Variations on a Theme
Three local chefs share their take on the Thanksgiving Day feast

BY MICHAEL SCHAFER // PHOTOGRAPHS BY CYBELLE CODISH // FOOD STYLING BY STEPHANIE POTTS

Go directly to: Introduction & Wine | Local Flavors | Non-Traditional | Vegan

AMISH TURKEY BALLOTINE WITH CHORIZO AND CORNBREAD STUFFING - A BALLOTINE IS TRADITIONALLY A BONED PORTION OF MEAT, FISH, OR FOWL. IT IS STUFFED, ROLLED, AND TIED INTO A BUNDLE TO HOLD ITS SHAPE, THEN BRAISED OR ROASTED. FOR THIS RECIPE, CHEF RIGATO USES A STUFFING MIXTURE OF CHORIZO AND CORNBREAD. - JAMES RIGATO, THE ROOT RESTAURANT AND BAR

Our national holiday for feasting holds many fond memories. From the stuffing to the sweet potato pie, and all that's in between, we gather together to reunite with family and friends for fun, food, and football. For some, the order of priorities may be a bit different, but you know the routine. From descendants of the folks who arrived on the Mayflower to newly minted citizens, many Americans celebrate our bounty and good fortune around a table that usually groans with the cornucopia of delectables we call “Thanksgiving dinner.” Let’s dig in!

Hour Detroit presents variations on the big meal from three metro Detroit chefs. Each expresses a vision of the ultimate holiday dinner. Given free rein to create culinary delights, these chefs have created menus to grace your table and delight those lucky enough to be invited to your celebration.

Despite their divergent backgrounds and personalities, these culinarians personify the phrase, “A cook knows ‘how,’ but a chef knows ‘why’” in their approach to food. They know “why” these meals will bring your guests pleasure. Here’s “how” to get them to your Thanksgiving table.
From James Rigato's passion for local products to Jacques Van Staden's contemporary take on our national dish to Thomas Lasher's vegetarian inspirations, each embodies the joy of our tradition of giving thanks for our blessings. Now please, pass the stuffing.

Dinnerware & Accessories courtesy of:
The Silver Quill Antiques and Gifts - Warren, 586-756-8180, silverquillantiques.com
Zieben-Mare - Franklin, 248-539-8879, ziebenmare.com
Fleurdetroit - Bloomfield Hills, 248-953-3840, fleurdetroit.com
Rail and Anchor - Royal Oak, 248-397-8985

Thanksgiving Wines
As the classic American holiday approaches, the annual quandary becomes: What wines to serve with your family feast?

What better way to give thanks than with a sparkling wine? Bubbles pair well with just about any food. Excellent Spanish cavas are available for less than $10. A stellar example is Segura Viudas Brut. If you want to up the ante a bit, Scharffenberger Brut Rosé from California is a fabulous value for around $25.

Appetizers offer a variety of aromas, textures, and flavors. A wine that works well with the plethora is riesling. The J Lohr Riesling from California offers the right balance of fruit and acidity. Another excellent choice is the Rosemount Riesling from Australia. Both are under $10.

Turkey is easy to pair with wine. Our first selection is pinot noir. The aromas of cherries, raspberries, and currants entice us to enjoy this versatile wine. Elk Cove Willamette Valley Pinot Noir is a round, mouth-filling example from Oregon for about $25. Black Star Farms Arcturos Pinot Noir from our own Leelanau Peninsula is delicious, elegant, and refined, especially for around $22.

For those who prefer a more robust red, zinfandel is the choice. Big, berry fruits and hints of bramble and pepper are typical. Joel Gott California Zinfandel is a lighter style for about $20. For a wine of power and finesse, Seghesio Old Vine Zinfandel is an upscale value. At around $45, it's a bit pricy, but well worth it.

It's time for dessert. On the lighter side, a Late Harvest Riesling from Michigan's Chateau Grand Traverse matches perfectly with the recipes we've highlighted. At about $15, it's worth every penny. Dow's LBV Porto complements a variety of pies — or dulce de leche stuffed sweet potatoes. LBV means late bottled vintage. This fabulous finish runs around $20.

