



These first few days of spring have been glorious! Signs of spring are everywhere. The trees are budding, flowers are blooming and the marsh grass is once again turning bright green. The temperatures are finally warming up and hibernating animals (and human beings!) are coming out of their dens for the tastes and smells of all things new. The days are getting longer and we're all feeling excited and energized. This week's dishes are bright and bursting with fresh flavors that announce the arrival of the season. Spring has sprung!

p.s. Please join me for CODA's 2010 Carolina Spring Fling on Saturday, April 10th from 6:30 until 9:30 p.m. For more tickets and information visit www.carolinaspringfling.com.

Goat Cheese Souffles in Phyllo Cups with Frisee Salad

For the phyllo cups:

6 phyllo sheets, thawed if frozen

½ stick unsalted butter, melted

For the souffle filling:

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup whole milk

2 teaspoons Dijon mustard

2 large eggs, separated

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, divided

5 ounces ($\frac{2}{3}$ cup) soft mild goat cheese, crumbled

For the salad:

1- $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons cider vinegar

1- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons Dijon mustard

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt

5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

8 ounces (8 cups) frisee salad, torn into bite-sized pieces

6 radishes, cut into very thin wedges

3 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly butter a muffin pan with 12 muffin cups. Place 1 phyllo sheet on a work surface and brush with some butter. Top with 2 more sheets of phyllo, brushing each with butter. Cut buttered stack into 6 (4-1/2-inch) squares with a sharp knife. Line 6 of the muffin cups with a square. Repeat in the same manner, making 6 additional phyllo cups. Bake cups in middle of oven until golden, about 8 minutes, then thoroughly cool in pan on a rack. (4 cups are extra, in case of breakage.) Increase oven temperature to 400 degrees. While phyllo cups are cooling, make the filling. Melt butter in a 3-quart heavy saucepan over low heat, then whisk in flour. Cook roux, whisking, for 3 minutes. Add milk in a stream, whisking, and bring to a boil, whisking. Reduce heat and simmer, whisking occasionally about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and whisk in mustard, egg yolks and 1/4 cup Parmigiano-Reggiano until combined, then fold in goat cheese. Beat egg white in a large bowl with an electric mixer until they just hold stiff peaks. Fold one third of whites into sauce to lighten, then fold in remaining whites. Spoon batter into 8 phyllo cups and sprinkle with remaining Parmigiano-Reggiano. Bake in middle of oven until souffles are puffed and golden, about 15 minutes. In the meantime, make the salad. Whisk together vinegar, mustard and salt in a bowl, then add oil in a slow stream, whisking until emulsified. Just before souffles are ready, toss frisee and radishes in a large bowl with just enough dressing to coat. Mound salad onto 8 plates and sprinkle with chives, then make a small nest in the center of each. Place a souffle cup in each salad and serve immediately. Serves 8.

Chicken Piccata with Lemon, Capers and Artichoke Hearts

4 (4-ounce) boneless, skinless, chicken breast halves

Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1/3 cup all-purpose flour

1/2 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest

1/2 teaspoon paprika

1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

2 tablespoons olive oil

1/4 cup fresh lemon juice

1/2 cup dry white wine

1/2 cup chicken stock

1 (14-ounce) can artichoke hearts, drained and quartered

1/4 cup capers, drained

Pound chicken until 1/4-inch thick. Season with salt and pepper. In a shallow dish, combine flour, lemon zest, paprika and garlic powder. Mix well. Add chicken and turn to coat. Remove chicken from flour mixture and shake off excess flour. Heat oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken and saute 2 to 3 minutes per side, until golden brown. Add lemon juice, wine and chicken stock and bring to a simmer. Simmer for 5 minutes, until chicken is cooked through and sauce thickens. Add artichoke hearts and capers and simmer 1 minute to heat through. Serves 4.

Spring Carrots with Apricots and Pistachios

2 bunches carrots, peeled and cut into small chunks

3/4 cup water

1/3 cup diced dried apricots

Zest of 1 lemon

6 large cloves garlic, chopped

Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

Juice of 1/2 lemon

1/3 cup shelled and chopped salted pistachios

In a 12-inch skillet, combine carrots, water, apricots, lemon zest, garlic and salt and pepper. Bring to a simmer, cover and gently cook for about 8 minutes or until carrots are barely tender. Uncover and boil until they are cooked through and the liquid becomes a glaze coating the carrots. Taste for seasoning, then stir in the butter. Turn into a serving bowl and sprinkle with lemon juice and pistachios. Serves 6 to 8.

Chocolate Pots De Creme

2 cups whipping cream

1/2 cup whole milk

5 ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, chopped

6 large egg yolks

1/3 cup sugar

Sweetened whipped cream

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Bring cream and milk to simmer in a heavy medium saucepan over medium heat. Remove from heat. Add chocolate and whisk until melted and smooth. Whisk yolks and sugar in separate bowl to blend. Gradually whisk in hot chocolate mixture. Strain mixture into another bowl. Cool for 10 minutes, skimming any foam from the surface. Divide custard mixture among six 3/4-cup custard cups. Cover each with foil and place in a large baking pan. Add enough hot water to come halfway up sides of cups. Bake until custards

are set, about 55 minutes. Remove from water and remove foil. Chill custards until cold. Serve with a dollop of sweetened whipped cream on top. Serves 6.

Spring Fling Cocktail

1-1/3 cups sugar

1 cup fresh mint leaves

2 lemons, sliced into rounds

1 cucumber, sliced into rounds

2 cups vodka

2 cups fresh lemon juice

2 cups club soda

In a large pitcher, combine the sugar, mint, lemons and cucumber. Add the vodka and lemon juice and let stand for 30 minutes. Stir to dissolve the sugar, then chill for another 30 minutes. When ready to serve, add the club soda and serve in rocks glasses filled with ice. Serves 6 to 8.

The writer owns Catering by Debbi Covington and is the author of the cookbook, Dining Under the Carolina Moon. Debbi's website address is www.cateringbydebbicovington.com . She may be reached at 525-0350 or by email at debbic@cateringbydebbicovington.com.