

SAVORY 'PEACH MELBA'

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This fun summer dish incorporates all the classic elements of the dessert Peach Melba, but twists them to make a very interesting savory rendition. The cake is changed into a homemade scrapple (please don't turn your brain off...this scrapple is unlike any other that you have tried), the peach is a fresh white peach (I prefer to use McDannell Farms in Adams County, Pennsylvania), baby arugula adds a spicy bite and the whole shebang is finished off with a wonderfully bright raspberry and lemon verbena sauce. This is perfect as a light lunch or the first course of a wonderful summer dinner. Serves 8.

HOMEMADE SCRAPPLE

3 smoked ham hocks or shanks (or a combination)
1 medium Spanish onion
2 carrots, peeled and rough chopped
1 bay leaf
2 cloves garlic
2 quarts ham stock (you may substitute good chicken stock)
2 cups yellow cornmeal
2 teaspoons chopped parsley
2 teaspoons chopped thyme
2 teaspoons chopped chives or spring onion
2 teaspoons salt
2 teaspoons Old Bay
1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper

Place the ham hocks, onion, carrots, bay leaf and garlic clove in a large pot. Add the stock, cover and simmer gently for 3 hours, or until the meat falls from the bones.

Strain the broth into a clean pot and reserve. Discard the bones. Chop the meat fine like minced pork barbecue.

Add enough additional broth or water to the reserved broth to make 2 quarts. Bring the broth to a simmer. Combine the cornmeal, and all remaining herbs and seasonings and gradually add to the boiling broth, stirring constantly. (Sifting handfuls of the cornmeal mixture through your fingers while whisking can help reduce lumps.) Reduce heat to medium and add 2 cups of the chopped meat mixture. Stir until everything is well mixed. Cook slowly for 30 minutes, stirring almost constantly so it does not stick to the bottom, as it will be quite thick.

After 30 minutes the scrapple is ready to pour. Grease a 9x5 inch loaf pan and pour the scrapple to the top of the pans. Let the pans cool, cover with plastic or foil, and refrigerate overnight.



RASPBERRY SAUCE

3 tablespoons chopped chervil
3 tablespoons raspberry vinegar
3 tablespoons crushed raspberries
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
2 tablespoons chopped lemon verbena, plus 1 tablespoon for garnish
1 tablespoon finely grated fresh orange zest (from 2 oranges)
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
¼ cup olive oil

Combine chervil, vinegar, raspberries, mustard, lemon juice, mint, verbena, zest, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Add oil in a slow stream, whisking until combined. (This vinaigrette will keep in the refrigerator for about 5 days.)

TO SERVE

¼ lb small baby arugula
4 white peaches

Unmold the scrapple onto a cutting board and cut into ¼-inch thick slices. (The loaves can be unmolded and frozen but will keep refrigerated for about 1 week.) Heat ¼ inch of grapeseed or canola oil over medium-high heat in a skillet and fry the slices until brown and crusty, about 3-4 minutes each side.

Dress the arugula with very good extra virgin olive oil and sea salt (I use Maldon). Select peaches that feel almost soft to the touch, warmed by the sun and preferably not refrigerated. Cut each peach in half (peeling is optional).

On each of eight plates, spoon 1-2 tablespoons of the raspberry sauce. Lay down one piece of fried scrapple, top that with a handful of dressed arugula, and nestle the peach in the arugula. Finish with some chopped lemon verbena and dig in!