

PEOPLE

Big & Rich, the country music duo, cancel a concert to accommodate a 5-year-old. | **M2**

TELEVISION

Golden anniversary

CNN hosts this celebration of the broadcast icon "Larry King — 50 Years of Pop Culture." | **M7**



Making the most of your life



BUDGET LIVING

Color them green

Environmentally friendly weddings are the latest trend. | **M3**



Start with salad in a bag and "Simply Salads" by Jennifer Chandler and toss up (top, from left) Arugula Salad with Goat Cheese-stuffed Figs and Fig Vinaigrette, or (right) Italian Chef Salad; (bottom, from left) Shrimp Stir-fry Salad, or Asparagus, Roasted Red Pepper and Arugula Salad.

Salad solutions

By **JENNIFER BIGGS** / biggs@commercialappeal.com

WE COOKS are such predictable culinary creatures. A nip in the air each fall and we all scurry for our favorite chili pot. Give us a warm spring breeze and we make a beeline for the produce market. And there's no fresher way to serve up the season's bounty than in a salad.

In her new cookbook "Simply Salads" (Rutledge Hill Press, \$24.99), Memphian Jennifer Chandler shows us how easy making a meal from a salad really is.

"Everything starts with a bag of lettuce," she says.

*Memphian
Chandler
gives light
fare a little
weight with
shrimp,
bacon, other
goodies*

The concept for the book came from a contest held by editors at Rutledge Hill Press. The bagged salad idea won, and one of the editors contacted Memphis cookbook packager Ellen Rolfe Stauffer, whose 2005 book "Graceland's Table" was published by Rutledge.

She recommended Chandler submit a proposal. "I thought of her because I consider her to be one of the most creative minds in food to come along in a long time," Stauffer said. "She just has such a fresh voice."

Stauffer (who recently married) owns Ellen Rolfe Books, a company that's put together

Please see SALADS, M5

Cook up tasty falafel using 2 sizzling hints

By **MARK BITTMAN**
New York Times News Service

You cannot say enough about falafel. These seasoned fritters are among the best things you can make with chickpeas, they are easy and rewarding to fry (perfect for novice deep-fryers) and they are vegetarian.

Unlike other bean fritters, falafel is made from uncooked beans. The cooking goes best when the beans are soaked for a full day in plenty of water.

Yes, you can make falafel with

canned beans, but the difference in both texture and taste is pronounced. Dried beans are the way to go.

There are two keys to making good falafel. First, keep the amount of water you use when grinding the beans to an absolute minimum. More water makes grinding easier, but it also virtually guarantees that the batter will fall apart when it hits the hot oil. If this happens, bind the remaining mixture by stirring in a little flour.

Please see FALAFEL, M6



Matthew Craig/The Commercial Appeal

The finished falafel: To make a good sandwich, you've got to start with dried chick peas.

Chalk up another food choice for Downtown

I JUST LOVE IT when new restaurants open. It's always fun to go out and try something different. And while this town has some of the best dining establishments around, I do believe there is plenty room for more.

It's no secret that the Downtown dining scene has grown by leaps and bounds over the past few years. Encore, Spindini and Sauces are a few of my favorites that opened in the past year or



JENNIFER CHANDLER
The Weekly Dish

so. The newest addition to our ever-growing Downtown dining scene opened this week.

The Daily Grill (170 Lt. George W. Lee Avenue, 334-5950) is in the new Westin Hotel across the street from FedExForum. This popular Los Angeles-based chain features all-American fare using the freshest of ingredients and

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SALADS

cookbooks including "A Gracious Plenty" by John T. Edge, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority's "Occasions to Savor," and "The Church Ladies' Divine Desserts" by Brenda Rhodes Miller.

"She's been a mentor to me over the past couple of years," said Chandler, 36.

She submitted a package in December 2005 and had the book ready to go just six months later.

"All I did was eat lettuce for six months," she said.

Most of the recipes are original, although many will be familiar to locals because they're inspired by restaurant dishes.

One of Chandler's favorite salads is the Chinese chicken salad with peas, which is based on one she had at P.F. Chang's.

"It's tasty, it's colorful, it has crunch and it can be made in five minutes, using rotisserie chicken," Chandler said.

The Margarita chicken salad is based on one from Automatic Slim's, and the black and blue chicken salad is similar to one at David-Kidd's Brönte Café.

"What I'd do is go home from a restaurant after I'd eaten something I liked, remember what I tasted and start playing in the kitchen," she said.

