, crushed garlic cloves, thyme sprigs and bay leaf and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until the onion is softened, about 5 minutes.

Add the cauliflower florets and chicken stock and bring to a simmer. Cover and cook over moderately low heat until the cauliflower is very tender when pierced with a fork, about 20 minutes. Discard the thyme sprigs and bay leaf.

In a blender or food processor, carefully puree the soup in batches until smooth. Pour the soup into a clean pot and set it over low heat. Stir in the heavy cream and season the cauliflower soup with salt and black pepper.

Meanwhile, in a medium skillet, cook the chopped chorizo over moderate heat until it is almost crisp, about 3 minutes. Add the panko and cook, stirring frequently, until the crumbs are crisp, about 5 minutes.

Transfer the chorizo bread crumbs to a small bowl. Ladle the soup into shallow bowls. Sprinkle with the chorizo bread crumbs and serve at once, before the bread crumbs get soggy.

Serving: 12

Honey Roasted Pear Salad With Thyme Verjus Dressing

Dressing

5 oz verjus or (6 Tbl white grape juice and 4 Tbl apple cider vinegar)
5 oz grapeseed oil
2 large shallot, finely chopped
4 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves

Salad

5 bunches fresh thyme sprigs
6 ripe but firm Bartlett pears (about 3 1/2 pounds), halved, cored
3 oz honey
2 head of butter lettuce, coarsely torn
6 ounces baby arugula
10 ounces blue cheese, sliced or coarsely crumbled
1 cup hazelnuts, toasted, coarsely chopped

Dressing

Whisk all ingredients in small bowl to blend. Season dressing to taste with salt and pepper.

Pears and Salad

Preheat oven to 400°F. Scatter thyme sprigs on rimmed baking sheet. Place pear halves, cut side down, on work surface. Starting 1/2 inch from stem and leaving pear half intact, cut each lengthwise into scant 1/3- to 1/2-inch-wide slices.

Press pear gently to fan slices; place atop thyme sprigs. Drizzle pears with honey; sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake until pears are tender, about 15 minutes. Let stand on baking sheet at least 30 minutes and up to 3 hours.

Combine lettuce and arugula in large bowl. Add dressing and toss to coat. Divide salad among plates. Place pear alongside greens. Garnish salads with cheese; sprinkle with nuts.

Serves 12

Slow Roasted Salmon With Tarragon and Citrus

8 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
 8 garlic cloves, very thinly sliced
 6 medium shallots, minced
 4 tablespoons fennel seeds, coarsely ground in a spice grinder
 Finely grated zest of 6 lemons, plus 3 Tbl fresh lemon juice
 Finely grated zest and juice of 2 oranges
 4 Tbl chopped tarragon
 1 Tbl coarsely ground black pepper
 4 tea chopped thyme
 Extra-virgin olive oil, for the baking dish
 One 4 lb whole fillet of skinned salmon
 Kosher salt
 1 tea cayenne pepper
 Salt, for sprinkling

In a bowl, combine the melted butter with the garlic, shallots, ground fennel seeds, lemon zest, orange zest, tarragon, black pepper and thyme.

Preheat the oven to 300°. Brush a large glass or ceramic baking dish with olive oil. Lightly season the salmon fillet with kosher salt. Spread half of the seasoning mixture on the skinned side of the fish. Place the salmon skinned side down in the baking dish and fold the thin tail end under itself to make the fillet an even thickness.

Stir the cayenne pepper into the remaining seasoning mixture and spread it over the salmon. Let the salmon stand at room temperature for 20 minutes.

Pour the orange juice into the baking dish and cover the baking dish tightly with aluminum foil. Bake the salmon for about 35 minutes, until it is barely opaque in the center.

Sprinkle the salmon with the lemon juice and sea salt and serve.

Serves 12

Vodouvan Carrot Puree

24 carrots
2 onion
2 stalk celery
2 plug of ginger
32 oz carrot juice
32 oz orange juice
Salt and pepper
4 oz vadouvan spice
2 oz sour cream

Season with salt and pepper, cook carrots with onion, celery, ginger and juice until soft and liquid reduced to $\frac{3}{4}$ of original amount. Add vadouvan spice and blend smooth. Adjust seasoning if necessary and add sour cream squeeze of lemon

Serves 12

Oregano Pesto Brussels Sprouts

48 small brussels sprouts (less if you can find only larger)

Olive Oil

Salt

Oregano Drizzle

1 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
1/2 cup fresh oregano, chopped
1/2 cup fresh parsley, chopped
2 large garlic clove
1/2 tea salt, plus more to taste
2 Tbl extra virgin olive oil, plus more for rubbing
toasted almond slices

Wash the brussels sprouts well. Trim the stem ends and remove any raggy outer leaves. Cut in half from stem to top (quarter, if using larger sprouts) and gently rub each half with olive oil, keeping it intact. Or toss them in a bowl with some of olive oil.

Make the oregano drizzle by pulsing the olive oil, oregano, parsley, garlic, and salt in a food processor until the herbs are just little flecks of green. Season with more salt if needed, and set aside.

Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Don't overheat the skillet, or the outsides of the brussels sprouts will cook too quickly.

Place the sprouts in the pan flat side down (single-layer), sprinkle with a couple pinches of salt, cover, and cook for roughly 5 minutes; the bottoms of the sprouts should only show a hint of browning.

Once just tender, uncover, turn up the heat, and cook until the flat sides are deep brown and caramelized. Toss them once or twice to get some browning on the rounded side. Remove from heat and drizzle and toss with as much (or little) oregano pesto as you like. Season to taste, and serve sprinkled generously with the almonds as soon as possible.

Chocolate Mousse With Hazelnut Praline

Chocolate Mousse

500 g dark chocolate
1000 ml creme fraiche
1136 ml double cream
100 g powdered sugar , sifted
1 -2 tablespoon coffee liqueur
(optional)

Break the dark chocolate into small pieces and place in a bowl that fits snugly over a pan of boiling water. Leave until the chocolate has completely melted and then remove from the heat and set aside.

Add the crème fraiche to the melted chocolate and whisk until combined. Put the double cream and icing sugar into a separate bowl and whisk with an electric whisk until it forms soft peaks. Fold the chocolate mixture into the cream, add the coffee liqueur and stir to combine.

Spoon the mousse into 12 small serving dishes and then sprinkle over the hazelnut praline and serve.

Hazelnut Praline

1 cup sugar
5 oz cup hazel nuts toasted
lightly and skinned

Coat a rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray. Heat sugar, corn syrup, water, and a pinch of salt in a small saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring constantly until sugar dissolves. Continue to cook, without stirring, until deep amber. Remove from heat, stir in nuts, and spread evenly on baking sheet. Let cool completely on sheet on a wire rack.

Break praline into medium pieces, and transfer to a resealable plastic bag. Using a rolling pin, crush into pea-size pieces. You can also use a food processor to crush the praline

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Cooking At Ren **Meet The Chef**

Chef Mark Wright dining restaurants cooking is an
has been cooking in the Chicago experience that
since his area. He combines anyone can enjoy
childhood. He his passion for given the right
received his formal food with his inspiration.
training from two desire to educate
renowned culinary and delight with
programs and has every meal he
worked at several prepares. His
restaurants fine philosophy is that