— Michael Schafer
Local Flavors: The Root Restaurant and Bar’s Chef James Rigato

Menu (serves approximately 12)

Appetizer: Deviled Eggs with shallot aioli
Entrée: Amish Turkey Ballotine with Chorizo and Cornbread Stuffing
Side dishes: Three Potato & Poblano Hash, Chilled Green Bean Salad
Dessert: Pumpkin Pie

James Rigato is a local star, born and bred. As executive chef of The Root Restaurant and Bar in White Lake, he executes his vision of “Michigan cuisine” with passionate precision.

For Rigato, Thanksgiving was an enormous potluck. “Just about everyone made a dish or two; the host cooked a goose, and we all nested together. My family is a blend of Italian, Irish, and German backgrounds. We had lots of different flavors on our table!”

The Howell native instinctively knew his calling at his first job: washing dishes as a teenager. At age 17 he attended Schoolcraft College, graduating from the culinary arts program in 2005. He learned the business from local restaurateur, Matt Prentice, and was sous chef at both Morels and Shiraz. He met his wife, Jennifer, when she was a hostess at Shiraz. He also worked at Bacco Ristorante in Southfield and Rugby Grille in Birmingham. He’s “made his chops” in some of the best kitchens in town.
In 2007, Rigato became the private chef for Ed Mamou’s Royal Oak Recycling company. After two years of getting to know each other, the two opened Ripe Catering. It wasn’t enough. Both wanted to present high-quality, locally sourced food in a more traditional setting. Voila! The Root Restaurant opened in 2011.

Rigato is on a mission: to develop and foster Michigan cuisine. “California has their cuisine; I’m spreading the gospel about Michigan food. We have incredible ingredients right here. Morels, ramps, lake perch — the list goes on and on. We need to educate our guests about our bounty that’s surrounded by the Great Lakes. We’re unique on earth,” he says. “Let’s develop and share a cuisine that celebrates the four seasons.”

### Appetizer

**Deviled Eggs**

10 hard-boiled eggs, cooled and peeled  
1/2-1 cup shallot aioli, depending on how thick/thin you like your mix  
4 medium-sized radishes, shaved thin  
1 teaspoon smoked paprika for garnish

**Roasted Shallot Aioli**

2 shallots  
3 roasted garlic cloves  
3 egg yolks  
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
1 lemon, juiced  
1/2 cup blended oil  
Pinch of kosher salt  
Pinch of cracked black pepper  
Dash of Worcestershire  
Dash of Tabasco
DIRECTIONS: Peel the shallots, season with olive oil, salt, and pepper. Wrap in foil and roast at 350 degrees for about 90 minutes. The shallots should be soft and caramelized.

To roast a garlic bulb, cut the head off just enough to expose the cloves. Coat lightly with olive oil, wrap in foil, and bake at 350 degrees for 60-90 minutes.

To make the aioli, add all the ingredients into a food processor except for the oil. Puree until smooth and slowly drizzle in the oil. Set aside. Cut eggs in half. Pull out yolk. Push yolk through a sieve and into a food processor bowl. Add 1/2 cup of roasted shallot aioli. Puree until very smooth. Taste. Add more aioli if desired. Scoop into pastry bag or zip-close bag with one corner cut off. Pipe filling into the egg-white halves. Serve with shaved radish and smoked paprika.

Entree

Amish Turkey Ballotine with Chorizo and Cornbread Stuffing
1 15-20-pound Amish turkey, brined
1 pound fresh chorizo
8 cups cornbread, cubed
1 large Spanish onion, diced small
6 stalks celery, diced small
1 bunch of thyme, kept whole
1 orange, sliced
1/2 stick of butter
1-2 cups chicken stock
5 Michigan farm eggs
Kosher salt
Cracked pepper

Brine
1 gallon water
1 cup kosher salt
1/2 cup sugar
8 garlic cloves
2 dried chilies, like ancho
or pasilla
2 oranges, halved

DIRECTIONS: Bring water, salt, and sugar to boil. Add remaining brine ingredients. Cool and refrigerate. If in a rush, cut the water in half, make the recipe and then ice the mixture until you've reached 1 gallon of total liquid. Brine turkey for 24 hours. Drain the brine and debone the turkey. (Take Jacques Pepin's advice and treat it like a chicken.) Set aside the turkey.

