

SPRING FROM PAGE B1

"And the association with salmon and spring is strong," Rowison said. Jack Leone, chef and owner of Cucina Leone in Birmingham, said salmon brushed with a lavender honey and crusted with ground peppercorns is a popular item at parties he caters this time of year.

"When people go out to eat or go to events with other people, they want to eat healthy," Leone said. With the popularity of the Dr. Atkins diet, many still eat a lot of meat and protein, including New York strip steaks, rib eyes and center cut pork chops, according to Leone.

"With fish, salmon is definitely No. 1," he said. "It's a healthy fish, a universal fish." Leone is just starting to pick up reservations for summer graduations parties. "People are tending to wait until the last minute to book things this year," Leone said. "People are unsure what's going to happen in one month, or three months."

For desserts, Leone said many people enjoy smaller, fresher and lighter foods. Jerry Vassel, owner of Main Street Catering in Canton, said salads hit the plates at this time of year.

"We get the spinach and Caesar salads and potato salad sides — a summertime dish that people sometimes order in the spring — the Maurice salads with mandarin oranges, strawberries and bleu cheese," Vassel said.

Sandwiches are popular foods, too. "We get a lot of vegetarian requests, since more people are eating vegetarian," Vassel said. "We get pastas with light butter sauces with vegetables at this time of year."

Lemon chicken, lavash sandwiches and fresh fruit are some of the other lighter dishes served, Vassel said. A strawberry shortcake cake consisting of a light cake with strawberries and a cream frosting or a lemon cake with lemon filling and lemon sauce can be served for a dessert.

"We also get a lot of requests for cookies, brownies and chocolate," Vassel said. "Besides our corporate gatherings, most of the parties we're getting right now are for baptisms. We're doing quite a few of those."

In the spring, people "start looking at their clothes," Rowison said. "They go 'carbs crazy' in the winter because of the lack of daylight," Rowison said. "But now they will start going outside more." Fiddlehead ferns, which are found in

SPRING PARTY MENU

- Asparagus Chowder
Shrimp and Leek Strudel
Grilled Salmon with Papaya Strudel
Orzo with Broccoli, Carrot and Lemon Zest
Yellow Squash, Green Beans and Roasted Shallots
Strawberry Cream Puff with White Chocolate Bavarian Cream and Grand Marnier Sauce

CHEF'S TIPS

Dan Rowison has some cooking tips in preparing the dishes in the accompanying menu: "With a cream puff, you can tell when they're done when they're perfectly golden and light," Rowison said. "When you lift them, if they feel heavy, they need to be cooked longer." Roasted onions and shallots give these vegetables a taste similar to caramelizing. "Roasting them takes the starch and converts it to sugar," Rowison said. Vegetables are done when a toothpick can be inserted easily, Rowison adds that salmon should be cooked to 140-145°F internally using an Instant-Read thermometer for the fish to reach a nice leilure.

Canada and England, are good springtime fare. "You cook it similar to an asparagus," Rowison said. Dishes with leeks or mushroom rigout are also appropriate.

"I like to get into light sauces," Rowison said. "At the time of year, you start to get away from the cream sauces. They're not as thick. The sauces have a real lightness to them."

Pasta dishes also make that transition in the spring. You can mix noodles with grilled portabella mushrooms, zucchini, eggplant with olive oil and asiago cheese. Rowison suggested the accompanying menu because much of it can be prepared ahead. Rowison said the orzo can be made early in the day, along with salsa, cream puff and the blanching of the vegetables.

"The white chocolate mousse and the Grand Marnier sauce can be created the day ahead, and the cream puff can be stored in a plastic bag so it won't get soggy," Rowison said.

Rowison said soon the outdoor culinary activities will begin. "We'll move away from the sticky and heavier foods," Rowison said.

"People want foods that are light. They'll dust off the 'barbec', grill fish and create fresh foods."

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OCC's Dan Rowison sets up a spring banquet

Warm up your spring party guests with these recipes from Dan Rowison, chef-instructor at Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills.

ASPARAGUS CHOWDER

- 1/4 cup onion, minced fine
1/2 stalk celery, minced fine
1/2 leek (white only) minced fine
1/2 cup margarine or canola oil
1/2 cup flour
1 bunch asparagus, stems only
6 cups chicken stock (48 ounces)

Sauté onion, celery and leeks in margarine until tender. Add flour. Cook three to five minutes.

Add hot stock. Add asparagus stems only. Simmer one hour.

Strain soup. Add garnish as directed below.

- Garnish
4 potatoes (boiling type or redskins), medium dice, skins on
1/2 carrot, medium dice
1/2 stalk celery, medium dice
1/2 leek (white and light green), medium dice
1 bunch asparagus tips
1/2 cup half and half (optional)
1/4 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, minced
Salt and pepper (to taste)

Simmer potatoes in one quart boiling salted (2 teaspoons salt) water till al dente. Shock in ice water. Simmer carrots and celery in one quart boiling water with 2 teaspoons salt till al dente. Drain, then shock in ice water.

