

# California chefs share festive seasonal menu

AP — Two California chefs, who are also husband and wife, have cooked up a holiday menu that includes Sausage and Fresh Fennel Stuffing, Sweet Potato and Pecan Relish, Fennel Cured Pork Loin and Green Beans with Tasso Butter.

Bruce Aidells, the author of several cookbooks, is founder and chef of Aidells Sausage Co. in San Francisco. His wife, Nancy Onkes, is chef-owner of San Francisco's popular Boulevard restaurant.

For the stuffing recipe, fresh fennel or finocchio is a delicious and unusual vegetable that adds a subtle anise flavor and a delightful crunchy texture. The stuffing can be served with turkey, chicken, veal or pork chops, or extra-thick pork chops.

### SAUSAGE AND FRESH FENNEL STUFFING

4 teaspoons (1/2 stick) but-

ter  
 1 1/2 pounds mild or spicy Italian sausage, removed from casings  
 1 large bulb fresh fennel, coarsely chopped  
 2 ribs celery, coarsely chopped  
 1 medium onion, coarsely chopped  
 1 tablespoon minced garlic  
 1 tablespoon ground sage  
 2 bags packaged stuffing or 8 to 10 cups dried bread cubes  
 2 to 3 cups turkey or chicken stock  
 Salt and pepper, to taste  
 Melt butter in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the stuffing and fry for about 5 minutes, breaking up the meat into small pieces.  
 Add the fennel, celery, onion, garlic and sage to the sausage; cook for 10 to 12 minutes, or until the vegetables are soft.  
 Put the sausage and vegetable

mixture in a large bowl, along with the stuffing mix or bread cubes. Add 2 cups of the stock and mix well.  
 The stuffing should be moist enough to hold together when mounded on a spoon. Add more stock if necessary. Taste for salt and pepper.  
 Cook this stuffing in a buttered-covered casserole at 350 degrees F for 45 minutes.  
 Dot the surface of the stuffing with butter and add a little more stock to make up for the lack of extra juices the stuffing would absorb if inside the bird. Makes 8 to 10 servings.  
**SWEET POTATO AND PECAN RELISH**  
 2 large sweet potatoes or red yams, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes  
 3/4 cup olive oil  
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary

3 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped  
 1 red bell pepper, fire-roasted, peeled and diced  
 1 red onion, finely chopped  
 1/2 cup pecans, toasted and coarsely chopped  
 2 tablespoons maple syrup  
 1/4 cup red-wine vinegar  
 Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.  
 Toss sweet potatoes in 1/4 cup of the olive oil with the rosemary and the garlic. Spread on a sheet pan and roast in a 350-degree F oven until tender, about 15 to 20 minutes. Cool.  
 Transfer sweet potato mixture to bowl with red peppers, onion and pecans.  
 In another bowl, combine maple syrup, vinegar and remaining oil. Pour over vegetables. Toss until well dressed. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Makes 8 servings.

**FENNEL CURED PORK LOIN**  
 1/2 gallon hot water  
 1 cup sugar  
 1 cup kosher salt  
 2 tablespoons crushed fennel seeds  
 1/4 cup Pernod  
 2 teaspoons chili flakes  
 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard  
 1 center-cut pork loin with bones attached (5 to 6 pounds)  
 Mix everything except pork loin until salt and sugar dissolve. Cool to room temperature.  
 Submerge pork in mixture and refrigerate for two days. Remove and pat dry. Season with salt and pepper. Roast in a 325-degree F oven until internal temperature of 145 degrees F to 160 degrees F, about 1 to 1 1/2 hours.  
 Cover loosely in foil and let stand for 20 minutes before serving. Slice and serve. Makes 8 servings.

**GREEN BEANS WITH TASSO BUTTER**  
 2 pounds small green beans, cut into 2-inch pieces  
 1 cup unsalted butter  
 1 cup tasso or smoked ham, chopped into 1/4-inch dice  
 Salt and pepper, to taste  
 Blanch beans in 3 gallons boiling, salted water for 1 minute.  
 Remove beans and plunge into ice-cold water.  
 Place butter in a medium skillet, then add tasso. Slow fry tasso, being careful not to burn butter. Remove tasso and set aside.  
 Sauté beans in butter remaining in skillet. Cook until tender, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from skillet and combine with tasso. Add salt and pepper to taste. Makes 8 to 10 servings.