To make the stuffing, sauté onions and celery in the butter until soft. Add the chorizo and cook until almost completely cooked through. Add cornbread and 1 cup chicken stock. Stir. Add more stock if too dry. Let cool. Add the eggs. Mix in well. Set aside.

To make the turkey ballotine, take the deboned turkey and season in and out with kosher salt and cracked pepper. Add stuffing, roll, and tie in the shape of a bundle. Sear entire ballotine in a hot pan or on the grill until caramelized on all sides. Place on roasting rack on a sheet tray and brush with melted butter. Add thyme sprigs and sliced oranges on top of the ballotine and roast in a 325 degree oven for approximately 90 minutes until internal temperature is 160 degrees. Any extra stuffing should be baked for about 15 minutes until caramelized on top and served as a side dish. Let ballotine rest and slice into 1-inch wide slices.

Notes: We make our own chorizo using natural Michigan pork from C. Roy's in Yale. If you're interested in making your own at home and looking for a good recipe, Brian Polcyn's book, Charcuterie, has a fantastic version. However, fresh chorizo can be found in a number of grocery stores, many of which make their own. Cornbread can be bought as well but any homemade recipe will work.

Cracked Pepper & Lillet Blanc Gravy
6 cups turkey stock (If done the day before, the carcass of the bird can be used to make a simple stock. Look up any basic poultry stock recipe. A few carrots, onions, celery stalks, cold water and 6-8 hours will do the trick.)
1 cup Lillet Blanc
1 tablespoon cracked pepper
1 orange, zested and juiced
Salt and pepper to taste
1/4 cup-1/2 cup roux

**DIRECTIONS:** Prepare roux by mixing equal parts flour and butter, and baking until lightly browned. Simmer all ingredients except roux. When hot, whisk in roux. Stir for about 10 minutes until roux is dissolved. Adjust thickness and seasoning if desired. If too thin, add more roux; if too thick, add more stock.

---

**Side Dishes**

**Chilled Green Bean Salad**
4 pounds green beans, cleaned, trimmed, and blanched in heavily salted water. Shock in ice bath.
1 pound thick cut bacon
White distilled vinegar
Red wine vinegar
Salt
Sugar
1 lemon, juiced
1 cup red onion
1/2 cup sunflower seeds
1/2 cup crumbled French feta cheese
1 tablespoon parsley

**Vinaigrette**
1/2 cup whole grain mustard
5 cloves roasted garlic, smashed
1 lemon, zested and juiced
1/2 cup red wine vinegar (the liquid from the pickling onions also works well)
1 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup sour cream
Salt and pepper to taste

**DIRECTIONS:** Whisk vinaigrette ingredients together until smooth. Refrigerate until ready to use. Cut bacon into short strips and slowly render in a pan until crispy. Drain the fat and set aside. Heat two parts white distilled vinegar and one part red wine vinegar with salt, sugar, and lemon until you get a well-balanced liquid. Boil and pour over onions that have been cut into about 1-1/2 inch julienne. Let cool. Toss beans in bowl with dressing and top with remaining garnishes.

**Three Potato & Poblano Hash**
10 pounds of mixed potatoes, preferably Yukon gold, sweet potatoes and russets
2 tablespoons fresh thyme, chopped
2 large Spanish onions, diced small
3 poblano peppers, diced tiny
1/2 cup olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

**DIRECTIONS:** Dice potatoes all the same size, about the size of a game-board die. Toss all ingredients in a large bowl. Taste one potato piece. Adjust seasoning if necessary. Roast in a 400 degree oven on a sheet tray for about 30 minutes. Serve hot.

