



The Great Pumpkin

Hosted by Chef Pete Pica

November 5, 2009

**Martin's Super Markets at Heritage Square
Mishawaka, Indiana**

Pumpkin and Chicken Risotto

Ingredients

2 cups Arborio rice
4 cups chicken stock, hot
1 cup white wine
3 tablespoons olive oil
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 medium onion, finely chopped
2 chicken breasts
2 cups pumpkin, chopped into 1 – 2 cm cubes, depending on preference
1/2 cup parmesan cheese, grated

Instructions

Bake the pumpkin pieces in a 180 C oven for 15 minutes and put aside. Cook the chicken breasts in a fry pan until just cooked through and put aside. After chicken has cooled a little, cut into 1 - 2 cm cubes depending on preference. (Alternatively, you can cut into cubes first and then stir-fry). While doing steps 1 and 2, put the oil in a large saucepan on medium/hot and when heated, put the onions and garlic in and cook until onions begin to get soft - about 5 minutes.

Add the rice and stir until the grains start to swell and burst then reduce heat to low and add the cup of white wine. Stir over low heat until the liquid has been absorbed. Add a half a cup of the hot stock and keep stirring while the rice absorbs it. Keep adding stock in this way, stirring constantly. Just as the final liquid is being absorbed and rice is cooked (about 20 - 25 minutes), add the cooked cubed chicken and pumpkin and gently stir. Remove from heat, stir in grated parmesan cheese, add freshly ground black pepper and serve.

Pumpkin Seed Brittle

Yield: Makes 12 servings (as part of tapas buffet)

Ingredients

1 cup sugar

1/2 cup water

1/8 teaspoon fine sea salt

3/4 cup raw green (hulled) pumpkin seeds (not toasted; 4 ounces)

Special equipment: parchment paper; a candy thermometer

Instructions

Put a 24- by 12-inch sheet of parchment on a work surface and anchor corners with pieces of tape. Bring sugar, water, and sea salt to a boil in a 2-quart heavy saucepan over moderate heat, stirring until sugar is dissolved. Cook mixture, without stirring, washing down any sugar crystals from side of pan with a pastry brush dipped in cold water, until syrup registers 238° F (soft-ball stage) on thermometer, 10 to 12 minutes (sugar syrup will be colorless). Remove from heat and stir in seeds with a wooden spoon, then continue stirring until syrup crystallizes, 3 to 4 minutes.

Return pan to moderate heat and cook, stirring constantly, until sugar melts completely (sugar will continue to dry and become grainy before melting) and turns a deep caramel color, 4 to 5 minutes more (seeds will be toasted). Carefully pour hot caramel mixture onto parchment and carefully cover with another sheet. Immediately roll out (between sheets of parchment) as thinly as possible with a rolling pin, pressing firmly. Remove top sheet of parchment and immediately cut brittle into pieces with a heavy knife or pizza wheel. Cool brittle completely, then peel paper from bottom. (Alternately, break brittle into pieces once cool.)

Pumpkin Salad with Polenta

Yield: Makes 6 servings

Ingredients

1 1/2 cups yellow cornmeal (not coarse)
7 1/2 cups water
2 3/4 teaspoons salt
2 1/2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 tablespoon sugar
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon paprika
1/4 teaspoon cayenne
1/2 cup raw green (hulled) pumpkin seeds (pepitas)
1 tablespoon fresh pomegranate juice (see cooks' note, below) or cranberry juice cocktail
2 teaspoons Sherry vinegar
1 tablespoon minced shallot
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 small cheese pumpkin or butternut squash (2 lb), peeled, quartered lengthwise, and seeded
1 (6-oz) piece Parmigiano-Reggiano
8 oz arugula, trimmed

Instructions

Prepare polenta:

Bring cornmeal, water, and 2 1/4 teaspoons salt to a boil in a 4-quart heavy saucepan, stirring constantly. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring frequently, until polenta is creamy and tender, about 50 minutes. Remove from heat, then stir in 1 1/2 tablespoons butter and cool slightly.

Spoon polenta onto center of a lightly buttered large baking sheet, then spread evenly into a 10- by 7-inch rectangle (about 1/2 inch thick). Cover with plastic wrap, then poke several holes in wrap with a small sharp knife and chill 2 hours.

Candy pumpkin seeds:

Melt remaining tablespoon butter in a heavy saucepan over moderate heat. Stir in sugar, cumin, cinnamon, paprika, cayenne, and 1/4 teaspoon salt, then cook, without stirring, until caramelized. Add pumpkin seeds and cook, stirring occasionally, until seeds are puffed and golden. Transfer to a plate to cool. When seeds have hardened, break up any clumps with your fingers.

Make vinaigrette:

Whisk together pomegranate juice, vinegar, and shallot and let stand 5 minutes. Whisk in 3 tablespoons oil, remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt, and pepper to taste.

Roast pumpkin:

Preheat oven to 450°F.

Cut pumpkin quarters crosswise into 1/2-inch-thick slices. Toss with 1 tablespoon oil and salt and pepper to taste in a shallow baking pan and arrange slices in 1 layer. Roast in middle of oven until just tender, about 20 minutes. Remove from oven, then cover with foil to keep warm.

Fry polenta while pumpkin roasts:

Trim polenta into a 9- by 6-inch rectangle. Cut polenta into 6 (3-inch) squares, then halve each square diagonally. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet until hot but not smoking, then cook polenta in 2 batches, turning once, until golden brown, about 8 minutes (if necessary, use remaining tablespoon oil for second batch). Transfer as cooked to a plate and keep warm, covered.

Assemble salad:

Shave 12 strips from cheese with a vegetable peeler.

Whisk vinaigrette, then toss arugula in a large bowl with enough vinaigrette to lightly coat. Place several pieces of pumpkin and 1 piece of polenta on each of 6 plates. Top with arugula, more pumpkin, and remaining polenta. Sprinkle with candied pumpkin seeds and top with parmesan shavings, then drizzle with remaining vinaigrette.

Cooks' notes:

- Polenta, spread on baking sheet and not yet fried, can be chilled up to 1 day.
- Candied pumpkin seeds can be prepared 3 days ahead and kept in an airtight container at room temperature.
- To juice a pomegranate, firmly roll it on a work surface until it feels softer, then cut a small hole in skin and squeeze.