Chandler, who owned Cheffie's Market and More in East Memphis and is a freelance writer (she has a weekly column in The Commercial Appeal's Food section), graduated from Le Cordon Bleu in Paris. The warm goat cheese salad is inspired by one of her favorite lunches there.

Other recipes came from friends and family, and some, like the warm fingerling potato salad, were prompted by thumbing through old cookbooks.

"I saw a recipe in an old French cookbook, out of print, not even written in English, and it inspired that one," said Chandler.

Her mother, Barbara Hanemann, and friends Ashley Woodman, Allyson James and Nick and Jenny Vergos contributed recipes — the latter appropriately offering the BBQ pulled pork salad that uses a mustard cole slaw like the one served at The Rendezvous.

Chandler relies on numerous salad blends, all of which are explained and pictured in the book. They're also all available locally.

"Everything is available here, because I want everything in the book to be accessible to everyone," she said. "If an ingredient wasn't available in Memphis, then it's not available in most of the country."

Some of the blends she uses are hearts of romaine, which is just the inner leaves; baby spinach; the slightly bitter baby arugula; spring mix; and slaw mixes like broccoli slaw (which



BOOK SIGNINGS

Upcoming book signings for "Simply Salads"

■ Saturday, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. at Babcock's Gifts, 4626 Poplar

■ May 14 at 6 p.m. at Davis-Kidd Booksellers, 387 Perkins Ext.

■ May 18-19 at Lansky's in The Peabody hotel, 4-6 p.m. both days, 149 Union Ave.

■ June 7 at 5 p.m. at Square Books in Oxford, Miss., 160 Courthouse Square

Chandler uses in place of florets for the popular deli broccoli-raisin salad), angel hair slaw, three-color deli slaw and shredded red cabbage.

Many are interchangeable. Triple hearts, a mix of romaine, green leaf and butter lettuces, can be used in place of romaine hearts, for example. The Mediterranean and Italian mixes are similar, as are the sweet baby greens and the spring mix.

These are the mixes that you see in bags and clamshell packages in virtually every grocery in town. They're triple-washed, and despite the recent spinach scare, Chandler believes the greens are safe to eat from the bag.

"It's all pre-washed in a special wash and packaged in a special bag to help keep it fresh," she said. "You should always store your lettuce in its original package."

The packages are made to "breathe," so that the lettuce doesn't get water-logged and begin to decay.

She picked up a few tips during her six-month salad marathon:

"Don't buy a mix with less than three days left to the expiration date," she said.

"And look it over. The bags are clear so you can see what's inside. If you see wilted lettuce or slimy spots, then it means that it was mishandled. Don't buy it."

All of the recipes include a dressing recipe or a recommendation from the dressing section of the book.

And a tip accompanies each recipe. Don't want to use a raw egg in your dressing? Substitute a tablespoon of mayonnaise instead. Can't find ricotta salata? Feta cheese is the best stand-in.

It's all about making dinner time fresh and simple.

"I'm a working mother," Chandler said. "Everything has to be do-able. It has to be easy."

—Jennifer Biggs: 529-5223

Shrimp Stir-fry Salad

For the Thai dressing:
2 tbsp. dark brown sugar
1 tsp. finely grated lime zest
½ cup freshly squeezed lime juice
1 Thai chili pepper or serrano pepper, seeded (if desired), and minced
2 stalks lemongrass, outer leaves removed and very thinly sliced
1 shallot, halved and thinly sliced
3 tbsp. finely chopped fresh cilantro

For the salad:
1 tbsp. peanut oil (or canola oil if allergic)
1 tbsp. red Thai curry paste
1 lb. medium shrimp, peeled, deveined, and halved lengthwise
12 cherry tomatoes, stems removed and halved
¼ cup scallions, sliced ½-inch long on the diagonal
1 bag (11.4 oz.) Asian salad blend

To make the dressing: In a small bowl whisk together the brown sugar, lime zest, and lime juice until the sugar is dissolved. Stir in the chili pepper, lemongrass, shallots, and cilantro.

To make the salad: In a wok over medium-high heat, warm the oil and the curry paste, stirring often, until fragrant. Add the shrimp and cook, stirring occasionally, until opaque throughout, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl; set aside to cool.

Add the tomatoes and the scallions to the shrimp. Add ½ of the dressing to taste and gently toss.

Place the salad blend in a large salad bowl. Add the remaining dressing to taste and gently toss.

Divide the salad blend among the plates. Generously spoon the shrimp mixture on top. Serve immediately. Makes 4 dinner salads.

