

FROM THE FRONT

Nicoise Salad

"I fell in love with this simple yet filling salad when I first visited Provence a few decades ago," says chef Marc-André Choquette of Tableau at the Loden Hotel.

Showing the best of warm-weather ingredients, like young nugget potatoes, fresh-picked green beans and tiny Nicoise olives, Choquette has garnished this beautiful salad with lightly seared local albacore tuna tossed in a tomato vinaigrette.

This salad is summer at its best.

- 1 tablespoon (15 mL) vegetable oil
  - 1 pound (454 g) albacore tuna filet
  - 4 yellow nugget potatoes
  - handful of French green beans
  - 2 to 3 sun-dried tomatoes, packed in olive oil, drained
  - ¼ cup (60 mL) Nicoise olives
  - ¼ English cucumber, seeded, peeled and cut in ½-inch (1-cm) cubes
  - 2 heads butter lettuce
  - 2 hard-boiled large eggs
  - ½ cup (125 mL) tomato dressing (see recipe below)
- In a medium-sized pan, heat vegetable oil over medium-high heat. Carefully place the tuna into the pan and sear each side until cooked on all sides. For a rare tuna, sear for about 1 minute on each side. Reserve. Bring a small pot of water to a boil. Cook the potatoes in boiling water until



GERRY KAHMANN/PNG

tender (about 10 minutes) then allow potatoes to cool in cooking liquid. Reserve. Bring a small pot of water to a boil. Cook green beans until just tender (about 2 minutes) then plunge into ice water. Allow beans to cool, then cut into bite size pieces. Cut the egg into quarters (one half per serving). In a large bowl combine all vegetables together and toss with the tomato dressing. Divide and transfer vegetables and pile on serving plate. Slice the tuna and set equal portions on each plate on top of vegetables.

**Tomato dressing**

- ½ cup (125 mL) tomato vinegar

(available at specialty stores)

- 1 tablespoon (15 mL) Dijon mustard
  - 1 cup (250 mL) extra-virgin olive oil
  - 1 tablespoon (15 mL) honey
  - ¼ teaspoon (1 mL) cayenne pepper
  - ¼ teaspoon (1 mL) smoked paprika
  - ¼ teaspoon (1 mL) sweet paprika
- Combine all ingredients together minus the olive oil. Whisk well and slowly add the olive oil in steady stream.

Makes 4 servings

Plah Moo Yan (Roasted Pork or Prawn Salad with Chili Jam)

This rustic northern Thai-style salad is served at Angus An's Maenam restaurant in Kitsilano. The pork is marinated with coconut cream, palm sugar and fish sauce and slow-roasted until fork-tender, ready for shredding, similar to the Mexican carnitas. Tossed with aromatic herbs such as the heady sawtooth coriander and lemon grass, this is a wonderful salad that can be served with our fresh local spot prawns.

**Roasted pork:**

- ½ cup (125 mL) coconut cream
  - 1 small round or 3 tablespoons (45 mL) palm sugar
  - 3 tablespoons (45 mL) fish sauce
  - 2 to 3 lb. (1 to 1½ kg) pork shoulder, trimmed
- Rub pork shoulder, skin on, with coconut cream, palm sugar, and fish sauce. (If the palm sugar is hard, you can melt it with the cream to get a smooth mixture). Score the skin for better crackling, and cover loosely with aluminum foil to roast in 350 F (170 C) oven for about 2 hours. Remove cover and roast for another hour, or until tender. Remove from oven and allow to rest for about 1 hour,

and shred with two forks or by hand. Take the skin off and fry for crackling, to use as garnish.

**Chili jam dressing:**

- 10 small green Thai chilies
  - 2 small red Thai bird's eye chilies
  - 3 to 4 tablespoons (45 to 60 mL) coarsely chopped coriander roots
  - 2 cloves garlic
  - 1 tablespoon (15 mL) chili paste
  - ¼ cup (60 mL) sugar
  - ½ cup (125 mL) lime juice
  - ½ cup (125 mL) fish sauce
  - zest of one kaffir lime
  - juice of two kaffir limes
- Make the dressing in a mortar and pestle by chopping all ingredients into smallish pieces (2-3 mm). Ground the aromatics (chilies, coriander root, garlic) first and once a paste-like consistency has been achieved, add sugar to dissolve the fibres further. Stir in the fish sauce, chili paste, and lime juice. Add the kaffir lime zest and juice to taste. The dressing should taste equally sweet, sour and hot, so add more sugar, chili paste or lime juice as necessary.

**Salad:**

- ½ cup (125 mL) chopped young lotus stems (optional)
  - 1 cup (250 mL) fried shallots
  - 1 cup (250 mL) finely sliced lemon grass
  - 1 cup (250 mL) finely julienned kaffir lime leaves
  - handful of mint leaves
  - handful of cilantro leaves
  - handful of pak chi farang (sawtooth coriander)
- In a large mixing bowl, place the shredded pork and herbs into a large mixing bowl and toss with half of the dressing. Serve with remaining dressing on the side.

**Plah Gong (Spot Prawn Salad with Chili Jam)**

Substitute pork in the salad above with local spot prawns. 2 to 3 lbs. (1 to ½ kg) live spot prawns

Kill the prawns by submerging them in cold water for a few minutes. Grill the prawns over charcoal grill for about a minute; do not overcook. Once grilled, cut the prawns in half down the belly, keeping the head on, toss with all the herbs/aromatics, and season with dressing.

Serves 4-6, family style

Vegetable Salad with Miso Dressing

One of my favourite Indonesian dishes is gado-gado, the vegetable salad smothered with a spiced peanut dressing. With so many people allergic to nuts these days, this Japanese-inspired recipe makes a great alternative. The dressing can also be used as a glaze for barbecued salmon.

- 1½ cups (375 mL) awase or saikyo white miso
- ½ cup (125 mL) sake
- 1 cup (250 mL) mirin
- ½ cup (80 mL) sugar
- 1 teaspoon (5 mL) minced ginger
- 2 tablespoons (30 mL) toasted sesame seeds
- 1 tablespoon (15 mL) sesame oil
- 1 cup (250 mL) green beans, trimmed and cut on bias, 3-inch (8-cm) lengths
- 1½ cups (375 mL) cauliflower florets
- 1½ cups (375 mL) broccoli florets

1 stalk celery, thinly sliced ¼-inch thick on bias

Japanese chili pepper or shichimi togarashi, to taste

Combine miso, sake, mirin, sugar and ginger in a saucepan over medium heat. Bring to boiling point, reduce heat and continue to simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent burning. Remove and cool. Stir in sesame seeds and sesame oil. Refrigerate covered until chilled. This can be kept in an air-tight container for two to three weeks.

Bring a large saucepan of water to a boil and add broccoli, then cauliflower and finally green beans and quickly blanch until crunch-tender. Do not overcook. Drain under running cold water and drain well. Lightly dry the vegetables and place into a mixing bowl with the celery. Toss with ¼ cup (60 mL) of the dressing and sprinkle with togarashi, to taste.

Makes 4 servings

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