---

**Dessert (HourDetroit.com bonus recipe)**

**Pumpkin Pie**
1 medium pumpkin, split, guts scooped, and roasted flesh side down until soft. Scoop out of skin and set aside. Save seeds for Sweet & Salty Pumpkin Seeds.
1 teaspoon cinnamon
2 teaspoons ground ginger
1 cup brown sugar
1 vanilla bean, seeds scraped
1 cup sweetened condensed milk
5 Michigan eggs
Pinch of salt

**DIRECTIONS:** Puree all ingredients together in food processor until completely smooth. (Depending on the size of your food processor, it may take many batches.) Pour into rolled-out pie shell. Bake at 325 degrees for approximately 1 hour, until pie reaches 165 degrees. Cool. Sprinkle an even amount of white sugar (preferably Michigan beet sugar) over the top of the pie. Using a torch, caramelize the sugar the same as you would for a crème brûlée. Slice. Serve with Maple Crème Fraîche and Sweet & Salty Pumpkin Seeds.

To make Maple Crème Fraîche, whisk 2 cups crème fraîche, 1 teaspoon cinnamon and 1/2 cup Michigan maple syrup until incorporated.

To make the Sweet & Salty Pumpkin seeds, rinse the saved seeds and dry out in the oven, about 15 minutes or until golden brown. Toss with melted butter, sugar and salt and bake at 325 degrees for about 10 minutes.
Non-Traditional: Bistro Joe’s Chef Jacques Van Staden

Menu (Serves Approximately 12)
Appetizer: Roasted Pumpkin Soup With Raisins And Cognac Cream Sauce
Entrée: Roasted Turkey Roulade With Dried Fruit And Chestnut Stuffing
Side Dishes: Bacon-Wrapped Brussels Sprouts, Star Anise Cranberry Sauce
Dessert: Dulce De Leche Stuffed Sweet Potato

Jacques Van Staden is in metro Detroit because “family is the most important thing in life.” His wife, who grew up in Rochester, persuaded him to come to the Great Lakes State.

Van Staden — a partner and executive chef at Bistro Joe’s in Birmingham — describes his food as global cuisine with elements of surprise, presented in a playful manner. “What an honor to take the life from food and give it anew, to die on our palates, but forever live in our memories,” he says.
Van Staden began cooking with his Italian grandmother at the age of 8. While his father thought he was playing rugby, he worked at a local restaurant. After high school in his native Pretoria, he sold his car to buy a plane ticket to the U.S., where working as a chef was much more highly regarded than in South Africa.

Enrolling at the L'Academie de Cuisine in Bethesda, Md., led to a position with the world-renowned chef Jean-Louis Palladin at the Watergate Hotel. Palladin became a mentor — Van Staden hangs a well-worn photo of him "for luck" whenever he opens a new restaurant. It’s gotten a lot of use: He’s opened more than 100 restaurants to date.

In 2001, Van Staden headed to Las Vegas and soon ran two premier restaurants: Alizé and André's. Alizé was awarded a Michelin star during his tenure. Six years later, he became an award-winning vice president of food and beverage for Celebrity Cruises.

While Van Staden has an international reputation, he says he is old school — and proud of it. "Being conscious of who you are and what you do is key to being successful in the hospitality industry. Respect for self, others, and the food is so very important.

“We need to listen to our food,” Van Staden says. “It talks to you, if you’re willing to listen.” As Palladin would say, “the food will tell you how to cook it.”
Appetizer

Roasted Spiced Pumpkin Soup with Raisins and Cognac Cream Sauce

12 cups pumpkin, peeled and cut in chunks
3 cups sweet potato, peeled and cut in chunks
1 butternut squash, peeled and cut in chunks
Corn oil
1 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon powder
1/2 cup unsalted butter
4 yellow onions, chopped
2 Granny Smith apples, peeled and diced
4 teaspoons garlic, finely chopped
12 cups chicken stock
6 cups whole milk
6 cups heavy whipping cream
1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper
4 teaspoons Chinese five spice, ground
1 teaspoon coriander, ground
3 teaspoons kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg powder
1/2 cup maple syrup
Zest from 1 orange

DIRECTIONS: Mix together in a bowl pumpkin, sweet potatoes and butternut squash with oil (enough to coat), brown sugar, and cinnamon. Roast at 300 degrees until golden brown and tender, about 30-45 minutes. Set aside. Melt butter in a medium-sized stock pot; add onions, apples, and garlic and cook on medium high until tender, stirring often for about 15-20 minutes. Add stock, milk, and cream; bring to a simmer on medium heat for 30 minutes. Once cream has come to a simmer, add the roasted pumpkin, sweet potato and squash, followed by the spices, salt, and maple syrup. Simmer for 15 minutes. Remove from heat, and puree in batches in a blender until finely pureed; pass through a fine mesh strainer. After soup has been strained, add the orange zest; stir well. Adjust seasoning if needed and serve piping hot. Top with cognac cream.*

*Whisk together 2 ounces cognac, 12 ounces heavy cream and 2 ounces sugar until slightly stiffed whipped cream is formed.