Note: Lemongrass is a perennial herb that, until recently, was grown mostly in Southeast Asia. It offers a light and refreshing lemony flavor. Thanks to the growing popularity of Thai food, it is now available in many supermarkets. If you can't find it, substitute 1 tbsp. of freshly squeezed lemon juice.



Asparagus, Roasted Red Pepper and Arugula Salad

For the white balsamic and grainy mustard vinaigrette:
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
2 tbsp. white balsamic vinegar
1 tbsp. whole-grain Dijon mustard
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
For salad:
1 bunch (about 1 lb.) asparagus,

tough woody ends snapped off and discarded
1 package (5 oz.) baby arugula salad blend
1 roasted red bell pepper, thinly sliced (about ¼ cup)
¼ cup Kalamata olives, pitted and finely chopped
½ small red onion, finely chopped

For the vinaigrette: In a small bowl whisk together the vinegar and mustard. Slowly add the olive oil in a steady stream, whisking to emulsify. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

For the salad: Bring a medium pot of salted water to a boil. Add asparagus and cook until vibrant green and crisp tender, 1 to 1 ½ minutes. Drain the asparagus and immerse in an ice water bath to stop the cooking process. Drain again and place in a large bowl.

On each plate, place a bed of arugula. Layer the asparagus on top. Arrange the peppers on top of the asparagus. Generously drizzle with the vinaigrette to taste. Garnish with olives and red onion. Makes 4 appetizer servings.

Note: The coarse seeds in whole-grain mustard add texture and a depth of flavor to traditional Dijon mustard. Despite being similar in appearance, the French-style whole-grain mustard has a more delicate flavor than spicy Creole mustard. Dijon mustard is the proper substitute.



Top: Cheese Tortellini Salad with Sun-dried Tomato Vinaigrette; and Warm Fingerling Potato Salad with Bacon and Croutons

Warm Fingerling Potato Salad with Bacon and Croutons

For the garlic vinaigrette:
½ small garlic clove, mashed to a paste or minced
1 tsp. Dijon mustard
1 tbsp. white wine vinegar
4 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

For the salad:
¼ cup garlic vinaigrette
1 lb. small fingerling potatoes, cleaned
3 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
½ thin baguette (8 oz.), thinly sliced
8 slices of bacon
1 bag (10 oz.) field greens salad blend

For the garlic vinaigrette: Place the garlic in the bottom of a small bowl. Blend in the mustard and vinegar. Slowly add the oil in a stream, whisking to emulsify. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

For the salad: Fill a large pot with salted water. Add potatoes and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until potatoes are fork tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Drain and keep warm.

In a large skillet over medium heat, warm olive oil until a few water droplets sizzle in the pan. Cook the bread slices, stirring often, until golden brown and crisp, about 4 minutes. Using a slotted spoon transfer croutons to a paper towel lined plate to drain. In the same pan, cook the bacon, turning as needed, until crisp, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer the bacon to a paper towel lined plate to drain; keep warm.

Place the warm potatoes in a large salad bowl and add the dressing to taste. Toss to coat well. Then add salad blend and toss gently. Tear bacon into 1-inch pieces and add to the salad along with the croutons. Serve immediately. Makes 4 dinner or 6 appetizer salads.

Note: Fingerlings are narrow finger shaped heirloom potatoes. A longtime secret of restaurant chefs, these tender potatoes have a rich and buttery flavor unlike any other potato variety. Yukon Gold potatoes or red new potatoes are good substitutes.

All recipes: "Simply Salads," Jennifer Chandler

A LA CARTE

Wine dinners and tastings

■ Spanish wine dinner at **Encore** tonight at 6:30 p.m. Three courses with wines from United Liquors. **Aaron Krisfalusi** from Dreyfus Ashby importers will be the guest speaker. \$65. Reservations: 528-1415.

■ **Tonight The Palm Court** wine tasting features wines from Oregon, 6:30. \$20.

■ Tuesdays on the Terrace Iris Garden Picnic at **Memphis Botanic Gardens** on Tuesday, April 24. Food by **Wade & Company**. 6-8 p.m. Members, \$25; non-members, \$35. Please make reservations at least 5 days prior to the event by calling 576-4131. Must be 21 to attend.

■ **Cafe Society** hosts a four-course wine dinner featuring Gundlach Bundschu reserve wines on Wednesday, April 25 at 6:30 p.m. \$60 per person, plus gratuity and tax. In attendance will be winemaker **Linda Trotta** from the Gundlach Bundschu vineyard. Call 722-2177 for reservations. 212 N. Evergreen.

