

Day at the Spa

January 14, 2009

Hostesses

Mari Donnelly, Susan Lynch,
Rita Janda, & Lizabeth Yee Lefaver

Menu

Cucumbers with Pickled Ginger and Crab
Artichoke Bottoms filled
with Roasted Eggplant and Pepper Puree
Vegetable Soup
Salmon with Lentils
Fruit Pavlova

Cucumbers with Pickled Ginger and Crab

Serves 10-12

6 cucumbers

2 ½ tablespoon mayonnaise

2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 ½ teaspoons fresh lemon juice

2 teaspoons minced shallot

1 teaspoon Thai chile paste

1 teaspoon minced fresh chives

¼ teaspoon salt

1 ½ cups (9oz/280 g) fresh-cooked lump crabmeat

1 cup (8 oz/250 g) drained sliced pickled natural ginger

Flat leaf Italian parsley sprigs for garnish (optional)

Cut cucumbers into thin slices (1/4 inch or 6mm thick). You should have about 48 slices.

In a bowl, combine the mayonnaise, olive oil, lemon juice, shallot, chile paste, chives and salt. Mix well. Add the crabmeat and turn gently with a fork to mix well, being careful not to break up the crabmeat too much.

Put a generous teaspoonful of the crab mixture on each cucumber round, top with a little of the pickled ginger, and garnish with a parsley sprig, if desired.

Tip: Thread a bamboo skewer or cocktail pick through the cucumber and crabmeat to make an easy-to-handle appetizer.

Arrange on a platter, cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour and up to 2 hours before serving.

Artichoke Bottoms filled with Roasted Eggplant and Pepper Puree

- 1 large eggplant, roasted and cooled
- 2 large red peppers, roasted, seeded and cooled
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- ¼ cup parsley leaves
- ¼ cup basil leaves
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1/8 teaspoon ground red pepper
- 2 jars artichoke bottoms, rinsed and drained

Combine all ingredients except artichoke bottoms in food processor until smooth. Fill artichoke bottoms with mixture and garnish with parsley or basil. Puree may be made and refrigerated up to 3 days before using. Serves 12.

Vegetable Soup

Cut into ½ inch dice:

- 2 white turnips
- 4 carrots
- 2 onions
- 4 tomatoes, peeled and seeded
- 3 baking potatoes (4 cups)

Coarsely chop:

- ½ head green cabbage
- 2 leeks

In a large pot melt:

- 6 TBS butter, then stir in:
All the vegetables

Cover the pan and stew the vegetables for several minutes until soft and wilted, then add:

- 1 TBS salt
- Freshly ground pepper
- 4 quarts chicken stock

Cover and simmer for 45 minutes then puree in a blender jar. This will have to be done in several batches.

Return to the pan and adjust seasoning to taste with salt and pepper

Salmon with Lentils

SERVES 4

It's the crisp crust that makes this salmon taste so delicious and look so beautiful on the plate. Make sure your sauté pan is very hot before you add the fish to create that perfect sear.

- ½ pound French green lentils such as du Puy
- ¼ cup good olive oil, plus extra for salmon
- 2 cups chopped yellow onions
- 2 cups chopped leeks, white and light green parts only
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- ¾ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh garlic
- 1½ cups chopped celery (4 stalks)
- 1½ cups chopped carrots (3 carrots)
- 1½ cups Homemade Chicken Stock (page 84) or good canned broth
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons good red wine vinegar
- 4 (8-ounce) center-cut salmon fillets, skin removed

Place the lentils in a heat-proof bowl and cover with boiling water. Set aside for 15 minutes, then drain.

Meanwhile, heat the oil in a sauté pan, add the onions, leeks, thyme, salt, and pepper and cook over medium heat for 10 minutes, until the onions are translucent. Add the garlic and cook for 2 more minutes. Add the celery, carrots, chicken stock, and *lentils* tomato paste. Cover and simmer over low heat for 20 minutes, until the lentils are tender. Add the vinegar and season to taste.

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees.

For the salmon, heat a dry oven-proof sauté pan over high heat for 4 minutes. Meanwhile, rub both sides of the salmon fillets with olive oil and season the tops very liberally with salt and pepper. When the pan is very hot, place the salmon fillets seasoning-sides down in the pan and cook over medium heat without moving them for 2 minutes, until very browned. Turn the fillets and place the pan in the oven for 5 to 7 minutes, until the salmon is cooked rare. Spoon a mound of lentils on each plate and place a salmon fillet on top. Serve hot.

Fruit Pavlova

Makes: 8 servings

Ingredients

- 4 egg whites
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 3/4 teaspoon vinegar
- 4 cups sliced, peeled fresh tropical fruit (such as pineapple, strawberries, mango, papaya, and/or kiwifruit)

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 250 degrees. Meanwhile, line a baking sheet with parchment paper or foil. Draw a 7-inch circle on the paper or foil.
2. In a medium mixing bowl, beat egg whites and salt with an electric mixer on medium speed until soft peaks form (tips curl).
3. Add 1/3 cup sugar and beat until sugar is dissolved and mixture is very thick. Add rest of sugar, 1 tablespoon at a time, beating on high speed until very stiff peaks form (tips stand straight) and sugar is almost dissolved (about 4 minutes). Add vanilla and vinegar and beat to combine ingredients.
4. Spoon meringue mixture onto the circle on the paper. Using back of spoon spread out meringue evenly within circle building up the side to form a shell.
5. Bake for 1 1/2 hours until firm to the touch. Turn off oven and let shell dry in oven, for at least 1 hour. Remove from paper or foil; cool completely on a wire rack.
6. Using electric mixture, whip heavy cream in a chilled bowl until stiff.
7. To serve, spread whipped cream over top of cooled meringue and evenly arrange fruit on top. Cut into wedges and serve immediately.



Clockwise:
Cucumbers with Pickled Ginger & Crab
Artichoke Bottoms filled with Roasted Eggplant
and Pepper Puree
Fruit Pavlova
Salmon with Lentils
Vegetable Soup

