

Tomato bake will spice up dinner

SPICY TOMATO BAKE

3 cups cooked chicken meat or vegetarian "chicken," found at the produce section of most major super-markets
1 cup sour cream
1 (14.5 ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes, drained and chopped
1 teaspoon chili powder
1/4 cup chopped onion
2 green onions, chopped
1 tomato, diced
1 (8 ounce) can tomato sauce
1/2 cup salsa
2 teaspoons chili powder
1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
1/4 teaspoon dried parsley
6 ounces shredded Cheddar cheese

1 (2 ounce) can chopped black olives, drained
8 (8 inch) flour tortillas

In a large bowl combine the chicken, sour cream, canned diced tomatoes, 1 teaspoon chili powder, chopped onion, green onion, and fresh diced tomato. Mix well and set aside. In a medium saucepan combine tomato sauce, salsa, 2 teaspoons chili powder, oregano and parsley. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and simmer for 10 minutes. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Fill tortillas with chicken mixture and fold together, laying snugly in a lightly greased 9x13 inch baking dish. Pour simmered sauce over the top, then sprinkle with shredded cheese and chopped olives. Bake at 350 degrees F (175 degrees C) for 30 minutes, or until cheese is melted and bubbly.

Schoolcraft holds culinary arts classes

Schoolcraft College holds a variety of culinary arts classes. Those interested can enroll by mail, fax or walk-in registration. For further information, call (734) 462-4448. Schoolcraft College is located at 18600 Haggerty Road, Livonia.

COOKING CLASSES

Upcoming classes are:
One-Pot Cooking, 6-10 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 29
Tarts & Pies, 6-9 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 30
Theme Dinner with the Chefs, 6:30-9:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 31
European Bread Making Hands-on, 5-10 p.m. Monday and Thursday, Feb. 4, 7
Fast & Fabulous Family Favorites, 6-9 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 5
Chocolate Lover's Delight, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 9
Thai & Vietnamese Cuisine, 6-10 p.m. Monday, Feb. 11
Veggies, 6-9 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 12
Kitchen Knives & Handtools, 6-9 p.m. Hands-on, Tuesday, Feb. 26
Winter Soups & Stews, 6-10 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 21 from 6-10 p.m.
Quick Easy Meals, 6-10 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 23

Mussels in wine are truly divine

See related story on Pastimes front.

RUSTICA EUROPA MOULES (MUSSELS STEAMED IN WHITE WINE)

2 pounds mussels
1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons minced fresh garlic
3/4 cup finely chopped (confetti cut) mixture of red, green and orange bell peppers or red onion
1 1/2 cups dry white wine
juice of one fresh lemon
4 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon heavy cream
2-3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley
Salt and pepper to taste
Zest of one lemon for garnish (optional)
1 loaf crusty French bread

Wash, scrub and sort mussels, removing any pieces of protruding beard.

Over medium-high heat, add olive oil to a 12-inch sauté pan or 4-quart stock pot with a lid. Add minced garlic and peppers; sauté one minute and add the wine.

Immediately add mussels. Cover the pot and turn heat to high. When steam begins to come out from under the lid, turn the heat down to medium.

Leave the pot on the heat for 4 minutes (6 minutes for frozen mussels).

Leave the lid on the pot and holding down the lid with a hot pad, shake pot to redistribute the mussels. Put the pot back on the heat for 1 minute more.

Remove the lid and check to see if mussels have opened. If not, replace the lid and cook for another minute. (Avoid overcooking or mussels will be tough).

Remove the lid carefully and scoop the mussels out of the pot with a slotted spoon and place them in hot bowls, discarding any unopened mussels.

If the liquid in the bottom of the pan is sandy, carefully pour it into a clean saucepan, leaving any sand or grit behind. Add the lemon juice.

Whisk in the butter. Add heavy cream and parsley. Season with salt and pepper (either white or black) to taste. Stir to combine.

Ladle the broth over hot mussels in the hot bowls. Garnish with lemon zest if desired. Serve with slices of crusty bread. Serves 4 as an appetizer portion or 2 as main course.

Recipe compliments of Certified Executive Chef Michael Thomas, owner of restaurant Rustica Europa, Rochester Hills.

