

# Your Food

## THE COWGIRL CHEF

# Elegant and earthy

### Drink of the week

If previous awards shows are any indication (and they usually are), *Avatar* should do very, very well Sunday night at the Academy Awards. Serve this gin drink, from the makers of Bombay Sapphire, at your Oscar-watching party and toast all the winners.



BOMBAY SAPPHIRE

### Avatar blue Pandora Makes 1 drink

- 1 ounce Bombay Sapphire gin
- 1 ounce blue Curaçao liqueur
- 1 ounce peach schnapps

Add equal parts to ice in shaker. Shake well. Strain into chilled martini glass. Garnish with orange slice.  
**Nutritional analysis per drink:** 206 calories, no fat, no carbohydrates, no protein, no cholesterol, 1 milligram sodium, no dietary fiber, 0 percent of calories from fat.

— Stephanie Allmon

### Slam-dunk dinner for 2

If your partner eases away from the dinner table at record speed, don't take it personally. It's almost March Madness time, and the annual college basketball rite is a powerful lure for anyone with an interest in sports. Rather than begrudge the empty chair at mealtime, create a game-time meal for two, like these Parmesan chicken fingers.



JIM FROST

### Parmesan chicken fingers Makes 2 servings

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 1/3 cup panko (large, crisp Japanese bread crumbs)
- 3 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 large boneless, skinless chicken breast half, cut into finger-size strips
- Tomatillo-mayonnaise dip (follows)

1. Combine melted butter, paprika, salt and pepper in a small, shallow bowl. Mix together panko and cheese on a plate. Dip chicken strips in melted butter, then gently pat on panko mixture to lightly coat.

2. Place chicken fingers on nonstick baking sheet. Bake in preheated 425-degree oven for 14 to 15 minutes, turning over halfway through. Remove from oven and arrange on serving platter with dip in the center.

**Nutritional analysis per serving:** 255 calories, 16 grams fat, 10 grams carbohydrates, 21 grams protein, 81 milligrams cholesterol, 307 milligrams sodium and 56 percent of calories from fat.

### Tomatillo-mayonnaise dip Makes 2 servings

- 2 tablespoons tomatillo salsa
- 2 tablespoons low-fat mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon minced scallion (green part only) or chives

1. Combine salsa and mayonnaise in a bowl. Sprinkle scallion on top.

**Nutritional analysis per serving:** 20 calories, 1 gram total fat, 3 grams carbohydrates and 240 milligrams sodium and 45 percent of calories from fat.

— Tribune Media Services



Use whatever mushrooms you have on hand, or mix them.

### Wild mushroom soup

I used four kinds of mushrooms here because they were available, but if you can't find these, no worries. Use whatever mushrooms you can find — white or baby bellas, or a mix of the two — will work nicely.  
**Serves 6**

- 1 big handful dried cèpes (porcini), about 4 ounces
- Olive oil for sautéing
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons shallots, minced
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme (plus a bit more for garnish)
- 1 big handful cremini mushrooms (baby bellas), about 8 ounces, cleaned and sliced
- 1 big handful chanterelles, about 8 ounces, cleaned and sliced
- 1 big handful shiitakes, about 8 ounces, cleaned and sliced
- 1 cup white wine
- 6 cups chicken, beef or vegetable stock, or water
- 1 cup cream
- Lemon zest (for garnish)
- Toasted croutons (for garnish)

1. Put dried porcini in a bowl and pour hot water over them to reconstitute. This should take about 20-30 minutes.

2. In a soup pot, drizzle a bit of olive oil, and add the butter, shallots, garlic and fresh thyme. Turn heat to medium-low, and cook until shallots begin to turn translucent, 3-5 minutes. At this

point, remove about 4 teaspoons of the mushrooms to use as a garnish. Set aside.

3. Add all of the mushrooms except the cèpes, along with the wine, scraping the bottom of the pot to release any brown bits. Turn up heat and cook for about five minutes.

4. Now add the stock, the cèpes and the water used to reconstitute them — that you've strained through a fine sieve lined with a paper towel to catch all of the dirt. Simmer for 30 minutes. With a hand blender, purée the soup. Before serving, add the cream.

