

# March Into Spring



**March 8, 2006**  
**Gourmet Cooking Club**

Presented by

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## Menu

Champagne with Pomegranate Syrup  
Brie En Croute  
Spring Ham Rolls  
Beggars Purses with Goat Cheese

Lobster Cobb Salad  
en Pâte à Choux

Lemon Meringue Beehives



## Champagne with Pomegranate Syrup

SERVES 6

Serve this in the fall and early winter when pomegranates are ripe and delicious. Champagne cocktails are best made with dry champagne or sparkling wine. There are plenty of medium-priced bottles that are ideal; since syrup is being added, don't use the "good stuff." Also don't make the cocktails in advance, or the champagne bubbles will deflate.

Pomegranate syrup can be found at Middle Eastern markets and specialty shops. If you can't find it, use frozen cranberry juice or any favorite flavored syrup, such as raspberry, and float fresh raspberries, peaches, oranges, or toasted almonds.

**1 pomegranate (optional)**  
**1/3 cup pomegranate syrup or frozen  
concentrated cranberry juice, thawed**

**1 bottle of dry champagne or sparkling  
cider**

1. If using the pomegranate seeds for garnish, fill a medium bowl with cold water. Cut the pomegranate in half crosswise. Working with half of the pomegranate at a time, submerge it in the water, and remove the seeds under water. This cleans them and doesn't leave stains on your hands. Drain the seeds, remove any beige pith, and keep the seeds refrigerated until ready to use.

Proceed to either **FOR THE MINIMALIST** or **FOR THE TRADITIONALIST**.

### FOR THE MINIMALIST

*For a contemporary presentation, this is the streamlined look. The presentation can be very graphic if the flutes are arranged in a straight line on a slender silver tray. It's also very elegant to gather the flutes on a round silver tray, hotel style.*

2. Combine the syrup and champagne in a 2- to 4-quart pitcher and mix thoroughly. Fill the flutes to within 1 inch of the rim and serve from a smooth silver tray or other platter with no decoration. This presentation needs no garnish; the graphic glasses and tinted drink are simple, elegant, and spare.

# Brie en Croute

Thaw Time: 30 minutes

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Bake Time: 20 minutes

Stand Time: 60 minutes

Serves: 12

## Ingredients:

1/2 pkg. Frozen Puff Pastry Sheets (1 sheet)

1 egg

1 tbsp. water

1/4 cup toasted sliced almonds (optional)

1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

1 Round Brie (I used Rouge et Noir – Triple Crème Brie)

## Directions:

THAW pastry sheet at room temperature 30 min. Preheat oven to 400 F. Mix egg and water.

UNFOLD pastry on lightly floured surface. Roll into 14" square. Cut off corners to make a circle. Sprinkle almonds and parsley in center of circle. Top with cheese. Brush edge of circle with egg mixture. Fold two opposite sides over cheese. Trim remaining two sides to 2" from edge of cheese. Fold these two sides onto the round. Press edges to seal. Place seam-side down on baking sheet. Decorate top with pastry scraps if desired.

Brush with egg mixture.

BAKE 20 min. or until golden. Let stand 1 hr. Serve with crackers.

## Spring Ham Roll Ups

1 lb. ham sliced thin but enough so it holds it's shape and can be rolled. (I use ½ lb Danish Ham and ½ lb Black Forest Ham.)

½ lb. cream cheese (at room temperature)

4 green onions sliced thin including some green

salt and pepper to taste

Mix the cream cheese, green onions, salt and pepper together.

Spread mixture on ham slice and roll up ham. Cut off ends to even and then cut into 4 pieces. Put toothpick in each one to hold it together.

Chill until ready to serve.

# Beggar's Purses with Warm Goat Cheese

SERVES 6 TO 12

This simple but delicious appetizer is the creation of Cakebread Winery chef Brian Streeter. In terms of do-ahead ideas, this appetizer is best if frozen and then baked frozen. By the time the phyllo turns golden brown, the goat cheese filling will be perfectly warm.

4 ounces unsalted butter  
3 (12 by 17½-inch) sheets phyllo dough

## GOAT CHEESE-CHIVE FILLING

4 ounces soft goat cheese  
1 teaspoon chopped chives  
1 teaspoon grated lemon zest

In a small saucepan over low heat, melt the butter. Lift off any butter solids that float to the surface. In a bowl, mix together the goat cheese, chives, and lemon zest.

Working on a flat surface, brush a sheet of the phyllo dough with butter. Top with another sheet of phyllo, and brush with butter. Add the last sheet of phyllo and brush with butter. These sheets will become your wrapping. Cut the phyllo into 20 squares measuring 3 by 3 inches. Place 2 teaspoons of the filling in the center of each square. Pull all the edges up to form a little purse and place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Refrigerate up to 4 hours or freeze. *The beggar's purses can be completed to this point up to 2 weeks before cooking.*

To serve, preheat the oven to 400°. Place the frozen or refrigerated beggar's purses in the oven and bake until golden, about 8 minutes if fresh and about 15 minutes if frozen. Serve warm.

The following three fillings can be substituted for the Goat Cheese-Chive Filling in the previous recipe. Just fold, freeze, and bake the beggar's purses as described on the left.

## Cranberry and Orange Zest Filling

4 ounces soft goat cheese  
¼ cup dried cranberries  
1 teaspoon grated orange zest  
1 teaspoon chopped fresh chives

In a bowl, combine all of the ingredients and mix well.

## Ginger, Chile, and Goat Cheese Filling

2 tablespoons pine nuts  
4 ounces soft goat cheese  
1 tablespoon finely minced ginger  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro sprigs  
½ teaspoon Asian chile sauce

Preheat the oven to 325°. Spread the pine nuts on a baking sheet and toast until golden, about 8 minutes. In a bowl, combine all of the ingredients and mix well.





