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Health-conscious recipes bountiful

By Sue Rosiek
staff writer

MASTER CHEF Jeff Gabriel offers these tips for busy cooks this holiday season: Keep it simple and be organized.

"Before you start to cook — *mise en place* (the French word meaning have everything in place)," says Gabriel, director of the culinary arts program at Schoolcraft College in Livonia.

"Organize ingredients and/or make things ahead," adds the award-winning chef, who also manages and directs a small cooking school at Les Auteurs Restaurant in Royal Oak.

And while holiday parties come packaged with the urge to splurge, Gabriel offers some elegant, relatively easy and "guilt-free" offerings to please your health-conscious guests.

Gabriel's "guilt-free" selections include an eggplant appetizer, tomato basil coulis over angel hair pasta, chicken and shrimp jambalaya and a luscious but low-fat apple and dried fruit pudding with orange sabayon. (See accompanying recipes).

ASIDE FROM abstaining, there's plenty one can do when preparing foods, while entertaining as a party guest to healthy up holiday eating habits.

When cooking and baking, there are lots of food substitutes that can cut calories, fat, sugar and salt.

For whipped cream, whip well-chilled evaporated skimmed milk. To lower cholesterol, replace whole eggs with commercially prepared low-cholesterol egg substitutes. Or use two cholesterol-free egg whites for each whole egg in the recipe.

Say so long to salt and instead use herbs and spices to season. Highly flavored ingredients and tangy herbs are especially satisfying.

Opt for salsa or hummus served with vegetable sticks and bread instead of chips. Instead of buttery quiche of glazed meatballs, set out stuffed mushrooms or filled grape leaves.

Season-fresh fruits, sprinkled with a liqueur and served in balloon goblets make a holiday-special dessert.

For a tasty eggplant and garlic soup, Gabriel substitutes olive oil for butter and low-fat condensed milk for cream.

TO REDUCE stress during the holidays, Gabriel recommends being organized and serving dishes that can be prepared ahead.

For example, chicken and shrimp jambalaya can be made the day ahead and so can the pasta sauce and eggplant and garlic soup. In fact, the day ahead approach helps to make some dishes more flavorful, says Gabriel.

Roasted Eggplant and Garlic Soup (Serves 8)

2 1/2 pound eggplants, roasted, peeled,

dicel.
1 garlic bulb, roasted, cloves squeezed from skins
1 onion, pared, dicel
2 ounces olive oil
salt and pepper to taste
1 quart chicken stock
2 cups low-fat condensed milk.

Saute eggplant, garlic and onion in olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Cook 20 minutes. Add chicken stock and simmer 20 minutes. Puree mixture. Add low-fat condensed milk. Adjust seasoning and reserve.

2 red bell peppers, roasted, peeled, seeded, chopped
4 ounces low-fat condensed milk
Salt and pepper to taste

Puree peppers with coulis. Season with salt and pepper. Ladle soup into bowls. Drizzle red pepper coulis on top.

Paupiettes of Eggplant with Roasted Red Peppers and Tomato Basil Coulis over Angel Hair Pasta

Peeled eggplant sliced thin
Olive oil spray
1 tablespoon minced garlic
Pinch of seasoning salt
3 roasted red peppers (peeled and seeded)
2 zucchini sliced thin and blanched
3 tablespoons asiago cheese (optional)

Roll red peppers and cheese in the eggplant to form the paupiettes. Wrap with the zucchini slices and place in an earthenware dish. Cover and bake 15 minutes.

Tomato Basil Coulis

2 teaspoons olive oil
1 teaspoon minced garlic
2 teaspoon shallots, minced
1 teaspoon jalapeno peppers, minced (optional)
2 cups tomato paste
2 cups tomato concasse
1 cup chicken stock
1 cup tomatoes, medium dice
4 teaspoons chopped basil
2 teaspoons cilantro, chopped
1 teaspoon fresh oregano

Heat oil, garlic, shallots, jalapenos and tomato paste and saute.

Add the tomato concasse and stock. Simmer for approximately 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Puree the mixture until smooth. Add the remaining ingredients. Reheat before serving.

Present paupiettes with tomato basil coulis over angel hair pasta.

Apple and Dried Fruit Pudding with Orange Sabayon

3 cups boiling water
1 large apple, peeled, quartered and cored
2/3 cups dicel fruit (dicel prunes and dates, raisins, currants), packed
3 packets Pritikin Hearty Hot Cereal

Please turn to Page 16