

EAT LOCAL MONTH
Local Heroes



SIMON DOLINKY *of BLVD 16*



Grilled Fig Salad with Candied Pecans and Blue Cheese Vinaigrette

Recipe adapted from Simon Dolinky

Makes 4 Salads

For the salad

- 1½ cups pecan halves
- ½ tablespoon melted butter
- ½ tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 6 fresh figs, halved
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 bunches watercress, trimmed
- 5 Belgian endives, cut crosswise into ¼-inch sections
- 1 bunch chervil, leaves picked

For the vinaigrette

- 2 cups mayonnaise
- 2 cups sour cream
- 1 tablespoon chopped chives
- ¼ tablespoon red wine vinegar
- ¾ cup crumbled creamy blue cheese, such as Point Reyes
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

1. Make the pecans: Preheat the oven to 350°F. In a large bowl, mix pecans with the butter, Worcestershire, salt, cayenne pepper and 1 tablespoon of the sugar. Spread the nuts in a single layer on a nonstick baking sheet and roast for 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool, then transfer to a bowl and toss with the remaining sugar.
2. Grill the figs: Cut the figs in half lengthwise and toss with the olive oil. Using a hot grill or grill pan, quickly sear the cut side of the figs just until caramelized. Remove and let cool.
3. Make the vinaigrette: In a bowl, mix the mayonnaise with the sour cream, chives and vinegar. Gently stir in the blue cheese and season with salt and pepper.
4. Assemble the salad: Toss the watercress, endives and chervil with the vinaigrette. Place three fig halves in a triangle on a plate and pile the greens in the middle. Garnish with a few candied pecans and serve.

As the Figs Fly

Simon Dolinky's love of fresh produce started after he visited Wisconsin's farmers' markets as a child. Now, as executive chef at Blvd 16 at the Palomar Hotel in Westwood, it's the cornerstone of his menus.

When you buy local, you know your ingredients are getting picked fresh that day, says Dolinky. But it's not just about using the ripest tomatoes or freshest greens; it's also about working directly with the farmers, like Dave Barnes from Temecula's Crows Pass Farm.

"Dave believes so much in what he's doing," says Dolinky. "He's not just trying to unload his stuff on your doorstep—he'll bring things from other small farms, too."

The chef likes Crows Pass Brown Turkey figs this time of year, especially in this salad with blue cheese and candied pecans. The farm only sells directly to chefs and restaurants, but you can find figs at any farmers' market now.





JOSIE LE BALCH *of Josie*



Josie's Tomato Soup

Recipe adapted from Josie Le Balch
Makes 8 servings

5 pounds ripe tomatoes
1 stick unsalted butter
1 medium onion, diced
4 garlic cloves, minced
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
3 thyme sprigs
5 basil leaves
1 bay leaf
5 black peppercorns
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Tomatoes From Heaven

In the early nineties, farmers' markets existed, but few chefs were utilizing them. So in 1992, Josie Le Balch helped organize a meet-and-greet to introduce local farms' produce to local chefs' kitchens. Now market-fresh ingredients are the norm.

Although Le Balch, who opened Santa Monica's Josie Restaurant in 2001, uses fresh, seasonal ingredients on her regular menu, she has a \$45 prix fixe on Wednesdays that features whatever came in from the farms that day.

She buys from many different sources, but when she wants "divine beets" and "unbelievable carrots," she looks to Coastal Organics, a farm in Oxnard.

"Maryanne Carpenter, the owner, has been one of the forefront farmers," says Le Balch. "She always lets you know what they have in the ground, and what they're going to be planting. She keeps that old-world farming stance."

Because they have a dense flesh and few seeds, Coastal's Early Girl tomatoes are Le Balch's favorite when she's making her velvety soup.

1. Combine the tomatoes and 1 quart of water in a large pot over medium heat. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes, or until tomatoes are soft. In a blender or food processor, working in batches, blend the tomatoes and leftover liquid on high speed. Pass the mixture through a strainer to remove the seeds and skins.