Entree (HourDetroit.com bonus recipe)

Roasted Turkey Roulade with Dried Fruit and Chestnut Stuffing

Turkey
1 16- to 18-pound whole turkey (see instructions in method)
2 tablespoons fine sea salt
2 teaspoons finely ground white pepper
2 pounds mirepoix (equal amount carrots, celery, onion)

Turkey Legs
4 turkey legs and thighs (skin off), two from above turkey and 2 additional legs and thighs
2 tablespoons kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon cinnamon powder
1 teaspoon allspice
5 large white onions
2 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced
1 pound salted butter, cubed
1 tablespoon thyme, chopped
2 tablespoons sage, chopped
4 sheets phyllo dough
1 pound clarified butter (simmer unsalted butter until foam rises to the top and strain through a cheesecloth)
DIRECTIONS: Place turkey on its breast side on the cutting board with the back facing up. Make an incision along the backbone of the turkey and carefully remove the skin from the entire turkey without cutting through the skin. Once turkey is completely skinned, place skin on a tray and set aside. Remove turkey breast (see below for how to finish the breast). Remove thighs and legs from turkey. Save the carcass for the gravy.

Season thighs and legs with salt and spices; set aside. Arrange onions, garlic, and butter on the bottom of a roasting pan, and place legs and thighs on top of onion mixture. Sprinkle with thyme and sage, cover with aluminum foil, and roast in a 300 degree oven for 5 hours or until tender to the bone. Remove and pull meat in flakes from the bone; place in a mixing bowl. Drain excess fat from onion and garlic mixture and add to the flaked turkey. In an electric mixer with paddle on low speed, whip onions and meat together until well incorporated. Place mixture in plastic wrap and roll in the shape of a sausage; place in refrigerator to cool. Once mixture has cooled down, it will hold the cylindrical shape. Brush 1 sheet of phyllo dough with clarified butter, place another sheet on top of first sheet, and brush. Repeat once more. Remove plastic from meat, place on one end of the phyllo dough, wrap around and roll until completely covered. Refrigerate to set. Once phyllo dough has congealed from the butter, cut the roll in 2-inch pieces. In a medium hot skillet, brown the phyllo dough crust all around, then bake in 350 degree oven for 10 minutes or until hot.

To finish the breast, carefully remove the skin; make sure not to puncture. Then butterfly breast and lightly pound until even all around. Place half of the stuffing in one breast and the other half in second breast. Carefully fold the breast closed to a cylindrical shape, wrap the skin around to cover entire breast, and tie with butchers twine. Season with salt and pepper, place mirepoix in a roasting pan, and place breast on top of mirepoix. Roast at 300 degrees for 3-4 hours or until completely cooked (inside temperature to 180 degrees). Remove and let rest for 5 minutes before carving.

** Tip: You can add the mirepoix and pan drippings to the gravy.

Sage Gravy
5 pounds turkey bones, including trimmings (use carcass)
2 additional drumsticks, dusted with flour
Turkey giblets
1 bunch leeks, diced, white part only
Mirepoix (2 carrots, diced; 1 yellow onion, diced; 3 celery stalks, diced)
1/2 pound whole butter
4 plum tomatoes
1/2 cup sherry wine
1 cup white wine
4 sprigs fresh thyme leaves
3 bay leaves
10 sprigs fresh sage
1 quart turkey stock
4 ounces whole butter, cut in cubes
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon white peppercorns
Black pepper

DIRECTIONS: In a large roasting pan over high heat, caramelize the turkey bones, drumsticks, giblets, leeks, and mirepoix with the butter. After they are seared off, mix in the tomato. To caramelize deeper, bake for 30 minutes at 350 degrees. Return the pan to the stove. Add the sherry, white wine, and herbs, and reduce to syrup consistency. Add the turkey stock and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer until turkey drumsticks and giblets are cooked through, approximately 20 minutes. Remove and strain the stock. Let cool and slowly stir in the cubes of butter. Turkey roasting juices can be added to the gravy prior to seasoning and thickening. Add salt, peppercorns, and pepper to taste.

