

# Cooking Corner



## Warm Weather Brings Out Lighter Fare, More Fruits And Vegetables

(NAPSA)—As warmer weather prevails, the snow has melted, flowers start to blossom and seasonal fruits and vegetables appear on the tables again. This special time of year awakens us from those winter doldrums and rejuvenates us all, making way for entertaining outdoors or indoors with light, fresh entrees.

A simple bouquet of bright-colored flowers, a bowl filled with citrus fruit, or a fresh vegetable centerpiece are just a few of the many ways you can bring this time of year in from the outdoors and onto the table. Award-winning, Pacific Northwest chef Tom Douglas suggests that we share the splendors of the season with family and friends and incorporate ripe fruits and vegetables into our menus.

“Simple, light dishes including crisp asparagus, peas and berries are perfect to bring home that fresh taste we savor this time of year,” said Douglas. “Garden-fresh fruits and vegetables are a welcome addition to your entertaining plans and daily menus because they add a unique touch that your guests will surely enjoy, whether it’s for a party of 12 or a quiet dinner at home for two.”

To add that special something to your entertaining menus, Douglas suggests:

- Zest your citrus fruits—lemons, limes, and oranges—before you juice them and be sure to use the zest in your cooking. The most intense and aromatic citrus oils are in the skin of the fruit, not the juice. When you grate the zest from citrus fruits, remove only the colored part, not the white pith, because the pith is bitter.

- When you need a sauce for fish, meat, or poultry, don’t always think butter and cream. An herb



**Whether it’s for a dinner party or an intimate meal, a light entrée paired with a crisp chardonnay can make for a memorable occasion.**

vinaigrette or a simple fresh fruit puree can make a light, fresh tasting sauce.

- For dessert, use fresh berries or citrus fruits to make a tart, sorbet or simply top with fresh whipped cream. Gourmet coffee, such as Millstone, accentuates the flavor of these refreshing desserts.

Douglas offers the following recipe, full of flavor and vegetables of the season:

### **SPRING PEA AND ROAST CHICKEN RISOTTO**

*Serves 4 to 6*

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened**
- ¼ cup minced shallots**
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic**
- 2 cups Arborio rice**
- ½ cup dry white wine**
- 6 to 7 cups simmering chicken stock, homemade or low sodium canned**
- 2 cups roast chicken, cut into chunks**
- ¾ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese**

- 1½ cups shelled fresh peas, briefly cooked**
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley**
- 2 tablespoons thinly sliced chives**
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh dill**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

Melt 3 tablespoons of the butter over medium-high heat in a large skillet. Add the shallots and garlic and sauté a few minutes. Add the rice and stir until the grains of rice are coated with butter. Add the wine and simmer, stirring, until most of the wine is absorbed. Start adding the simmering chicken stock, about one cup at a time, only adding more chicken stock when the rice has absorbed most of the stock already in the pan. Continue stirring and adding stock until the rice is cooked “al dente,” about 25 minutes. Stir in the chicken, then remove the risotto from the heat and stir in the remaining 3 tablespoons of butter and the Parmesan. Add a little more of the simmering stock, about ¼ to ½ cup, to loosen the risotto and make it a bit soupy. Add the peas and herbs, and season to taste with salt and pepper and serve.

An excellent wine pairing with this entrée to complement the light, fresh taste is Columbia Crest Chardonnay from Washington state.

According to Douglas, the key to seasonal entertaining is to take a fun and light-hearted approach to whatever you prepare in the kitchen and just enjoy the company of loved ones.