

Valentine's Day Tapas & Mojitos February 2010

Menu:

Greek White Bean & Feta Puree with Cucumber Relish
Italian Sausage & Roasted Tomato Crostini with Wild Mushroom Butter
Grilled Tandoori Prawns with Cilantro Chutney
Balsamic-Glazed Butternut Squash Mini Skewers with Mozzarella & Basil
Mini Flourless Chocolate Cakes

Mojitos:

Mango-Grapefruit
Pomegranate-Honey
Cucumber-Lime

Greek White Bean & Feta Puree with Cucumber Relish

serves about 6

For the puree:

1 15-oz can white beans
1 clove garlic
1 cup crumbled feta
1/3 cup parsley leaves
1 lemon, zested and juiced
1 tsp dried oregano
1/3 cup olive oil, plus more as needed
salt and pepper

For the relish:

1 1/2 cups finely diced cucumber
2 scallions, finely chopped, white and green parts
1/2 tsp lemon juice
1 tsp olive oil

For the pita chips:

8 pita bread, cut into small wedges
olive oil
1 tbl ground cumin
1 tbl smoked paprika

***** Preparation ******

For the puree:

In a food processor, combine white beans, garlic, feta, parsley, lemon juice and zest, oregano and olive oil. Puree until smooth, adding more olive oil as needed. Season with salt and pepper and needed.

For the relish:

Toss together the cucumber, scallion, lemon and olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.

For the pita chips:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Toss the pita bread with olive oil to lightly coat. Toss with the spices and some salt and pepper. Spread out onto a baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes or until golden. Let cool completely.

Serve the dip in a shallow bowl with the relish on top in the middle. Serve the pita chips on the side.



Italian Sausage & Roasted Tomato Crostini with Wild Mushroom Butter

makes 20-24 pieces

2 oz dried wild mushrooms

4 tbl butter, softened

1 clove garlic

1 each baguette

olive oil

5 roma tomatoes, halved and seeded

3 links italian sausage, mild or hot

2 tbl balsamic vinegar

1/4 cup finely chopped basil

salt and pepper

***** Preparation ******

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Pour 1 cup hot water over the wild mushrooms and let soak for 15 minutes. Drain and squeeze the mushrooms dry. In a small food processor, combine the mushrooms, butter and garlic. Process until smooth and season with salt and pepper. Cut the baguette into 20-24 slices and spread some butter on one side of each pieces. Place the slices on a baking sheet and set aside.

Meanwhile, toss the tomatoes with olive oil and roast for 20 minutes until browned in some places.

Heat a skillet over medium-high heat and coat lightly with olive oil. Cut open the sausage casing and squeeze the sausage into the pan. Cook until browned, stirring often. Add the roasted tomatoes and break up with a spoon. Add the balsamic and season with salt and pepper.

Place the baguette slices into the oven until golden. Top with the sausage mixture and some basil. Serve immediately.

Grilled Tandoori Prawns with Cilantro Chutney

serves 6 as an appetizer

for the shrimp

1/2 cup plain yogurt
1 lime, juiced
2 garlic cloves, peeled
1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled
1 tbl ground cumin
1 tbl ground coriander
1 tsp tumeric
pinch cayenne
1 tsp salt
1 lb medium prawns, peeled and cleaned

for the chutney

1/2 jalapeno
1-inch piece fresh ginger
1 garlic clove, peeled
1 cup cilantro leaves
1/2 cup fresh mint leaves
1 tsp salt
1/4 cup lime juice
1/4 cup plain yogurt

*** Preparation ****

For the shrimp:

Preheat grill pan over high heat.

In a small blender or food processor combine the yogurt, lime juice, garlic, ginger, cumin, coriander, tumeric, cayenne and salt. Blend until smooth and pour over the shrimp. Let sit for 15 minutes. Remove the prawns from the marinade, shaking off the excess, and place on the grill. Grill on both sides for a couple minutes until just cooked through.

For the chutney:

Combine all of the chutney ingredients in the blender and blend until smooth.

Serve the prawns hot or at room temperature with the chutney for dipping.



Balsamic-Glazed Butternut Squash Mini Skewers with Fresh Mozzarella and Basil

makes about 24 pieces

for the glaze:

1/2 cup balsamic vinegar

1 orange, zested

1/4 cup honey

1/2 tsp salt

for the skewers:

1 small butternut squash, cut into 24 1-inch cubes

olive oil

salt and pepper

12 large leaves basil leaves, torn in half

1 log fresh mozzarella, cut into 24 cubes

red chili flakes, for sprinkling

***** Preparation ******

For the glaze:

In a small pot, stir together the balsamic, orange zest, honey and salt. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for about 10 minutes until mixture is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon. Set aside to cool slightly.

For the skewers:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Toss the squash with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Spread out onto a baking sheet and roast until just tender, about 15 minutes. (DON'T over-cook until the squash is mushy!)

Use sturdy toothpicks or mini skewers to thread on a basil leaf, a cube of mozzarella and a butternut squash piece.

To serve, drizzle with the balsamic glaze and sprinkle with the red chili flakes.

Flourless Chocolate Cake

makes 1 9-inch cake OR about 36 mini cupcakes

6 tbl butter

8 oz. bittersweet chocolate

6 each eggs, separated

1/2 cup sugar

2 cups heavy cream

1 tbl instant coffee or espresso, in 1 tbl hot water

1/4 cup powdered sugar

*** Preparation ****

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Line mini muffin tins with paper liners OR spray a 9-inch spring-form pan with non-stick spray.

In a bowl over simmering water, combine the butter and chocolate. Stir often, until melted. Remove bowl and let cool slightly. Whisk in the egg yolks.

With an electric mixer, beat the egg whites until they begin to hold their shape. Add the sugar a little at a time, beating until the eggs hold soft peaks.

Fold the whites into the chocolate mixture.

Scoop the mixture into each of the tins, filling about 3/4 full. Bake for 12 minutes or until puffed and just set. Remove and let cool slightly (cakes will fall in the center).

Meanwhile, beat the cream with the hydrated coffee and powdered sugar until thick.

Top each cake with a scoop of the cream just before serving.



Cucumber Lime Mojitos

makes 4 drinks

1/2 cup sliced cucumber

1/4 cup mint leaves

1/4 cup lime juice

3 tablespoons agave syrup, plus more to taste

24 oz light rum

12 oz club soda

***** Preparation ******

In a pitcher, combine the cucumber, mint and lime juice. Muddle to break up the cucumber and mint. Add the agave and stir to combine. Add plenty of ice. Add the rum and club soda. Stir and taste. Add more agave as desired.

Serve with plenty of ice in high-ball glasses.

Mango-Grapefruit Option:

Switch the cucumbers for diced fresh mango. Add the zest and juice of 1 large ruby red grapefruit. Proceed with the recipe above.

Pomegranate-Honey Option:

Replace the cucumbers with 1/2 cup pomegranate seeds and 1/2 cup pomegranate juice. Replace the agave with honey. Proceed with the recipe above.