5. Serve with toasted croutons — these are simply thinly sliced baguettes that I've toasted — a few reserved mushrooms, along with lemon zest and a few tiny thyme leaves.  
**Nutritional analysis per serving:** 521 calories, 22 grams fat, 77 grams carbohydrates, 22 grams protein, 45 milligrams cholesterol, 110 milligrams sodium, 1 gram dietary fiber, 33 percent of calories from fat.

### Here are two simple recipes for folks who are simply mad about mushrooms

By ELLISE PIERCE

Special to the Star-Telegram

PARIS — You'd be hard-pressed to walk into any Paris bistro or restaurant and not find mushroom *something* on the menu, any time of year. Sadly, the season for fresh cèpes (aka porcini) just ended, it's still a few months early for morilles (morels), but creminis, shiitakes and chanterelles are easy to find, as are the city's namesake fungus, les champignons de Paris, otherwise known as the button, or white mushroom. There's even a stand at my neighborhood market, President Wilson, that sells just mushrooms and potatoes.

They're crazy about mushrooms, these people.

Last spring, along with a handful of journalists and Yannick Alleno, the Michelin-starred chef at Le Meurice, I visited a champignonniere just north of the city, where the local mushrooms are grown the old-fashioned way — deep inside dimly lit caves, in flat beds of good old French dirt, mixed with straw and horse manure.

Turns out these mushrooms were discovered when Baron Haussmann, who was charged with reforming the medieval city in the late 1800s, ordered up some stone and noticed, when it arrived at the building site, that it was covered with white mushrooms. And so they become known as les champignons de Paris.

Crisper and more earthy-tast-

ing than most of the white mushrooms that I've tasted, these are my go-to mushrooms for just about anything, since: 1.) my boyfriend, Xavier, loves them almost more than chocolate, and 2.) They're inexpensive, usually less than 1 euro for a small 9-ounce box — enough to throw into an omelet.

Here are two easy mushroom recipes — one fancy, and the other casual, for every day. The wild mushroom soup is so rich with mushroomy flavor and aroma that it almost feels like you're sitting in the middle of a forest. It's a perfect first course. The crustless mushroom, leek and goat cheese quiche can be made with any mushrooms that you have on hand, but I use the white ones and quarter them, so they're nice and chunky. Because there's no crust, this classic little quiche is about the simplest thing that you can possibly imagine — yet it feels so fancy, from the very first bite.

How very French, right?



SPECIAL TO THE STAR-TELEGRAM/ELLISE PIERCE

### Crustless mushroom, leek and goat cheese quiche

A super-easy quiche that you can put together in less than half an hour. You won't even miss the crust!

**Serves 6**

- Olive oil for sautéing
- 1 leek, thinly sliced and well rinsed
- 16 ounces mushrooms, quartered
- 3 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 cups milk
- 1/3 cup flour
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 8 ounces goat cheese, crumbled
- Flour for dusting baking pan
- Butter for greasing baking pan

1. Flour and butter a 10-inch tart pan and preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large skillet, drizzle a bit of the olive oil and add the sliced leek. Turn up the heat to medium-high, and cook

until the leeks start to become translucent, about 5-10 minutes.

2. Add the quartered mushrooms to the skillet, being very careful not to overcrowd them. Work in batches if necessary. (Overcrowded mushrooms won't brown.) Once the mushrooms are all cooked, set them aside.

3. In a large bowl, mix together the eggs, milk, flour, salt and pepper. Stir in the mushrooms and leeks, and gently fold in the goat-cheese crumbles. Pour the mixture into the floured, buttered tart pan and bake for approximately 45 minutes or until set.

4. Let rest for 10 minutes before serving. Can be eaten at room temperature.

**Nutritional analysis per serving:** 341 calories, 22 grams fat, 16 grams carbohydrates, 20 grams protein, 152 milligrams cholesterol, 369 milligrams sodium, 1 gram dietary fiber, 58 percent of calories from fat.

ELLISE PIERCE IS THE COWGIRL CHEF. READ HER BLOG AND WATCH HER COOKING VIDEOS ON WWW.COWGIRL-CHEF.COM. YOU CAN ALSO FOLLOW HER ON TWITTER: HTTP://TWITTER.COM/COWGIRL-CHEF.



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