# Make roast capon the start of a memorable meal

AP — Looking for something different to serve for the holidays? Try capon. Known as the "Christmas bird," capon is found in the frozen meat display cases of supermarkets. Capons range in weight from 6 to 9 pounds. They are easy to prepare, and a 4-ounce serving contains 230 just calories.  
 For a holiday menu, serve Roast Capon with Cranberry Pecan Stuffing, Festive Pear Halves and Ambrosia. A tossed green salad, buttered greens with pimientos and cauliflower with cheese sauce can also be served as accompaniments.

### ROAST CAPON

6- to 7-pound frozen capon, thawed  
 Cranberry Pecan Stuffing (recipe below)  
 1/2 teaspoon salt  
 Melted butter, margarine or oil  
 Festive Pear Halves (recipe

below)  
 Free legs and tail from tucked position of thawed capon. Remove giblets from body and neck cavities. Rinse capon inside and outside under cold running water. Pat dry inside and outside with paper towels.  
 Prepare Cranberry Pecan Stuffing. Allow 1 cup of stuffing for each pound of capon.  
 Sprinkle body and neck cavities with salt. Fill cavities loosely with stuffing. Skewer neck skin to back. Cover stuffing with aluminum foil and tie legs and tail together loosely. Place capon breast-side up on rack in shallow oven roasting pan. Use no water in pan.  
 Brush skin with melted butter, margarine or oil. Cover loosely with aluminum foil, crimping it to edges of pan. Roast in slow oven (325 degrees F) 3 to 3 3/4 hours for a 6- to 7-pound capon. Thirty to 45

minutes before end of roasting time, remove foil and brush skin with butter, margarine or oil and cut band of string to free legs. Roast until leg joint moves easily and meat is tender. Arrange on platter and garnish with Festive Pear Halves. Makes 6 to 8 servings.  
**CRANBERRY PECAN STUFFING**  
 1/2 cup melted butter or margarine  
 2 cups chopped celery  
 1 teaspoon cinnamon  
 1/2 teaspoon salt  
 1/4 teaspoon cloves  
 8 cups day-old bread cubes  
 1 cup fresh cranberry halves  
 2/3 cup coarsely chopped pecans  
 Add 2 cups stuffing for each pound of capon.  
**FESTIVE PEAR HALVES**  
 29-ounce can firm pear halves  
 1/4 teaspoon peppermint extract  
 Red food coloring, as desired  
 8-ounce package cream cheese, at room temperature  
 Chopped candied fruits or maraschino cherries  
 Drain pear halves; save 1

cup syrup.  
 Add extract to 1 cup syrup and tint a delicate pink with red food coloring. Pour syrup over pear halves. Chill well. At serving time, drain halves well.  
 Beat cream cheese until smooth. Press cheese through pastry tip or spoon into cavity of each pear. Decorate cheese with chopped candied fruits or maraschino cherries. Makes 8 to 10 servings.  
**AMBROSIA**  
 6 large navel oranges, peeled and white membrane removed  
 1-pound, 4-ounce can pineapple chunks, drained  
 3/4 cup fresh strawberries or maraschino cherry halves  
 1 cup shredded coconut,  
 canned or fresh  
 1/2 cup orange juice  
 1/4 cup confectioners sugar  
 Sweetened whipped cream (optional)  
 Cut peeled oranges into sections, removing all traces of white membrane.  
 Spread one-third of orange slices over bottom of a pretty glass bowl. Cover with one-third of the pineapple chunks, one-third of the strawberries or cherries and one-third of the coconut. Repeat process twice, ending with coconut.  
 Combine and mix orange juice and confectioners sugar. Drizzle over fruit mixture. Chill. Serve plain or topped with sweetened whipped cream. Makes 6 to 8 servings.  
 Recipes from: Waspie Produce

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