■ Wine 101. Blending Seminar at **Miss Cordelia's**, 757 Harbor Bend Rd., hosted by **Robert Dean** of United Liquors on Wednesday, April 25. \$10. Call 526-4772 for information and reservations.

■ **Paulette's** wine dinner on Thursday, April 26 at 7 p.m. features wine from Australia and New Zealand. **John Adams** of Star Distributors is the host. Four courses; call 726-5128 for reservations. 2110 Madison. \$49.95.

Tea time

■ "Afternoon Tea with Joan

Collins," today at 2 p.m. in **Chez Philippe**.

Collins, one of the stars of television's "Dynasty," will sign her book "The Art of Living Well: Looking Good, Feeling Great." A variety of teas and an assortment of tea sandwiches, pastries, and flavored breads from the Peabody Pastry Shop will be served. \$26.95 per person, including tax and gratuity. Reservations are required. Call 529-4188.

Cooking classes and events

■ **Mantia's**, 4856 Poplar, tonight: Chef **Matt Gelinas** of Bittersweet Restaurant offers "Stocks and Sauces II," instruction on basic stocks, then on the various "mother sauces" of classic cuisine. \$35. Call 762-8560 for reservations.

■ Also at **Mantia's**: **Demitrie Phillips**, the restaurant's first chef, returns Wednesday, April 25 for "A Mediterranean Meal for Spring." 6 p.m., \$35, reservations required.

■ Food Network's **Dave Lieberman** demonstrates tricks of the trade and prepares items for tasting at **Macy's Oak Court**, Wednesday May 2, at 6 p.m. in the housewares section on the third floor. Reservations are limited and must be made 48 hours prior to the event. Call (800) 292-2450 to reserve your spot.

■ **Chris Green** with **Viking Culinary Arts Center** demonstrates how to use fresh herbs to enhance the flavor of foods at 10 a.m. Saturday, April 28 during the Spring Herbal Festival at Trees by Touliatos, 2020 E. Brooks.

Ray Bennett, herbalist at the nursery, will share advice on growing and using herbs. Cost: \$10; free to members of the Toulaiatos Garden Club.

The deadline to submit information to A la Carte is 10 days prior to publication. Contact Jennifer Biggs at 529-5223, by fax at 529-2787 or by e-mail at biggs@commercialappeal.com. Each event is bulleted, restaurant or business name is in bold.

Top culinary teams: Kingsbury, Bartlett

Two Shelby County teams took top spots in the Family, Community and Career Leaders of America culinary competition last week in Nashville.

Betty Hall's team from Kingsbury Career Technology Center took first place, and Marsha Johnson's team from Bartlett High School's Culinary Arts program came in second.

"Of all the teams in the state, we dominated," Johnson said. "We're really proud that the top two are from here."

Winning students on the Kingsbury team were Andrew Apple, Kiara Johnson and Davier Rayburn. Bartlett's team was Chad Barton, Shay Widmer and Harry Davis.

Both schools are part of the Pro-Start program that gives the students the opportunity to intern at restaurants while they study.

"I attribute this to the Pro-Start program," Hall said. "I think the industry experience is making a big difference."

—Jennifer Biggs: 529-5223

WHAT'S FOR DINNER TONIGHT?

CHICKEN & VIDALIA ONION SALAD



Prep Time: 15 minutes
Cook Time: 35 hours

Ready In: 3 hours
Makes 8 servings

Ingredients:

2 Boneless, Skinless Chicken Breast
3/4 Cup Steak Sauce
1 (12 Oz) Bow-Tie Pasta
2 Chicken Bouillon Cubes
1 Vidalia Onion, Chopped
2 Avocados: Peeled, Pitted, & Chopped
1 Cup Cherry Tomatoes, Halved
1 Cup Ranch Salad Dressing

Directions:

1. Marinate the chicken breast in the steak sauce for 1 hour.
2. Preheat an outdoor grill for high heat. Grill chicken breast till they are no longer pink and the juices are clear. Remove chicken from grill and cut into bite-size pieces.
3. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add bouillon cubes and pasta. Cook until pasta is al dente. Drain the pasta and rinse under cold water.
4. In a large bowl, mix the chicken pieces, bow-tie pasta, onion, avocados and tomatoes. Add the ranch salad dressing. Cover and refrigerate until chilled.

Good at the following Piggly Wiggly locations:
www.memphispiggywiggly.com
1620 Madison • 4049 Elvis Presley
3666 N. Watkins • 5150 American Way
729 N. White Station Road • 3071 S. Perkins