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FOOD DRINK DECOR GARDEN

# fresh

PARTIES STYLE DIY RECIPES

## Chefs dream of perfect meals

By Nancy J. Stohs of the Journal Sentinel

Nov. 4, 2011

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Famished?

Feed that hunger to your imagination. If you could have any meal you wanted, cost being no object, what would it consist of and who would cook it for you? What's your dream setting for this meal, and whom would you choose as dining companions?

In other words, what's your idea of a perfect fantasy meal?

We asked that question of eight Milwaukee-area chefs scheduled for cooking demonstrations next weekend at [Wine & Dine Wisconsin](#) at the Frontier Airlines Center.

### GRANDMA'S HOME COOKING



**Joe Muench,**  
chef-owner, Blue's Egg restaurant, 317 N. 76th St.

"Two awesome main dishes compete for this spot. First, I grew up with my Grandmother Doris, who lived with us for a number of years. I absolutely loved her braised lamb meatballs. They were golf ball-size meatballs, flavored with garlic and pepper, browned in butter and braised in a milk gravy. (Surprisingly, this is a very popular meat braising technique chefs

currently are using.)

"The meatballs simply melted in your mouth, and the flavor of the lamb was as good as it gets. I used to suck the juice out of each one after popping the whole meatball in my mouth. She (made) them very simply in a West Bend electric covered frying pan. . . . No need for fancy equipment. Also, she made great homemade bread to soak up any sauce.

"I have cooked this recipe over the years, and they are currently on the Blue's Egg catering menu" and often the customer's favorite.

"An extremely close second is my mother's beef oxtail soup," he continued. "Crazy good, fatty, falling-off-the-bone meat, with the jellylike connective bits still attached. Tail bones like these have gobs of flavor and texture, which helps thicken and enrich the broth. She makes it fun and quite kid-friendly by adding in alphabet pasta.

"Sucking meat from oxtail bones, slurping a hearty broth studded with vegetables and playing alphabet games with your food is always great fun on a Sunday after church."

Accompanying either entrée, he said, would be "some sort of malted beverage and some cold butter to slather on the warm homemade bread coming right from the oven."

"From any chef's perspective, it is always better when someone else cooks for you, even if it is a simple PB&J. My mom, Loretta, always makes great food, so I would have to give the honor/duty to her."

The setting for this dream meal? "In the home where I grew up. Completing the setting would be a 'cheesy' red-checked tablecloth protecting the antique table, a Brewer/Packer game resonating from the single-speaker radio and the smells of fall in the air."

Muench would share this meal with "anyone who has the same passion for these types of foods."

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### NEW BASQUE ON AN ISLAND

**Nicolas Ramos,**

co-chef/owner, Antigua Latin Restaurant, 5823 W. Burnham St.:

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Country-Style Ribs with Oregano and Mint

Spare Ribs

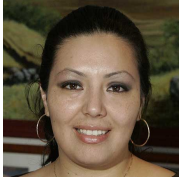


"My ideal meal would be prepared by Chef Juan Mari Arzak, who is considered to be one of the great masters of the New Basque cuisine. I would leave the menu up to Chef Arzak; however, I would like to make sure the meal included some Puerco Iberico de Bellota (Iberian pork), and warm Spanish flan.

"I would also like to watch him cook, and be able to ask him questions. I'm sure there will be a lot to learn from him! To make the dinner perfect, it would have to take place on an island of the Mediterranean Sea with my wife, Citlali, at my side."

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#### DAD'S COOKING REVISITED



**Citlali Mendieta-Ramos**, *co-chef/owner, Antigua.*

"My father was an admirer of Louis the XIV, king of France, known as the Sun King. The king had a passion for food and considered his chef as one of the most important people in his life. My father named two of his restaurants Rey Sol (Sun King), and had a passion for the French, Spanish and Mexican cultures." (Health issues forced her father into retirement after 50 years as a chef.)

"My ideal meal would be a beef Argentino, cooked by my father, Jose Mendieta, at the Palace of Versailles with all of my family. The beef Argentino is a thick cut of tenderloin, seasoned and charcoal grilled; served with sliced zucchini dipped in egg, coated with Parmesan cheese and then grilled, and some mouthwatering butter potatoes.

"It was a treat when my father used to grill this dish for me when I was a little girl. I used to enjoy every bite and savor it very slowly. . . . I would love for my husband and kids to experience one of those meals with me and have my father join us at the table."

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#### OUTDOORS AMONG FRIENDS



**Natalia Radicevich**,  
*chef, Old Town Serbian Gourmet House, 522 W. Lincoln Ave.:*

"Being an American-Serb, I have had wonderful times around the table. It comes second nature to my family because this is how we connected on a regular basis.

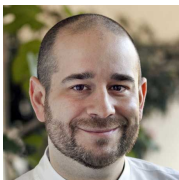
"I would definitely like to have this outside, preferably during the summer months by candlelight in the evening. Nothing too fancy but a table set for all of my family, since family is so important to me. My family as well as Branko Radicevich and his family from Three Brothers would be my dinner companions; they have a beautiful garden by their restaurant.

"Recently we shared an evening outdoors, and I never forgot it. I would love to do it again. It was magical, and the warm feelings that came from everyone (led to) some outstanding memories and stories of generations of family members.

"Food and wine would be highlighted. Foods liked by Serbians are grilled or cooked by rotisserie spit-style: homemade sausages, shish-kebabs, pork and lamb with fresh summer vegetables from the farmers market all grilled with fresh herbs, lemon and olive oil. Wine, red and white, all from the regions of Serbia. . . . A summer's bounty with family and friends. It doesn't get any better than this."