Stuffing
12 cups white bread, diced into 1-inch cubes
1/2 pound whole butter
1 cup smoked apple wood bacon, julienne *optional
2 yellow onions, diced small
1 stalk celery, diced small
2 cups carrots, small cubed
2 Granny Smith apples, cored and cubed
2 cups ruby red port
1 1/2 cups chicken or turkey stock
1 cup dried cranberries
1 cup golden raisins
1/2 cup dried sour cherries
8 ounces whole chestnuts
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
Cracked black pepper, to taste
1/2 cup fresh parsley, chopped
1 tablespoon fresh sage, chopped
1 tablespoon fresh thyme, chopped
3 each whole eggs, slightly whipped
1 pound ground turkey meat

DIRECTIONS: Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Arrange the bread cubes in a single layer on a baking sheet and bake until dried and slightly toasted for about 10 minutes. Let cool. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, melt the butter over medium-high heat. Add bacon (if using), onions, celery, carrots, and apples and cook about 8 minutes, stirring frequently, until softened and slightly browned. Deglaze with port and reduce to dry consistency. Add cranberries, raisins, sour cherries, and stock; reduce. In a small baking dish, roast the chestnuts until golden brown, about 8 minutes, remove and cut into large chunks and combine with the dried fruit, salt, and pepper; refrigerate until completely cool. Once the cooked fruit mixture is cold, combine parsley, sage, thyme, eggs, ground turkey and toasted bread cubes. Mix until well incorporated. Reduce oven temperature to 350. Transfer stuffing to a 12-gallon ovenproof baking dish and cover with foil. Bake for 25 minutes. Remove the foil and bake until golden, about 15 minutes more.

Side Dishes

Bacon-Wrapped Brussels Sprouts
5 pounds of medium-sized Brussels sprouts
4 pounds of bacon
2 tablespoons sherry vinegar
4 tablespoons maple syrup
2 tablespoons honey clover
Corn oil
1 gallon water
1/2 cup kosher salt, plus more to taste
Black pepper

DIRECTIONS: Place a medium-sized pot filled with 1 gallon water and 1/2 cup salt on stove on high heat; bring to a boil. Cut each Brussels sprout halfway, but do not cut in half. Blanch sprouts for 1 minute, remove, and place in ice bath to stop cooking. When sprouts are cooled, remove and drain well. Lay out bacon strips and cut in half. Place each Brussels sprout on one end of bacon and roll to wrap bacon all around; insert toothpick at end of bacon strip to keep from falling off when frying. Once all Brussels sprouts are wrapped, fry in a pot of corn oil at 350 degrees until bacon is crispy and golden brown. Remove from oil, drain well, and place in a bowl. Mix with honey, maple syrup, and vinegar; toss well. Season with salt and pepper.

Star Anise Cranberry Sauce
7 cups cranberry juice
2 cups raspberry vinegar
2 cups fresh orange juice
1 cup honey
1 cup brown sugar
2 tablespoons star anise (approximately 6 to 8 whole pieces)
1 teaspoon cinnamon, ground
5 cups dried cranberries
2 each lemon zest

DIRECTIONS: Combine all ingredients in a small saucepan and place on medium heat. Simmer until most liquid has evaporated, turn down to low heat, and continue cooking to a thick consistency for about 1 hour. Be careful not to burn.
Tip: This sauce can be made in larger batches weeks before needed, placed in an airtight jar, and refrigerated.

