

Gourmet on the Run

A Wine and Kitchen Shop

137 Marketplace Avenue ▪ Mooresville, NC 28117 ▪ 704-696-0030

Spring 2008

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Hello!

I hope everyone's New Year is off to a great start and that you're looking forward to spring and warmer weather. My year is off to a good start ... after what seemed like a lifetime of waiting, we finally received final inspection for the kitchen on January 23rd. We decided the best way to celebrate (and kick off the new year) was to do something good so we held a cooking class to raise money for charity. We hosted our own "Iron Chef" competition with Battle: Super Bowl Man Food. John, my challenger, and I competed to see whose Super Bowl dip and chili reigned supreme. Although our chili recipes tied, John's Dog Food dip was rated the best so he was named the overall winner (at least until next time). I've included my chili recipe on page 2. John's recipe is posted on our website: www.gourmetontherun.com. Check our blog (www.gourmetontherun.blogspot.com) for additional details and photos of the battle.

Since the kitchen has been completed, we've done several wine tastings that were very informative and fun! Our next formal wine tasting will be on April 17th – Todd from the Country Vintner will help us explore the world's Rieslings and maybe change our perception of Rieslings. Check out page 2 for a primer on Rieslings. With spring right around the corner, some of us have started worrying about the grass and thinking about flowers. Not me! I'm thinking about what herbs I want to grow on the back deck. Take a look at page 3 for my top ten list of herbs to grow and use this spring and summer. I've also included some basic differences between fresh and dried herbs, as well as general guidelines on selecting, washing and storing herbs on page 4.

In January, Mom and I went to Atlanta to shop for spring and summer. We focused on stocking the kitchen and enhancing the wine drinking experience by picking up additional products from some of our favorite manufacturers including Fortessa, Kuhn Rikon, Oxo and Zyliss. We also couldn't resist some of the fun new collections from Boston Warehouse, Cypress and MoMo Panache. We hope you like the Josephine collection from April Cornell (expected later in the spring) as much as we do! We were very adventurous with our food selections and think you'll enjoy some of new exotic flavors of the season from Stonewall Kitchen and Robert Rothschild Farms including Dulce de Leche and Pineapple Rum Raisin dessert sauces, Mango Chutney, Caribbean Jerk seasoning and Harissa Moroccan sauce.

I finally finished our cooking class schedule for the spring (see insert) and hope to schedule some more events in the next few weeks. Please check our website for periodic updates! Hope to see you soon!

Linda

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Featured Recipe:

Linda's Not From Scratch Chili

INGREDIENTS

2 lbs ground beef
1 can tomato sauce (15 oz)
2 cans petite diced tomatoes (28 oz each)
1 can Rotel diced tomatoes (10 oz)
1 can light red kidney beans (16 oz), rinsed
1 pkg 2-Alarm Chili Kit

Notes:

- Cayenne can be omitted for a milder flavor.
- Medium or hot Rotel tomatoes can be used to make spicier.
- Serve chili with Scoops, Hint of Lime tortilla chips or corn bread.
- Serve chili with grated cheddar cheese, diced onions and sour cream.

METHOD

1. Cook ground beef in a large non-stick skillet over medium heat. Drain excess grease.
2. In a large dutch-oven or heavy-bottomed stock pot, add cooked ground beef, tomato sauce, diced tomatoes, Rotel tomatoes and kidney beans. Add 8 ounces of water and stir to combine.
3. Add all seasoning packets except masa flour and stir to combine. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat and reduce to a simmer.
4. Cover pot and cook for about 45 minutes stirring occasionally.
5. In a small bowl, stir masa flour and 1/4 cup water until a thick liquid forms. Add to chili, stirring to combine. Cook for another 15 minutes.
6. Serve warm with your favorite chili fixings.

"Penicillin cures, but wine makes people happy."

– Alexander Fleming (1881-1955), Scottish bacteriologist credited with discovering Penicillin in 1928

Wine Selection: Riesling

Riesling is a white wine grape variety that originated in the Rhine region of Germany. Its small, round grapes have tender greenish yellow skins and grow in compact clusters on the vine. It flourishes in colder climates and is one of the few grape varieties that are considered "terrior expressive" where the character of the wine closely reflects the area where it is grown. Riesling grapes tend to be aromatic with a flowery or perfume aroma and can be highly acidic which provides wine makers tremendous latitude in creating dry, semi-sweet, sweet and sparkling wines.



Most of the world's Riesling is grown in Germany, the Alsace region of France and Austria. It is also grown successfully in northern Italy, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada. Although in terms of volume it is the 20th most grown varietal, it is the number 3 white wine in terms of consumption, behind Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. Rieslings, which are rarely ever blended or aged in oak, will vary based on where it was grown and how long it was left to ripen on the vine. German Rieslings often display a balance between fruit and mineral flavors and are classified based on the sugar content (ripeness) at harvest which range from *trocken* (dry) to *auslese* (sweet) to *trockenbeerenauslese* (very sweet). Alsatian Rieslings tend to be very dry with cleansing acidity and have a higher alcohol content.

While most Rieslings are consumed young when they are fruity and aromatic, they can be aged for many years due to their high level of acidity and sugar content. Rieslings are very food friendly and can be paired with cheese, pork and seafood as well as spicy cuisines including Thai, Chinese and Indian.

