

M

FOOD

Making the most of your life

BASIC PANTRY 101

A well-stocked pantry includes:

Oils, vinegars, condiments:

Oils: canola oil, extra-virgin olive oil, toasted sesame.
Vinegars: balsamic, distilled white, red wine, rice.
Condiments: ketchup, mayonnaise, dijon mustard, soy sauce, chili paste, hot sauce, Worcestershire.
Seasonings: Kosher salt, black peppercorns.



Dried herbs and spices: bay leaves, cayenne pepper, crushed red pepper, cumin, ground coriander, oregano, paprika, rosemary, thyme leaves, cinnamon, cloves, allspice, ginger, nutmeg
Vanilla extract

Baking products: Baking powder, baking soda, brown sugar, cornstarch, all-purpose flour, granulated sugar, honey

— Food Network Kitchens



Barbecue nachos from Alfred's.



Shrimp and grits from Bleu in the Westin.



Photos by Mike Brown/The Commercial Appeal

Wearing their white chef coats, Lance and Carol Silkes lead Jeff and Roselyn Abrams of Ohio on their Taste of Downtown Memphis walking tour, with a stop for cheeseburgers at Dyer's on Beale Street.

JENNIFER BIGGS
Whining & Dining

Mother of bride girds for storm to come

HERE ARE WORDS of advice for the mothers of the bride who have been e-mailing me: Don't be fooled by that lull you feel about a month before the wedding.

I have it on good authority that the relative calm I'm experiencing right now, and what is still ahead for those of you with summer weddings, is the calm before the storm.

As if we haven't weathered enough of a storm already, right?

But they — and I mean the mothers of the brides who have gone before us — tell me that a week or 10 days before the wedding, all tulle breaks loose.

In preparation, I'm taking some time off work — my column will return April 25 — and am arming myself with an arsenal of responses to get me through what may come:

To avoid chaos and help calm those around me, I have this: "Just relax."

To quickly fix any last-minute problems: "Just tell me how much."

And to make it all easier on me: "Just one more glass."

Cochon calls for art

The organizers of Cochon Heritage BBQ, the big event that debuts in Memphis over Labor Day weekend, are looking for artwork for the event.

First — in case you haven't heard: This is a big deal. Memphis landed the event, which is all about heritage pork, fine dining, bourbon and barbecue, and the plan is for it to become a Labor Day destination for food lovers for years to come.

There are a lot of fun elements to the weekend, and you'll be reading plenty about it. But or now, it's about the art. If you're interested in competing, it's a two-step process. First, submit a proposal to Taste Network, 57 Forsyth St. N.W., 14D, Atlanta, Ga. 30303, or e-mail carol@cochon555. Be specific about what you'd like to do (you're not limited to any medium), and include photos of other things you've done.

Cochon founder Brady Lowe and others will select up to 15 artists (teams are also allowed, up to five artists per team) to advance to the next round. Those artists will then create their artwork live on either May 25, June 29 or July 27 at the South Main Art Trolley Tour.

Besides having their work displayed at the Labor Day event, the winner or winning team will also receive \$750 cash, \$500 in products, and tickets to the event (including Sunday's VIP portion).

Get more information at the Cochon 555 page on Facebook.

Historic meals at The Peabody

This is going to be great fun. The Peabody launches its new historic dinner series with two meals honoring the 100th anniversary of the Titanic on Sunday and Monday.

There are three other events planned for the 2012 series: the 85th anniversary of the world's first solo trans-Atlantic flight by Charles Lindbergh on

Please see **WHINE, M3**

Tastin' 'Round Town

Culinary tours offer samples of 'cue with side of history

By **LINDSAY MELVIN**
lindsay.melvin@commercialappeal.com

FOR THOSE LONGING to capture the taste of Memphis, it can be a dizzying endeavor. Even smoked pork can vary widely from one barbecue joint to the next.

Not to mention the endless number of restaurants serving up Southern specialties like mac and cheese and Memphis-style tamales.

But a new tour company called Tastin' 'Round Town says it has taken out the guesswork by condensing the Memphis food experience into a three-hour culinary excursion.

Instead of committing to a full meal at one restaurant, the tour allows people to sample signature dishes from a variety of restaurants.

"This is really a great way to personalize a

city," said Carol Silkes, who leads the tours with her husband, Lance — known as LimoLance.

