



what are you eating?

Thomas & Jennifer

With this being 90% food blog and only 10% jibber-jabber (some of you may argue this ratio), I guess it is safe to assume that most who read this will have seen, or read, or at least heard of *Julie & Julia*. In case you aren't familiar, here is the trailer of last year's movie.



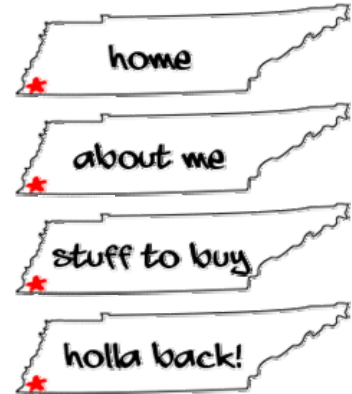
In the movie, Julie decides to cook every recipe from Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and to write about her recipes on her blog. Now, with the help of a friend and local chef, I've decided to go for the junior merit badge in cooking from someone's cookbook and writing about it. I was excited to hear that Memphis' Jennifer Chandler has her second cookbook coming out today. After enjoying her first, *Simply Salads*, I was excited to hear about *Simply Suppers*, as it would help me cook a whole meal! We chatted a little bit about the book, and I was able to get my hands on a copy a little bit before it came out.

The Simple Challenge

In order to test the true simplicity, I didn't give myself any time to prepare to cook, and I let K pick out the menu at about 5:30pm after work one day last week. We took a quick trip to the grocery to pick up supplies, which were easy, because the recipes are really broken down to include mainly basic ingredients. The menu for the evening was:

- Apricot Pork Tenderloin
- Asparagus with Brown Butter
- Baked Sweet Potato Fries

I started prepping in the kitchen at about 7 or 7:15. First came chopping up some sweet potatoes that I had from the Memphis Farmers Market, and then coating them with a light olive oil, salt, pepper, and thyme mixture.



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Once I got the potatoes on my baking sheet (my tip, covered in tin foil to ease the cleanup), I was able to jump into seasoning the tenderloin.



The plan calls for searing the tenderloin on all four sides in the skillet, then moving it to the oven at a fairly high heat to finish off the cooking. Good way to have a crisp outside, tender inside, and to lock in the flavors and juices. While adding the tenderloin to the oven, I added the apricot preserves that the recipe called for, and which would prove to be an awesome addition!

As the double oven rocked with a tenderloin up top and fries in the bottom, I got to work on the asparagus. Talk about simple! Boil asparagus until they are the ultimate green, then let them drain, before tossing them in brown butter. I will admit that I had never browned butter before, but that it is probably one of the easiest ways to add a richness of flavor to a dish that I can think of. Incredible! Unfortunately, the pictures of the asparagus getting cooked didn't really turn out, but rest assured, it was more exciting than watching water boil...

Plate Preppage

I pulled the tenderloin out of the oven, while the fries were finishing up. I followed the directions in the book and let the meat sit, while I went to work on the sauce. Keeping that which stuck to the pan, adding some water, which I reduced down, then adding a little more of the apricot preserves, and cooking that down left me with a rich sauce. I don't know about you, but sometimes the sauces is the most intimidating part. I'm always asking, "has it reduced enough, does it need this, does it need that," all while it is too hot to taste. But these directions steered me right! Here is what everything looked like right out of the oven.

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The tenderloin had a nice glaze and a nice seared outside. Thanks to good timing and my trusty meat thermometer, the inside looked like this:



As you can see in the picture, there is a thick runoff from the apricot preserves on the cutting board. Make sure to serve some of this on the plate in addition to the sauce that you prepare. It is insane. It gives a great sweetness to the rest of the flavors. In addition to the meat, the fries came out just right:



For the fries, really use that thick, kosher salt. It makes a difference!

Plated Up

At about 8, I was serving plates, so the meal might have taken about 45 minutes total prep/cooking time, once I had everything out on the kitchen counter. That is insanely easy, and I would have been willing to spend twice the time for the end result.



I had very fresh asparagus with the richness of the brown butter, sweet potato fries that highlighted the potato and not the "fry," the thyme from the fries played off the thyme in the tenderloin, which came out cooked perfectly, and the combination of the cooked preserves and the rich sauce made this as good a pork tenderloin as I have had in a good while.



Following Jennifer's recipes led me to buy into the idea that you can have good Southern comfort food on a week night after work. I did the shopping at 6, started cooking at 7, and ate at 8. That is a pretty awesome dinner to be put together at the last minute, and while you all know that I love to go out to eat, there is something incredibly rewarding and person about cooking at home for the family and sharing food with the ones you love. That's what food is all about, so it really gives me a good feeling to have created something.



pretty close!

Now, I'm not committing to cooking a recipe a day until I finish the book. It would be possible, as these are all easy, good recipes, and all of the sort of food that I like, but I don't have the attention span to focus that closely! But I bet you will see a few more home cooked meals that pop up in this space from the book! So, if you like to cook in the house, whether you already cook at a high level or not, this cookbook is easy, fun, and takes a lot of the stress out of putting a meal together! Head over to your local bookstore (Burke's perhaps?) and pick this one up. Let me know how it goes in the kitchen!

-Thomas

PS. In one of the pictures, you will see K's father's drink creation. Mix fresh peach slices (ours came from Jones) with your champagne for a nice summer drink. It adds the slightest sweetness, but nothing overwhelming, and in the end you have a little snack of champagne covered peaches!

by THOMAS ROBINSON on AUGUST 31, 2010

2 COMMENTS

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tagged DINNER, HOME COOKING, JENNIFER CHANDLER, SIMPLY SUPPERS

2 Responses



Amanda

AUGUST 31, 2010 AT 8:09 AM

Can't wait to see who plays you in the film...



Conselor Forrester

AUGUST 31, 2010 AT 9:39 AM

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