

AT THE MARKET

# Inspired by 4th St. Bistro, a custardy bed for cherries

By Laura Longero  
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*At the Market runs through farmers market season with recipes for dishes that use seasonal produce.*

I've always had a penchant for red fruits: give me a strawberry or raspberry, and I'm a happy girl. But cherries are really among my favorites. They remind me of summers growing up, eating cherries with my mother, sisters and cherry-aficionado father — and spitting the pits into the grass.

The other evening, over dinner at 4th St. Bistro with my husband for his birthday, we tried chef Natalie Sellers' cherry clafoutis. I loved the delicate custard with cherries poking through served in its own little dish. I was inspired to make it myself, so we picked up cherries from the farmers market at the Grove last Sunday.

The recipe for custard and cherries baked in a skillet (clafoutis aux cerises) comes from "The Cooking of Southwest

France" by Paula Wolfert (2005, Wiley). I made the clafoutis the way Wolfert says it's traditionally done in Limousin, France, by not pitting the cherries.

If you decide to pit the cherries, she suggests rolling them in sugar and placing in the freezer so their juices don't bleed out during baking.

**CHERRY CLAFOUTIS**

1 pound sweet cherries (about 3 cups), pitted or not pitted

Grated zest of 1/2 lemon, organic if available

1/4 cup sugar, divided

1/2 cup (4 ounces) all-purpose flour, pastry flour OR whole wheat pastry flour, plus 1 tablespoon for the skillet

Pinch salt

4 1/2 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature, divided

3 eggs

2 cups warm milk, divided

2 tablespoons Armagnac OR Cognac\*

1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Confectioners' sugar



Cherry clafoutis — cherries in thick batter — is baked in a traditional cast-iron skillet. The cherries are stemmed, then pitted or left intact. ANDY BARRON/RGJ

Early in the day, rinse and dry the cherries. Stem and, if desired, pit the fruit; traditionally, this dessert is made with the pits in.

Line a 1-quart freezer container with paper towels and pile in the cherries. Sprinkle with the lemon zest and 3 tablespoons of the sugar. Cover and shake to

distribute the sugar. Freeze for 1 to 2 hours.

Meanwhile, in a mixing bowl, combine the flour, salt, 3 tablespoons of the butter, the eggs and 1/4 cup of the warm milk, whisking to blend thoroughly. Gradually add the remaining milk and whisk until smooth. Stir in the Armagnac and vanilla.

Cover and let the batter stand at room temperature for at least 1 hour. (This will encourage a small amount of fermentation, which allows the batter to rise to the top of the skillet during baking.)

Use 3/4 tablespoon of the butter to grease a 9-inch, straight-sided ovenproof skillet, preferably well-

seasoned cast iron. Dust the pan with 1 tablespoon flour; tap out to remove any excess.

Preheat the oven to 425 F. Arrange the cherries — with sugar and zest — in the pan in a single layer. Whisk the batter to a good froth and spoon over the cherries. Set the skillet in the top third of the oven and bake for 20 minutes; the surface will be barely set.

Sprinkle the remaining 1 tablespoon sugar over the clafoutis and dot with the remaining 3/4 tablespoon butter divided into small bits.

Continue to bake for 20 more minutes, or until well puffed, golden brown and set. Test by inserting a skewer into the center; it is done if it comes out clean.

Transfer to a rack and let cool before serving lukewarm, at room temperature or chilled. Sift powdered sugar on top of clafoutis to serve. Serves 6.

**Variation:** Tart cherry clafoutis. If substituting tart cherries, omit the lemon zest and double the sugar.

\*Ben's Fine Wine & Spirits, 901 W. Fourth St., has a good selection of sample-size bottles.

WEEKNIGHT COOKING

## An easy mint and lamb dish made for warm-weather cooking

By J.M. Hirsch  
Associated Press

Americans don't tend to think of mint as a savory seasoning. After all, it does go so nicely with chocolate.

In the rest of the world, however, it frequently appears on the dinner table. One reason is that its sweet-peppery freshness and deliciously pungent aroma do such a nice job of cutting through heavy and fatty foods like roasted meats. That's why you'll often see mint paired with roasted lamb.

But summer is here and nobody wants to crank up the oven to roast anything. So, I came up with this simple, weeknight-friendly recipe for lamb chops that get topped with a tzatziki-like yogurt sauce flavored with fresh mint, lemon juice, garlic and shallot.