In one tablespoon of margarine, sauté leeks till just al dente. Simmer asparagus tips in one quart boiling water with 2 teaspoons salt till al dente. Drain, shock in ice water, then cut into spoon size.

Temper in 1/2 cup half and half and add thyme. Season with salt and pepper. Yields: 1 1/2 quart.

STRAWBERRY CREAM PUFF

- Pate a Choux
1/2 cup water
1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup margarine
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 teaspoon sugar

Combine above ingredients in a heavy bottom pot and bring to a boil.

- 1 cup flour
1 cup eggs (approximately 4 large eggs)

Add flour at once and cook 3-5 minutes stirring so that the mixture does not stick or burn until the dough is smooth and a crust forms on the bottom of the pot. Place dough mixture into a mixing bowl and blend using an electric mixer or a paddle attachment on a large mixer (on high speed.) Add eggs to dough 1/4 cup at a time mixing until the egg is absorbed before adding the next amount of egg.

Grease four corners of a sheet tray. Place a sheet of Bakers Paper on tray, using a pastry bag and a 1/2 inch-wide tip. Pipe eclair dough into a tight spiral shape about 2 inches wide. Bake at 425° for the first 5 minutes. Turn oven down to 325° for 5 minutes. Turn oven down to 300° for the last 5 minutes. Eclair should feel light and the outside will be evenly browned.

To assemble:
1 pint fresh strawberries, greens removed, washed

- 3 ounces white chocolate, finely chopped
1 tablespoon salad oil
2 ounces white chocolate, curls for decoration

Split puff in half. Place white chocolate mousse in a separate bag with a large serrated tip.

Fill bottom half of the heart body with mousse, top with 1/4 cup upright strawberries. Cover with white chocolate mousse.

Finely chop white chocolate. Combine chocolate with salad oil in a stainless steel bowl over simmering water, stirring with a spoon till mixture melts. Remove

from heat. Dip top of cream puff in chocolate, set on top of filled puff. Cool till chocolate sets.

Place Grand Marnier sauce onto plate, top with heart, decorate with white chocolate curls and strawberries.

SHRIMP AND LEEK STRUDEL

- 8 shrimp (shells on)
1/4 cup white wine
2 teaspoons shallots
1/2 cup chicken stock
1 tablespoon margarine
1 tablespoon flour
1/2 cup heavy cream
lemon juice
1/2 each leeks
1 teaspoon dill (fresh, minced)
1/4 teaspoon salt
pinch white pepper
1 teaspoon margarine
900gh

- 4 ounces margarine (melted)
1/4 box filo dough
1/4 cup bread crumbs
1 teaspoon sesame seeds (optional)

Remove shrimp shells-reserve shells-devine shrimp-wash well.

Melt margarine, add flour and cook 1-2 minutes to form a roux.

Combine shells, white wine, shallots and chicken stock. Bring to a simmer-add roux. Simmer 30 minutes-strain-add heavy cream. Simmer to a medium sauce, season to taste with salt, white pepper and lemon juice.

Remove dark green leaves from leeks, split leeks in half, wash well under running water, cut thinly on the diagonal. Sauté with dill, salt and white pepper in 1 teaspoon of margarine.

Sauté shrimp in second 1 teaspoon margarine in a hot skillet till just externally cooked. Remove shrimp from skillet. Add any juices that remain in pan to sauce.

Place a sheet of bakers' paper on a plate.

Place 1 sheet of filo dough on top of bakers paper. Lightly brush with melted margarine using a pastry brush, sprinkle with

bread crumbs. Top with another sheet of filo dough. Do not top last layer with bread crumbs or melted margarine. Divide dough in thirds to form three equal rectangles. Place 2 shrimp, 1 teaspoon leeks and 1 teaspoon shrimp sauce on the edge of each dough thirds. Roll up filo dough half way. Press sides up over toward the center. Put the end with margarine, roll up into a cylinder. Brush top with melted margarine. Sprinkle with sesame seeds (optional) or bread crumbs. Bake as needed uncovered on greased pan at 375°, 20 minutes till crunchy and golden. Serve with any remaining sauce.

WHITE CHOCOLATE BAVARIAN

- 1 cup half and half
1 cup heavy cream
2/3 cup sugar
4 egg yolks
1/2 each vanilla bean, split in half
8 ounces white chocolate, finely chopped
1 tablespoon gelatin, unflavored
2 ounces white cream de cocoa
1 pint heavy cream

Combine half and half, vanilla bean, 1/2 cup cream and sugar in a pot.

Combine remaining 1/2 cup cream and yolks. Bring cream mixture to simmer, temper with yolk mixture, return to pot-stir till mixture coats the back of the spoon, about 185°.

Remove immediately and strain through a fine sieve. (strainer.) Add finely chopped white chocolate. Stir to melt. Cool immediately with an ice bath. Stir until cool.

Bloom gelatin with cream de cocoa in a stainless steel bowl. Let sit 5 minutes.

Heat gelatin in double boiler until no strains appear. Temper heated gelatin with chocolate-cream. Whip cream to soft peaks. Fold heavy cream into gelatin-cream. Pour into pan and chill until set-about 1 hour.

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