## Pâte à Choux

2/3 cup water  
5 Tbsp. butter or margarine  
1/4 tsp. salt  
2/3 cup all-purpose flour  
3 eggs

In a 2 quart pan, combine the water, butter and salt. Quickly bring to a boil, stirring to melt butter. Add flour all at once, remove pan from heat and beat ingredients with a wire whip until smooth. Beat in eggs, one at a time, until mixture is smooth and glossy. Spoon into a greased 9-inch cheesecake pan with a removable bottom or spring-release sides. Spread evenly inside pan.

Bake crust in a 400 degree oven for 40 minutes or until puffed and brown.

Turn off oven. Prick with a wooden pick in 10 to 12 places and leave in closed oven for about 10 minutes to dry. Remove pan from oven and cool completely. Remove crust from pan.

If you make the pâte à choux a day ahead, cover loosely with foil and store at room temperature. For longer storage, wrap completely in foil and freeze. Thaw completely, then recrisp pastry uncovered in a 400 degree oven for 10 minutes. (Recrisp even if stored at room temperature.) Cool, then add the salad of your choice and garnish. Makes four to six servings.

# LOBSTER COBB SALAD

Serves 4 to 6

*Make this elegant salad when your mother-in-law comes for lunch—she'll love you. It's like a Cobb salad but with fresh lobster meat instead of chicken. Of course, you can always substitute cooked chicken or shrimp if you have a crowd, but this is a special meal for times when you really want to please someone.*

## FOR THE VINAIGRETTE

- 1½ tablespoons Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice (2 lemons)
- 5 tablespoons good olive oil
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

## FOR THE SALAD

- 2 ripe Hass avocados
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1½ pounds cooked lobster meat, cut in ¾-inch dice
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, cut in half or quarters
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ½ pound lean bacon, fried and crumbled
- ¾ cup crumbled English Stilton, or other crumbly blue cheese
- 1 bunch arugula, washed and spun dry

For the vinaigrette, whisk together the mustard, lemon juice, olive oil, salt, and pepper in a small bowl.

For the salad, cut the avocados in half, remove the seed, and peel. Cut into ¾-inch dice and toss with the lemon juice. If the arugula leaves are large, cut them in half crosswise.

Put the lobster and tomatoes in a bowl. Sprinkle with the salt and pepper and toss with enough vinaigrette to moisten. Add the diced avocados, crumbled bacon, blue cheese, and arugula and toss again. Serve at room temperature.



## lemon meringue beehives

MAKES  
20 TO 24

Thick, tangy lemon curd, tender meringue, and crumbly pastry are clearly made for each other. I have been tinkering with the basic elements of lemon meringue pie for years, and however I put it back together, it's always great. These individual mounds look incredibly cute and are shockingly easy to do.

Toasting the meringue at the end, a touch borrowed from Baked Alaska, gives the dessert a caramelized, toasted-marshmallow flavor element.

### you'll need

A 2-inch cookie cutter  
A large cookie sheet, well greased or lined with parchment paper or with nonstick baking mats (see page 16); or a nonstick cookie sheet  
A small ice cream scoop or melon baller, about 1½ inches across  
A pastry bag fitted with a small plain tip (¼-inch or less)  
A kitchen torch (optional)

### ⊙ FOR THE PASTRY BASES

4 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into pieces  
1 cup all-purpose flour  
¼ teaspoon salt  
1 egg yolk  
¼ cup crème fraîche

### ⊙ FOR THE LEMON CURD

3 eggs  
¾ cup sugar  
Freshly grated zest of 1½ lemons  
½ cup fresh lemon juice (from about 3 lemons)  
6 tablespoons cold unsalted butter

### ⊙ FOR THE MERINGUE

½ cup egg whites (from about 4 eggs)  
½ cup sugar

Make the pastry bases: Mix the butter, flour, and salt in a mixer fitted with a paddle attachment until sandy. In a separate bowl, blend the egg yolk and crème fraîche. Add to the flour mixture and mix until barely combined. Form the dough into a disk, wrap it in plastic wrap, and refrigerate it for at least 2 hours or up to 3 days.

Make the lemon curd: Bring 2 inches of water to a simmer in a saucepan. Whip the eggs and sugar in a mixer fitted with a whisk attachment until light and fluffy. Add the lemon zest and juice and place the bowl over the simmering water (without letting the bowl touch the water; pour some water out if needed). Cook until the curd is thickened, whisking occasionally. Remove it from the heat and whisk in the butter. Let the curd cool to room temperature, cover, and freeze overnight or up to 3 days.

Bake the pastry bases: Heat the oven to 375 degrees. Flour a work surface. Roll out the dough to  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch thick and cut out 2-inch rounds. Transfer the rounds to the cookie sheet and prick them all over with a fork. Bake until they are light golden brown, 12 to 15 minutes. Let cool. *(The whole recipe can be made up to this point up to 3 days in advance.)*

Up to 6 hours before serving, assemble the dessert: Arrange the pastry bases in a pan that will fit in your freezer (use two if needed). Use the small ice-cream scoop to place a ball of frozen lemon curd (it won't be frozen solid) onto each round. Freeze until needed.

Whip the egg whites until foamy, then add the sugar and continue whipping until stiff and glossy. Transfer to the pastry bag. Pipe meringue around the base of each pastry round, spiraling around and up the lemon-curd dome and gradually enclosing the top to create a beehive (see photo). Heat the broiler to very hot (or fire up your kitchen torch) and broil until the meringue is lightly browned all over. Return to the freezer until ready to serve, up to 6 hours.