



# In the Kitchen

with Paula Liechty

April 2012

## spring celebrations

Spring celebrations always call for a festive menu to share with family and friends. This leg of lamb recipe will fill your house with tantalizing aromas and will feed a large group, as will the orzo salad. Start preparing the lamb 2 days before you plan on serving it on the 3rd day. The orzo vegetable salad can be varied depending on which vegetables look the freshest at the market and can be made the day before, for the best flavors. Orzo is tiny rice shaped pasta that is used in many soups and salads. This menu that can be used for a brunch, lunch or dinner and completed with a large platter of fresh fruit or a layered fruit salad. The spicy lemon cake will add a note of intrigue and provide new flavor combinations for your guests.



### Orzo Pasta and Vegetable Salad

1 pound orzo, fusilli, shell, or bow-tie pasta, cooked and drained  
½ green bell pepper, cut in thin strips  
½ red bell pepper, cut in thin strips  
½ red onion, finely chopped  
1½ tablespoons oil, plus more  
¼ pound mushrooms, sliced  
1 cup broccoli florets  
2 small zucchini, cut in half lengthwise and sliced  
12 fresh asparagus tips\*

1 basket cherry or grape tomatoes, cut in half  
One 6 ounce jar marinated artichoke hearts, undrained  
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste  
1-2 teaspoons butter  
½ cup pine nuts  
½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese  
Fresh Basil Leaves for garnish  
Dressing (*see recipe below*)

In a large skillet, sauté pepper and onion in oil. When peppers just begin to soften, add sliced mushrooms and stir-fry until slightly cooked. Remove to a large bowl. Stir-fry broccoli for 1-2 minutes, adding another tablespoon of oil if necessary. Add zucchini and cook until tender but still crisp. Add to vegetables in bowl. Stir-fry asparagus tips, adding a touch more oil if necessary. As soon as they turn bright green, re-move to a large serving bowl. Add cherry tomato halves and undrained artichoke hearts to bowl. Season all with salt and freshly ground pepper to taste.

Assemble the Salad: Sauté pine nuts in butter until brown. Drain on paper towel-ing. Combine pasta, vegetables, dressing, and Parmesan cheese. Toss gently but well. Correct seasoning and place in a handsome bowl or platter. Top with pine nuts. Fresh basil leaves would be an attractive garnish.

**\* Paula's Notes:** You may substitute or add Chinese pea pods/sugar snap peas/ green beans with or in place of asparagus tips. If you should be fortunate enough to have any leftover salad, additional Parmesan cheese would freshen it. Salad actually has more flavor the second day.

### Dressing

½ cup parsley leaves  
1 cup fresh basil leaves (or 2 tablespoons dried)  
2 cloves garlic  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
½ cup olive oil

½ cup red wine vinegar  
1 tablespoon dried oregano  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

Combine parsley, basil, garlic, and 2 tablespoons oil in a food processor or blender until well chopped. Add to rest of dressing ingredients.



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## Roasted Leg of Lamb

One 7 to 8 pound bone-in leg of lamb  
Eight 2-inch rosemary sprigs  
6-7 cloves of garlic, cut in half  
1 cup Dijon mustard

About 2 teaspoons Kosher salt  
½ teaspoon pepper  
½ cup (1 stick) butter

**Day 1:** take the lamb out of any wrapping plastic, paper, trays etcetera and put on a large baking sheet. Let lamb to air dry in the refrigerator overnight.

**Day 2:** Prepare the leg of lamb the day before cooking it. Make six or seven one-inch incisions per side into the lamb meat. Insert garlic slices into the cuts. Put 2-inch sprigs of rosemary in about 4 cuts per side. Sprinkle the entire surface of the lamb with salt, pepper, and spread mustard all over. Cut 1 stick of butter into 1 tablespoon cubes and put in a line on top of the roast. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for overnight.

**Day 3:** The following day, remove the plastic wrap. Leave the lamb on the baking sheet and roast it in a preheated 450°F oven (after 15 minutes, turn the temperature down to 425°F for slower roasting), about 12 minutes per pound until a thermometer placed close to the bone but not touching it, registers 125°F for rare or to 130°F for pink- medium rare. Check temperature about 20 minutes earlier.

After about 25 minutes, add some water to the pan. Once there are pan juices, baste the roast every 15 minutes. Let meat rest for at least 20 minutes, loosely covered with foil, before carving and serving. Pour all of pan juices into a saucepan and reheat.

To carve the roast: hold the leg by the bone, at the small end of the roast, cut very thin slices in the same direction as the bone -from the small to the large end of the roast (away from your body). When you hit the bone, turn the roast to a new side and start slicing again, repeat.

Put several slices of meat on each plate and ladle with the sauce-or put the slices of lamb on a serving plate and pass the sauce in a gravy boat.



## White Pepper and Ginger Lemon Cake

Rind of 2 large lemons, finely grated  
½ tablespoon salt  
2 tablespoons + ½ cup lemon juice  
1 teaspoon finely ground white pepper, moderately packed  
½ ounce (a piece about ½-inch x 1-inch) fresh ginger  
8 ounces (2 sticks) butter  
3 cups sifted all-purpose flour

1¼ cups + ½ cup granulated sugar  
¾ teaspoon baking soda  
3 large or extra large eggs  
¾ teaspoon double acting baking powder  
1 cup buttermilk  
Plain bread crumbs (*I use Progresso brand*)

Adjust a rack one-third up from the bottom of the oven and preheat the oven to 325°F. Butter or spray with vegetable oil spray a 10 or 12 cup tube pan (even if the pan has a non-stick finish), then dust with \*fine breadcrumbs (be sure to butter and crumb the center tube--sprinkle the crumbs on the tube with your fingers), then invert it over waxed paper, tap to shake out excess crumbs, and set aside. In a small cup mix the rind and the juice. Grate the fresh ginger and add it to the lemon juice mixture. Sift together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, and pepper, onto waxed paper and set aside.

In the large bowl of an electric mixer beat the butter until soft. Add the sugar and beat for a minute. Then add the eggs one at a time, beating until incorporated after each addition. On low speed add the sifted dry ingredients in three additions alternately with the buttermilk in two additions. Remove bowl from the mixer and stir in the lemon and ginger mixture. Scoop batter into the prepared pan. Smooth the top by briskly rotating the pan first in one direction, then the other. The batter will be rather heavy.

Bake for 1 hour and 15 to 20 minutes until a cake tester inserted gently in the middle comes out clean and dry. If you have used a 12-cup cake pan the cake will not rise to the top of the pan--it's all right. Make Lemon Glaze. This should be mixed as soon as the cake is put in the oven. Stir the ½ cup lemon juice and ½ cup granulated sugar together and let stand while the cake is baking.

Let the cake stand-in the pan for 5 to 10 minutes. Cover with a rack, turn the pan and rack over; remove the pan, and place the cake on the rack over a large piece of aluminum foil (to catch drippings of the glaze). When the cake is removed from the pan, stir the glaze and, with a pastry brush, brush the glaze all over the cake (including the hole in the middle). The cake will absorb it all. If some of the glaze drips onto the foil, move the cake and the rack and pour the glaze back over the cake. Let stand until completely cool. Cover with plastic wrap. This cake is even better if it ages for a day or two--the spicy hotness cools a bit as it ages.