Dinners inspired by the Montgomery County Farmers Market

Ruth Ann Grissom

Goat Cheese and Arugula Soufflé

Adapted from The Silver Palate Good Times Cookbook by Julee Rosso and Sheila Lukins.

Soufflés are easier and more forgiving than you might think. Before I broke down and bought a proper soufflé dish, I used to make them in Pyrex bowls. Don’t be intimidated.

3 T butter, plus more for greasing dish

¼ C all-purpose flour

1 ½ C half-and-half

6 egg yolks

8 egg whites

2 C chopped arugula

½ C goat cheese

Pinch of cayenne pepper, ground nutmeg, cream of tartar

Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 375 and butter a 2-quart soufflé dish.

Melt butter in a medium saucepan. When it starts to foam, add flour, and cook 1-2 minutes, stirring constantly. Heat half-and-half in a glass measuring cup in microwave until just below boiling, then add it to the butter and flour, stirring constantly until it’s smooth and thick.

Remove from heat and add egg yolks, one at a time, whisking well after each addition.

Stir in chopped arugula, cheese, cayenne, nutmeg, salt and pepper.

Beat egg whites with pinch of salt and cream of tartar until stiff but not dry.

Take about ¼ of the egg whites and gently stir them into the soufflé base. Gently pour this mix into the bowl with the rest of the egg whites and fold them together. Be careful not to overmix.

Bake until puffy and golden, about 35-40 minutes. The center will still be a little wobbly.

Serve immediately.
Chicken Infused with Bay Leaves

From *The Food of Southern Italy* by Carlo Middione.

A roast chicken is a fine thing in cold weather, but this time of year, a cold chicken is more appealing. This works well with all sorts of side dishes – anything you might take on a picnic.

1 large yellow onion, peeled and chopped fine
1 large carrot, washed and cut into 1-inch pieces
1 bunch celery, washed and cut into 1-inch pieces, leaves left on
5 sprigs parsley
Salt to taste

**1 3-lb whole chicken, dressed for cooking**

6 quarts cold water
60 +/- bay leaves, fresh or dried

Put vegetables in an 8-quart pot. Add water and bring to a boil. Add chicken. When water comes back to a boil, reduce heat and simmer until it’s done, about 45 minutes.

While chicken is cooking, line a platter with bay leaves, but reserve enough to cover the chicken later. When the chicken is done, remove it from the water with a slotted spoon, taking care not to piece the skin and let the juices escape. Shake it to remove excess water, then lay it on the platter. Cover the chicken with the remaining bay leaves. Place a large bowl over the chicken and platter to trap the steam. This permeates the meat with the flavor and aroma of the leaves. Let the chicken stand and cool for 2 hours, then refrigerate it overnight, still covered by the bowl. Serve the chicken cold the next day.


Steaks My Way

Once I get my hands on some of those ribeyes, this is how I’ll cook them. I’ve developed this method over the years. It works on other cuts as well as ribeyes.

Steaks

Olive oil
Kosher salt
Coarse, fresh-ground pepper

Defrost steaks, if necessary. Rinse in cool water and pat dry. Put them on a wire rack over a plate and refrigerate for a day or two or three. This “dry ages” the meat, concentrating the flavor and tenderizing the meat.

About an hour before you’re ready to grill the steaks, remove them from the refrigerator. Brush lightly with olive oil the sprinkle generously with kosher salt and coarse-ground pepper. Let rest at room temperature.

Prepare the grill. I prefer lump hardwood charcoal to briquettes and a chimney and newspaper to lighter fluid. Some people swear by gas grills, but I’m not one of them. They’re fine for some things, but they don’t get hot enough to cook a steak properly.

Fill the chimney heaping full, crumple 3 sheets of newspaper and light it. When fire starts to die down, dump charcoal into the bottom portion of the grill. Spread it evenly and place the grate over coals. Let grate get good and hot, but don’t let the coals sit too long. You don’t want them flaming up, but you want them as hot as possible.

Put steaks on the grate. Leave them 1-2 minutes. Turn them over. Leave them 1-2 minutes. If the fire is good and hot, this will put a nice crust on the meat. Put the lid on and cook the steaks another minute or two or three. Sorry to be so vague here, but the exact time will depend on the thickness of the steak and how you like it cooked. If the fire isn’t too hot, you can leave the cover off. Grass-fed beef is best left medium-rare, or certainly no more than medium.

Take steaks off grill, put them on a clean, warm plate and let them rest a few minutes before cutting.