Dessert

Dulce De Leche Stuffed Sweet Potato
12 medium-sized sweet potatoes, whole, skin on
12 foil sheets
1 cup dulce de leche (This spread is made from milk and sugar that has been slowly cooked until the sugars caramelize; find it in the ethnic foods section at the grocery store or make your own.)
2 cups mini marshmallows
1 teaspoon kosher salt
3/4 cup pecans, chopped
Melted butter, for drizzling

DIRECTIONS: Individually wrap each sweet potato in foil and place on baking tray. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes or until tender. Remove and let cool in refrigerator. Remove foil and cut each potato in rectangular shape, hollowing out the center. Add the salt to the dulce de leche. Pipe 1 tablespoon of dulce de leche inside the hollowed sweet potato, and cover with the marshmallows, about 10 pieces per sweet potato. Place on baking sheet, drizzle with melted butter, and bake at 300 degrees until marshmallows are golden brown. Garnish with chopped pecans and serve immediately.
Vegan: The Inn Season Café’s Chef Thomas Lasher

Menu (Serves Approximately 12)
Appetizer: Potato Quinoa Croquettes with Apple Chutney
Entrée: Shiitake Wild Rice Loaf with Sweet Potato Rosemary Sauce
Side Dishes: Sautéed Collard Greens, Maple-Glazed Carrots
Dessert: Pumpkin Pecan Baklava

Thomas Lasher, executive chef and partner of Inn Season Café in Royal Oak, has honed his craft for some 30 years. He was an apprentice and later sous chef under acclaimed vegetarian chef George Vutetakis for more than 15 of those years. Vegetarian and vegan diners know his establishment as a temple of healthy cuisine.

Lasher is originally from Grosse Pointe Woods and came from a family who loved to cook. While his father “was a meat and potatoes man, my mother was quite adventurous, especially for the times. I remember going to her hometown in Sweden, 150 miles north of Stockholm. They foraged a great deal and ate food that was totally foreign to me. I actually enjoyed a lot of it!”
While earning a Bachelor of Science in zoology from the University of Michigan, he was motivated to forgo meat by the best-seller, *Diet for a Small Planet* by Frances Moore Lappé.

After sharpening his cooking skills at the original London Chop House under the young superstar chef, Jimmy Schmidt, Lasher took a break from the culinary world. Taking a cue from the Monty Python’s *Flying Circus* film, *And Now for Something Completely Different*, he performed in Frisbee demonstrations throughout the United States.

Michigan called Lasher back to Grosse Pointe where he learned vegetarian cooking at the Harvest Park restaurant on Mack Avenue. It was an easy segue to the Inn Season Café. “George was a fantastic mentor,” he says. “He was incredibly knowledgeable and passionate about cooking the vegetarian way. He ran the restaurant using the farm-to-table model long before it was popular.”

---

**APPETIZER**

**Potato Quinoa Croquettes with Apple Chutney**

**Croquettes**

- 6 cups potato, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 3 cups leeks, chopped
- 1 1/2 cup celery, chopped
- 1/4 cup Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup fresh tarragon, minced
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley, minced
- 1/4 cup chives, minced
- 2 cups cooked quinoa
- 3/4 cup cooked black beans
- Zest of 1 lemon
- Salt
- White pepper
- Olive oil for sauté

**Chutney**

- 1 tablespoon mustard seed
- 1 tablespoon cumin seeds
- 12 cups apple, peeled, cut into 1/2-inch chunks
- 1/3 cup grated ginger
- About 1/2 cup sugar, depending on flavor of apples and desired sweetness
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 7 cloves
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- Bay leaf
- Pinch of salt
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/2 cup apple juice
- Safflower oil
DIRECTIONS: Cook potatoes in salted water until mashable, drain, and set aside. Sauté leeks in olive oil for 2 minutes, add celery and sauté 2 more minutes. Add Dijon mustard and garlic. Continue to cook on medium heat until softened, 10-12 minutes. Lightly mash potatoes. Combine with leek mixture and the rest of the ingredients, adjust salt and white pepper to taste. Form into 2-ounce patties. Lightly brown on both sides in sauté pan with olive oil.

To make the chutney, coat pan in oil and warm over medium heat; add mustard seeds. When they begin to pop, add cumin seeds. When they brown, add remaining ingredients. Mix well. Simmer until apples begin to break down. (Don’t make applesauce!)