Best yet, though the recipe calls for stove top cooking, these chops could just as easily be tossed on the grill. If so, aim for about 3 minutes per side.

**LAMB CHOPS WITH MINT-YOGURT SAUCE**

1 cup plain Greek-style yogurt

2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 shallot, minced

1 tablespoon lemon juice

Salt and ground black pepper

1 tablespoon ground cumin

12 lamb rib chops



Weeknight-friendly lamb chops with mint-yogurt sauce can be cooked on the stove top or grill. MATTHEW MEAD/AP

2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided

Heat the oven to 200 F.

In a medium bowl, combine the yogurt, mint, garlic, shallot and lemon juice. Mix well, then taste and season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

In a small bowl, combine 2 teaspoons salt, 1 teaspoon ground black pepper and the cumin. Rub the mixture over both sides of each lamb chop.

In a large skillet over medium-high, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil. Add half of the chops and cook

for 3 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer the chops to an oven-safe plate and place in the oven to keep warm. Repeat with the remaining tablespoon of oil and chops.

Serve the chops topped with the mint-yogurt sauce. Serves 4.

*Nutrition information per serving (values are rounded to the nearest whole number): 310 calories; 130 calories from fat (41 percent of total calories); 14 g fat (4 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 130 mg cholesterol; 9 g carbohydrate; 37 g protein; 1 g fiber; 590 mg sodium.*

TRENDS

## Food companies 'sneak' veggies into packaged products for kids

By Jessica Mintz  
Associated Press

It looks like Kraft Macaroni & Cheese, and Kraft says it tastes just like the original. But a new ingredient is lurking inside this version of the American family dinner staple — cauliflower.

Don't tell the kids! Kraft Foods Inc. is the latest large food manufacturer to try hiding additional veggies in packaged foods, an effort to ride a renewed interest in healthy eating to fatter profits. It's a slowly growing trend, and it's one that is dividing food industry experts.

In June, Wal-Mart and Target stores started stocking Kraft Macaroni & Cheese Dinner Veggie Pasta across the country, alongside boxes of the traditional recipe and other alternative versions like organic and whole grain. Every neon-orange cup serving of the new recipe has a half-serving of cauliflower.

Kraft joins brands like Chef Boyardee, which includes enough tomato in some of its canned pasta to claim half a cup of vegetables per serving, and Ragù pasta sauces, which owner Unilever says has two servings of veggies for every half cup of sauce.

For the Kraft product, the company pulverizes freeze-dried cauliflower into a powder it uses to replace some of the flour in the pasta.

"We know moms are always looking to please

their kids and wanting to not make meals a big ordeal, insofar as being able to get them to eat their food," said Alberto Huerta, who oversees the Kraft Macaroni & Cheese brand at Kraft. "Mom is looking for ways to sneak veggies into her kids' diet."

Kraft's move is a variation on a theme espoused by several recent — and highly successful — cookbooks.

Missy Chase Lapine wrote the "Sneaky Chef" series of cookbooks, which show how frozen fruits and vegetables can be mixed into foods like macaroni and cheese (yams or cauliflower), spaghetti (carrots and sweet potato), and brownies (baby spinach and blueberries).

"Food is only healthy if you can get someone to eat it," she said.

**Sticking point**

Harry Balzer, who tracks Americans' eating patterns for The NPD Group, a market research firm, says parents are making genuine attempts to get healthier foods into their kids.

But vegetables, which peaked as a percentage of kids' diets in 1984, remain a sticking point. They're a hassle for parents to buy

and keep fresh, they're not generally seen as snack foods the way fruits are, and they're rarely served alone as a main dish.

For Phil Lempert, another food industry analyst, half a serving of cauliflower in the new Kraft Macaroni & Cheese is better than nothing if Americans are willing to serve it.

"I don't care about the top 1 percent that can buy whatever they want, eat strictly organic, buy artisan cheese where they know the cheese maker," Lempert said.

"I want to make sure people, who go in every week in the supermarket are spending 22 minutes and 100 bucks a week for a family of four, get the best health, taste and value that they can."

That approach draws skepticism from Marion Nestle, a professor at New York University's department of nutrition, food studies and public health. Nutrients are lost when vegetables are freeze-dried, Nestle said, and people are also losing the benefits of having a less calorie-dense food in a meal.

"Oh, what will they think of next," Nestle said. "What a silly idea."

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