Mussels

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freezing mussels is quite good. "They're not better than fresh," he noted, "but are better than those sold in some markets in the net bags as fresh. These are often dried out. Flash freezing seals in juices and helps maintain flavors and texture." To use flash-frozen mussels in cooking, don't thaw them first; just increase the steaming time by a few minutes until the mussels open.

To ensure that they are alive and fresh, buy mussels with tightly closed shells or those that snap shut when tapped. Avoid those with broken shells. "If they feel unusually heavy," Chef Michael contends, "it means they're full of sand or mud. If they feel light and loose when shaken, that's a signal that the mussel is dead. They should smell like the ocean and sea air, not fishy."

Shucked mussels should be plump with a clear liquid. Smaller mussels will be more tender than large ones. Fresh mussels, whether live or shucked, should be stored in the refrigerator and used the same day that they are purchased.

Mussels may be steamed, fried, baked or used as an ingredient in dishes such as the French seafood stew known as bouillabaisse or as an addition to standard risotto.

Keep it simple

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■ As it is with most seafood, over-complicating the recipe entails the risk of losing prime freshness and delicate flavors. They really keep steamed mussels simple in France. Instead of using a soup spoon to drink the broth, one half mussel shell is used. This etiquette is A-OK in the USA.

prime freshness and delicate flavors. They really keep steamed mussels simple in France. Instead of using a soup spoon to drink the broth, one half mussel shell is used. This etiquette is A-OK in the USA. On his Rustica Europa menu, which includes French and Italian-inspired dishes, Chef Michael keeps his mussel presentation simple. He calls it Moules (French for mussels) and states that this dish is "farm-raised mussels steamed with white wine, garlic and multi-colored bell peppers." In France, the same preparation on a menu might read Moules Marinières. It's a traditional dish served all over France and is usually made with the local white wine.

Chef Michael's wine choice is an inexpensive, dry pinot grigio. "Drink the same

wine with the dish," he suggests. "You can use chardonnay, but opt for a less expensive bottle for cooking. With the dish, drink one that's expensive with more flavor."

For an appetizer portion of mussels, Chef Michael suggests two pounds for four people. As a main dish, it is one pound per person. He roughly estimates that one pound of mussels yields six or seven ounces of meat.

Chef Michael has some easy variations on his theme. For an unusual risotto, use a seafood stock instead of chicken stock. Steam the mussels and remove them from the shell or purchase them shucked. With the final addition of stock to the risotto, toss in the mussels, along with some butter and chopped fresh, flat-leaf parsley.

For a southwest, Spanish or Mexican spin, replace the parsley in Chef Michael's recipe with cilantro. Use lime juice and lime zest instead of lemon. Add a dash of red pepper flakes for a final taste kick. In warmer months, he suggests using a lime or an orange in his original recipe rather than lemon.

Eleanor Heald is a Troy resident who writes about restaurants, food, wine and spirits for The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave her a voice mail message, dial (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, mailbox 1864#.

Brew

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the flavor of foods cooked on the grill can't be beat, so it's worth the extra snow shoveling effort to keep the grill area clear.

I paired the fish with herb

risotto and grilled fresh white asparagus purchased at Papa Joe's, the new gourmet market in Birmingham (which, by the way, has everything any

gourmet cook could desire).

Needless to say, the marinated sea bass was some of the best fish I have ever eaten. I hope you will try this and let me know what you think. Despite my stalwart belief that handcrafted beer should not be adulterated by the addition of artificial flavors (like lemons), after discovering that these beverages are manufactured by the major breweries

and sampling these new offerings, my worries about protecting the integrity of the brewing industry were over!

As always, never trust a skinny Brewmaster

Dean Jones is Brewmaster at the Big Rock Chop House, located at 245 South Elton in Birmingham.

CORRECTION NOTICE

Our January 27 ad showed a Sony VAO notebook computer (model # PCG-GR390) as being available. However, this model is not yet available. Accordingly, we will issue rainchecks for the item through February 2. We apologize for any confusion or inconvenience this may cause.



SKU # 4477932 Sony VAO notebook model # PCG-GR390

DOUBLE TRADE-IN

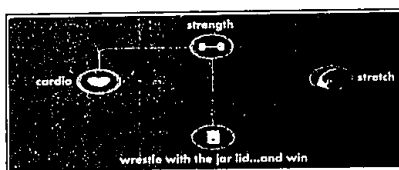
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