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#### FATHERLY COOKING, IN TUSCANY



**Zach Espinosa**,  
*chef, Harbor House, 550 N. Harbor Drive:*

"I would love to experience the cooking of my father and maternal grandfather; they were both strong influences on my becoming a chef. Growing up, I didn't have the appreciation for food that I now possess. What would it be? I always remember the smell of my grandfather's soups, especially chicken vegetable. He made stock, picking vegetables/herbs

from his garden. I love that smell. From my dad - grilled chicken: simple, easy and always delicious."

The setting would be the hills of Tuscany. He and his wife recently visited Italy, "and it is impossible to put its beauty into words. I would love to enjoy this experience with my wife, who always makes something good into something special."

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#### MOM'S CHILI, AT CHRISTMAS



Char Siu ribs (Chinese BBQ ribs)



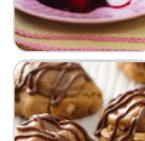
• Roasted Cranberry and Pear Scones



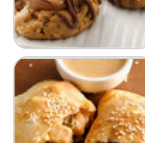
Banana Spice Cake with Walnut Frosting



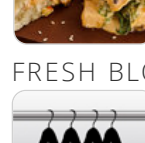
• Lemon Shortcakes with Warm Berry Compote



Summer Pudding



Peanut and Pretzel Peanut Butter Thumbprints



Chicken Chipotle Calzones

#### FRESH BLOGS



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**Justin Johnson,**  
chef, Metro Bar & Café, 411 E. Mason St.:

"My mom's chili, which is not really what you think of as a typical chili. It has more of a souplike consistency to it and is made with kidney beans and spaghetti. I don't care that many chili purists don't accept pasta in a chili. It's its own unique thing, and I've never wanted to really ask how she makes it because I'd prefer that it exist in anonymity and remain something that I can only get at home.

"The best way to enjoy it is just with a ton of shredded cheddar cheese and, of course, some soft white bread for dipping.

"The ideal setting would be the day before Christmas with my mom, my dad, my sister, my brother and my wife in attendance in the suburban house I grew up in, in Slinger. My brother and I usually have at least two or three bowls of it."

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**PORK, ALL PORK!**

**W. Chang,**  
chef, Tigerbite food truck:

"My fantasy meal would be a pork-centric five-course meal, starting with Southeast Asian pork rib soup, pork bun with pork belly for an appetizer, papaya salad with pork rind, bo ssam (roast pork butt wrapped in lettuce) for the main course, and bacon ice cream for dessert.

"The meal would be cooked by David Chang - not my younger brother, but the innovative and bold super-star chef that reinvented/reintroduced traditional Asian flavors and who inspires many chefs to this day.

"This meal would be enjoyed with Anthony Bourdain and the cook himself, not in a fancy restaurant or faraway land but in the comfort of my backyard, because that is what everyone prefers. Our choice of beverage would be Fat Tire beer, and I would hear great travel stories and F-bombs now and again, and it would be a blast!"

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**A VERY SPECIAL SURF 'N' TURF**



**Mitch Ciohon,**  
executive chef, Sabor, 777 N. Water St.:

The meal: "Langostino and sweetbread surf and turf, with a vinegar liver sauce and candied root vegetables." The cook: "My friend Tom Schultz (also a chef), because he is the only person I know who would make it the way I am thinking it would be.

"The dream setting: on the beach on the north shore of Oahu." (He and his wife honeymooned there.) And his dining companion? "My beautiful wife, Laurel Ciohon, and my beautiful Australian shepherd, Kingsley!"

"I am also pretty darn happy on my couch with a meatball hot pocket (cooked by my microwave) and some green Tabasco, watching TV with my wife and my dog."

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**WINE & DINE WISCONSIN**

The third annual Wine & Dine will be pouring and serving from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and next Sunday at the Frontier Airlines Center, 400 W. Wisconsin Ave.

This year's event features more than 150 wines (including more premium selections), 100 craft beers and 50 artisan cheeses. An expanded Critic's Choice area (requiring an additional ticket) will feature fare from noon to 3 p.m. from 20 of Carol Deptolla's Top 30 restaurants. A basic Wine & Dine ticket offers sampling from the 100-plus exhibitors on the floor, as well as all stage presentations.

Tickets are on sale at [wineanddinewisconsin.com](http://wineanddinewisconsin.com) for \$39. The \$39 advance price is good through 11:59 p.m. Wednesday. A weekend pass is \$59 in advance. Patrons ordering tickets online after midnight Wednesday and up to noon on Friday (when online sales end) will be charged the at-the-door price of \$49 per day or \$69 for a weekend pass. All tickets ordered online will be at Will Call.

Advance tickets at \$19 are required for the Critic's Choice area. Attendance is limited; as of press time, Saturday was almost sold out. Tickets to six special seminars (\$5 each) also are limited and must be purchased in advance.

For more: see the [website](#) or today's special Wine & Dine insert.

Read and share your thoughts on this story.

#### More from around the web

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- 13+ Things You Shouldn't Eat at a Restaurant (Reader's Digest)
- Organizing Mistakes That Make Your House Look Messy (HGTV)
- Mid-Market Menus Expand Sales, And Waistlines (Mid-Market Pulse by GE)
- Jessa Duggar's Fiancé Ben Seewald Is Already Living at Family Home (E! Online)

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