

Frances Wilson, former chef at Lalime's in Berkeley now divides her time between Chateau Routas in Provence and the Bay Area. She teaches cooking classes in a variety of locations. Visit her website at www.franceswilson.net for more information.

SAUTÉED CARAMEL CANDY CAP PEARS WITH CANDY CAP DENTELLES

For the pears:

3 medium sized pears, Bartlett or Bosc
1 oz fresh candy caps or ¼ oz dried, reconstituted
6 tablespoon butter
½ cup sugar
1 cup cream
1/8 cup brandy (optional)

For the whipped cream:

1 cup whipping cream
candy caps reserved from pears
sugar to taste

Peel pears and cut in half lengthwise. Remove the stem, and core. Melt the butter in a large sauté pan or skillet. Add the candy caps. Sauté for a couple of minutes and then add the pears. Cook the pears on each side until soft over a low heat. Keep covered with a lid to keep the steam in and to prevent the butter from burning. When the pears are soft, remove the lid and turn up the heat so that the pears brown.

Remove the pears to a serving dish. Put the candy caps in a small bowl and cover with the second cup of cream. Leave to steep.

Meanwhile, add the sugar to the juices and butter in the pan. Stir to dissolve the sugar over a medium heat. Turn up the heat and caramelize the sugar. When it is golden brown, stir in the cream slowly. Be careful as it is very hot and can splatter.

Add the brandy. Pour over pears in the serving dish.

Strain the cream from the candy caps. Whip to soft peak. Fold in the sugar.

Serve with candy cap whipped cream and candy cap dentelles.

CANDY CAP DENTELLES (LACE COOKIES)

2 tablespoon butter
2 tablespoon brown sugar
2 tablespoon granulated sugar
2 tablespoon orange juice
3 tablespoon flour
¼ teaspoon candy cap mushroom powder

Cream the butter and sugars together in a small bowl. Slowly add the orange juice. Blend in the flour and the candy cap powder. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 400°. Divide the mixture into nine pieces. Spread out on a cookie tray lined with parchment or a silk pad. With wet fingers or palette knife, flatten as thinly as possible.

Bake for 4-5 minutes. Allow to sit for 1 –2 minutes and then remove from tray and shape. Allow to cool.

CHANTERELLE AND BREAD SALAD WITH DANDELION GREENS, OVEN-DRIED FIGS AND SHAVED PARMESAN

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 clove garlic, minced
1# chanterelles, cleaned and cut in large pieces
salt and pepper

3 salted anchovies

1 clove garlic, minced
1 ½ tablespoon sherry vinegar
1/3 cup good quality olive oil

3 cups of country Italian bread such as Pugilese, cut into ½" cubes
2 cups small dandelion greens, washed and torn into bite sized pieces
12 oven-dried figs*
1 tablespoon roughly chopped flat leafed parsley
Parmesan cheese shavings

Heat the 2 tablespoons olive oil in a pan. Add the garlic and the mushrooms and cook over a medium heat until the mushrooms are soft. Season with salt and pepper. Place to one side to cool.

Mash the anchovies in a bowl with the garlic. Add the sherry vinegar and then whisk in the olive oil.

Place the bread cubes, dandelion leaves and the cooked chanterelles in a large bowl. Add the dressing and toss well. Season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with parsley.

Serve topped with shaved Parmesan.

*Oven-dried figs: Cut fresh figs in half and place on baking sheet. Place in the oven at 200°F for about an hour until they caramelize.