ENTRÉE
Shiitake Wild Rice Loaf with Sweet Potato Rosemary SauceLoaf
3 1/2 cups onion, chopped
1 1/2 cups carrots, chopped
2 tablespoons garlic, minced
1 1/2 cup celery, chopped
8 cups shiitake mushrooms, sliced
2 cups white wine
1/2 cup tamari
1/2 cup Dijon mustard
3 tablespoons dried sage
3 tablespoons dried basil
3 cups walnuts
3 cups oats
1 1/4 cup cornmeal
1 1/4 cup whole-wheat flour
4 cups cooked wild rice
1 3/4 cup cooked brown rice
1 3/4 cup cooked lentils
Salt
Pepper
Olive oil

Sauce
4 cups onion, chopped
8 cups sweet potato, cut into 1-inch chunks
1/2 cup nutritional yeast
Fresh rosemary sprig, plus more for taste
Water
Salt
Nutmeg
White pepper

DIRECTIONS: Coat pan in olive oil and sauté onions for 2 minutes. Add carrot, garlic and celery and cook for 5 minutes. Add shiitake mushrooms and continue cooking for 5 more minutes. Add white wine, tamari, Dijon mustard, sage, and basil. Continue on medium heat for 10-15 minutes until liquid is almost gone. Set aside to cool. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Mix walnuts, oats, cornmeal, and flour. Place on baking sheet and toast for 15 minutes. When cool, process in a food processor until walnuts are broken down. Mix all ingredients well. Adjust salt, pepper and herbs if needed. Bake in 3 4”x10” baking pans for 25 minutes at 375 degrees. Top with sauce.

To make the sauce, sauté onions in olive oil until they begin to brown. Add sweet potatoes, nutritional yeast, rosemary sprig, and salt. Cover with water, bring to a boil and cook until sweet potatoes are soft. Remove rosemary sprig and puree sweet potato mix. Add liquid to proper consistency. Adjust salt, pepper, nutmeg, and fresh rosemary.

Side dishes
Sautéed Collard Greens
15 cups collards, chopped in 1-inch pieces
1 large onion, sliced thin
1 cup roasted garlic
Olive oil
Salt

**DIRECTIONS:** Blanch collard greens to desired tenderness. Coat pan in olive oil and heat. Add sliced onions and sauté over low heat until they begin to brown. Add collard greens, roasted garlic and salt. Mix well.

**Maple-Glazed Carrots**
12 cups heirloom carrots, sliced diagonally
1/2 cup maple syrup
1/2 cup orange juice
1-2 tablespoons ground coriander
Salt
Olive oil

**DIRECTIONS:** Blanch carrots to desired tenderness. Drain, cool, and set aside. Heat maple syrup and orange juice in a pan. When mixture begins to boil, add carrots, coriander (to taste) and salt. Sauté until carrots are glazed.

**Dessert**

**Pumpkin Pecan Baklava with Cranberry Compote**

**Baklava**
4 cups pecans
1/4 cup maple syrup
1/2 teaspoon each of cinnamon, nutmeg, clove, allspice
7 sheets phyllo
2 1/2 cups pumpkin puree
1/2 and 1/2 mix of maple syrup and safflower oil for brushing the phyllo

**DIRECTIONS:** Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Toast pecans for 10-12 minutes. When cool, process lightly in food processor. Heat maple syrup in pan over medium heat. When hot, add pecans and spices. Mix on heat for 15 seconds. Remove and cool. Take one sheet of phyllo with long side facing you. Brush with maple syrup-oil mix. Repeat with other sheets until all are stacked. Spread pecans over lower half of phyllo. Spread pumpkin puree over top half, leaving about an inch space at the top. Roll the phyllo up into a log. Brush once again with maple-oil mixture and sprinkle the top with cinnamon. Before baking, make half cuts through the log. Bake 20-25 minutes at 375. Serve with Cranberry Compote.

**To make Cranberry Compote,** place 1 bag fresh cranberries, 1 1/2 cup of sugar, orange zest, and cinnamon stick in a saucepan. Simmer until cranberries break down and sauce thickens. Adjust sweetness to taste with sugar.