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Top 10 List: Herbs to Grow this Summer

1. **Mint** – Peppermint and spearmint are two of the more popular species in the mint family which contains over 25 varieties including aromatic herbs such as basil, rosemary, sage, oregano and catnip. Spearmint, the more common of the two mints, has gray-green leaves and is milder in flavor and aroma than peppermint. Fresh mint is used in sweet dishes (jellies, syrups and ice creams), savory dishes (lamb with mint sauce), drinks (mint julep, mojito, tea) and is often used to garnish desserts. Mint does not blend well with other herbs and is usually confined to specific dishes.
2. **Basil** – There are over 12 varieties of basil including sweet basil, lemon basil and Opal basil. Sweet basil, the most common, has large, tender green leaves and grows easily in warm climates in the summer months. Fresh basil is a key ingredient in Italian cooking and pairs well with garlic and tomato dishes (pesto, bruschetta, tomato and mozzarella salad). Fresh basil is sensitive to high temperatures and should be added at the last minute during cooking.
3. **Rosemary** – Rosemary has been used since 500 B.C. for culinary and medicinal purposes. The rosemary bush has woody stems and silver-green needle shaped leaves that smell of lemon and pine. Fresh rosemary is often used with roasted and grilled meats including lamb, but is also used for seasoning soups, vegetables, fish, egg dishes and stuffings. Rosemary can tolerate high temperatures and can be added anytime during cooking.
4. **Sage** – Like rosemary, sage has been used for culinary and medicinal purposes for centuries. The sage shrub has woody stems and fuzzy, narrow, oval shaped leaves that are gray-green in color. Fresh sage is used to season poultry, pork and game. Sage can also tolerate high temperatures and can be added anytime during cooking. Like mint, sage does not blend well with most other herbs but will stand up to rosemary and thyme.
5. **Oregano** – Oregano was made popular in the US by soldiers returning from Italy after WWII. The two most common types of oregano are Mediterranean and Mexican oregano. Mediterranean oregano, the milder of the two and more popular, has small green leaves and purple flowers. Oregano is a key ingredient in Italian and Greek cuisines and is used to flavor tomato sauces, grilled meats and vegetables.
6. **Cilantro** – Used mostly in Asian, Caribbean and South American dishes, cilantro is the North American name for the leaves and stems of the coriander plant. Cilantro leaves are flat and bright green and are often mistaken for flat-leaf or Italian parsley. Fresh cilantro is used for chutneys, salsas (mango, black bean, citrus), pico de gallo and guacamole. Cilantro cannot withstand heat and should be added at the last minute. Unlike other herbs, cilantro cannot be found in dried form.
7. **Chives** – The smallest member of the onion family, chives have slender, hollow green stems and a mild onion flavor. Fresh chives are often used to add flavor to eggs, poultry, potatoes, fish and soups. Chives have a low tolerance to heat and should be added at the end of cooking. Chives can be easily snipped with scissors and used as a garnish.
8. **Thyme** – Also a member of the mint family, there are several varieties of thyme, the most popular being garden thyme. Thyme grows in a bush and has gray-green leaves that have a minty, light lemon aroma. Fresh thyme can be used to flavor vegetables, meats, poultry and fish dishes as well as soups and green sauces. Thyme is a key ingredient in French cuisine and is one of the herbs in a bouquet garni.
9. **Italian Parsley** – There are over thirty varieties of parsley, the two most common being curly leaf parsley and flat leaf or Italian parsley. Italian parsley is the stronger flavored of the two and is more often used for cooking than curly leaf parsley which is often used as a garnish. Use fresh flat leaf parsley in soups, cream and tomato sauces, poultry, meats, shellfish and vegetables. Parsley stems are one of the three basic herbs used in a bouquet garni.
10. **Dill** – A member of the parsley family, dill is another centuries-old herb. Dill grows up to a height of three feet and has feathery green leaves called dill weed. Fresh dill does not withstand heat well and should be added toward the end of the cooking time. Dill is often used in Scandinavian and central European dishes especially fish and potatoes. Use fresh dill to season salads, vegetables, meats, fish and sauces.

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Do You Know?

- An **herb** is an aromatic plant whose leaves, stems or flowers are used as a flavoring agent. Herbs have been used for culinary, medicinal and sometime spiritual purposes for centuries. Herbs can be used either dried or fresh.
- A **spice** is the bark, roots, seeds, buds or berries of an aromatic plant that is used for flavoring, usually in dried form, either whole or ground.

- A **bouquet garni** is a small bundle of fresh herbs, usually parsley, thyme and bay leaves, wrapped in cheesecloth and tied with twine to introduce flavorings, seasonings and aromatics to stocks, sauces, soups and stews. A standard bouquet garni contains parsley stems, celery, thyme and leeks.



Cooking School Basics – Using and Storing Herbs

Whenever possible use fresh herbs over dried herbs for the best flavor. If you must use dried herbs, make sure they are stored in an airtight container and away from direct sunlight and heat. Most dried herbs will last longer than the 6 month shelf life suggested by the manufacturer – always check for freshness and potency before using. If substituting dried herbs for fresh, the general rule of thumb is to use a 1: 3 ratio of dried to fresh (e.g. 1 tsp dried parsley can be substituted for 3 tsp or 1 TBSP of fresh parsley). Check the package for the manufacturers suggested substitution ratio.

When using fresh herbs, delicate herbs including basil, parsley, chives, dill, etc. should be chopped, snipped or torn and added at the end of the cooking process to maximize flavor. Sturdier herbs including rosemary, sage and oregano can be added earlier in the cooking cycle. Some herbs including bay leaf must be removed prior to serving. Dried herbs will be sturdier than fresh herbs and can tolerate longer cooking times.

If you have an herb garden, pick as much as needed for the recipe prior to cooking. Wash thoroughly and allow to dry prior to using. If you are buying fresh herbs, make sure the leaves are not wilted and there are no black markings on the leaves or stems. Always wash the herbs before using. Most herbs can be rinsed under water including thyme and chives, however some will require soaking in a bowl of cold water to remove any residue dirt or silt such as parsley and cilantro. Left over herbs should be wrapped in a damp paper towel and stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Use within a few days to prevent spoilage.

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