2. In a large pot, melt the butter over moderately high heat. Add the onion and cook until translucent and soft, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute longer. Using a whisk, slowly mix the flour into the onion mixture to make a roux. Cook the roux 2 minutes, whisking, until light brown, being careful not to let the flour burn. Slowly whisk in the tomato mixture, being careful that there are no lumps.

3. Tie the thyme, basil, bay leaf and peppercorns into a cheesecloth sachet and add to the soup. Gently simmer the soup over low heat for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove the herb sachet and season with salt and pepper. Strain again and serve.

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AMY SWEENEY *of Ammo*



Green and Yellow Zucchini Salad with Castelvetroano Olives

Recipe adapted from Amy Sweeney
Makes 2 to 4 servings

- 1 green zucchini*
- 1 yellow zucchini*
- 6 Castelvetroano olives, pitted and thinly sliced*
- 8 mint leaves*
- ½ cup flat-leaf parsley leaves*
- 1½ tablespoons fresh lemon juice*
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil*
- Salt and freshly ground pepper*

Using a mandolin, shave the zucchini lengthwise into thin ribbons. Gently mix the ribbons, olives, mint and parsley. Toss in the lemon juice, olive oil, salt and pepper, and serve.

Meet Your Farmers

Earlier this year, chef Amy Sweeney started preparing market-to-table dinners at her Hollywood restaurant, Ammo. But she didn't want to just spotlight the day's best produce—she brought the farmers in, too.

The goal of these quarterly dinners (reasonably priced at \$65 for four courses) is to not only give her customers a great meal, but to introduce them to the people who are responsible for the great ingredients.

“We're so lucky to live in California, where there is so much farming happening,” says Sweeney. “I'm still in shock that some of the local markets have produce shipped in from Chile and New Zealand. We have such abundance here.”

Sweeney admires local farmers like those at Windrose Farm near Paso Robles for their commitment to their product.

She particularly likes their zucchini, which she calls “an underrated vegetable.” Their growing season is long, so you can enjoy her fresh, lemony salad well into October.

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NEAL FRASER *of Grace and BLD*



Grilled Rack of Lamb With White Carrot Puree

Recipe adapted from Neal Fraser

Makes 4 servings

- 1½ pounds Tutti Frutti white carrots, peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces*
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter*
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper*
- 2 racks Sonoma lamb (about 2 pounds)*
- 2 tablespoons chopped thyme*

1. Make the carrot puree: Using a three-quart pot, cover the carrots with water. Season with 1 teaspoon salt, cover and simmer over moderately low heat until soft. Transfer to a blender and add 1 cup of the cooking liquid; blend until smooth. Add more water as needed, until it reaches the consistency of soft polenta. Add the butter and 1 teaspoon salt and blend again. Pass through a fine mesh strainer and set aside.
2. Grill the lamb: Season the lamb with salt and pepper and rub the chopped thyme into the meat. Let sit for 20 minutes. Grill over high heat until cooked to desired doneness, about 5 to 7 minutes per side or until marked. Move the meat to cooler spot on grill to avoid flare-ups. Let the lamb rest for 10 minutes before carving and serving with the carrot puree.

From Dirt to Table

It's hard to be seasonal in L.A., says chef Neal Fraser, because we really don't have seasons. "You can go to the market and find heirloom tomatoes in December and chanterelle mushrooms all year long," he says. "We have an unfair advantage over the rest of the country."

But he puts this advantage good use. At his two Beverly Boulevard restaurants, Grace and BLD, the chef tries to use as much local and sustainable product as possible. To showcase California's bounty, he even introduced the 500 Mile Radius tasting menu at Grace last year (which is still available by request), which features ingredients sourced within 500 miles of the restaurant.

As all chefs know, getting something at the peak of its season (and picked that very day) is much more flavorful than anything shipped, processed or frozen. Take the sweet white carrots from Santa Barbara's Tutti Frutti Farms, for example.

"You don't have to adulterate a great product," says Fraser. "With these little white carrots, you just boil and puree them, and add butter and salt. They taste like pure sugar." And they're the perfect accompaniment to grilled lamb.