In starched white chef coats and with Carol brandishing a 3-foot metal whisk, the couple recently led a group into an eatery not far from the blaring blues music of Beale Street.

Soon, bowls of steaming shrimp and grits were placed in front of them.

"I've had grits once before and didn't like it," said Dr. Jeff Abrams.

Please see **TASTIN', M3**

In time for spring cookouts, Memphis chef-author Jennifer Chandler is releasing "Simply Grilling."

Justin Fox Burks



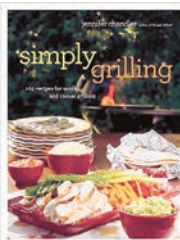
'Simply' series turns to grilling

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

In her soon-to-be-released third cookbook, Jennifer Chandler tackles grilling, from beef to bok choy, baked beans to bananas.

Sure, the grill can be used for dessert as well as meat and sides, but there was one dish that didn't make the "Sweet Endings" chapter of "Simply Grilling" (Thomas Nelson, \$24.99, release date April 17).

"The day I grilled strawberries, I almost lost my taste testers," she said. "A grilled strawberry dipped in white chocolate does



not taste as good as it sounds."

Chandler, 40, is also the author of "Simply Salads" and "Simply Suppers." As she did with these books, the Memphian relied on a network of friends and family to help her test her recipes for her latest, and she found inspiration from them, too.

"It's a process when I write a book," she said. "I start by gathering recipes I already have. Then I start thinking about things I've had in people's homes, and for 'Simply Grilling,' I started paying attention to grilled items in restaurants."

Please see **CHANDLER, M4**

EASY-WAY®
Fresh Produce
"It's Always Fresh"

FOOD FEATURES

A LA CARTE

Wine dinners and tastings

■ Local Gastropub, 95 S. Main, and chef Derk Meitzler host a "Homage to TV Dinners Past" beer dinner with Yazoo Brew at 7 p.m. today. \$35. Call (901) 473-9573.

■ Café Society, 212 N. Evergreen, hosts a Château Ste. Michelle wine tasting at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday featuring wines from the Columbia Crest Horse Heaven Hills Vineyards in Washington. Marcus Brinkerhoff of Château Ste. Michelle will lead the tasting that includes a small plate with each wine created by chef/owner Cullen Kent. \$35; call (901) 722-2177.

■ Felicia Willett collaborates with Andy Ticer and Michael Hudman from Andrew Michael Italian Kitchen, and winemaker Doug Margerum presents his wines at a four-course wine dinner April 19 at Felicia Suzanne's, 80 Monroe. Wine and appetizers on the patio at 6:30 p.m.; dinner is at 7:30 p.m. \$125; call (901) 523-0877 for reservations.

Other events

■ The Taste of Jubilee, 7 p.m. April 20 at the Pink Palace Museum, features food from 25 restaurants including Restaurant Iris, Erling Jensen, Andrew Michael Italian Kitchen, Bari, Felicia Suzanne's, River Oaks, 3 Angels Diner, plus live music and a silent auction. Tickets are \$75, and proceeds benefit the Blue Streak Scholarship, which funds scholarships for students at the Jubilee Schools. Call (901) 320-6320.

■ St. George's Episcopal Church, 2425 Germantown Road in Germantown, hosts its annual wine and cheese tasting 7 to 9:30 p.m. April 21. \$50; proceeds support the church and its ministries. Free child care for children up to 12 years old will be provided, and there's a silent auction of wines from parishioners' private collections. Call (901) 754-7282 for ticket information.

■ Starbucks hosts its first "Starbucks Coffee Tasting Extravaganza" from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. April 26 at the I-Bank Tower, 5050 Poplar. Eleven local Starbucks will each have a booth with a different theme with coffee and food pairing. Tickets are \$10 and are available at local Starbucks stores. Proceeds benefit Make-A-Wish Mid-South.

Unless indicated otherwise, prices do not include tax and gratuity.

Submit items for A la Carte to Jennifer Biggs at biggs@commercialappeal.com. The deadline is the Monday before Wednesday publication.

DINNER FOR TWO | CAROL BORCHARDT

Lighter twist on classic

Chicken dish with asparagus still fit for king

Chicken Oscar is an easy and elegant dish that is perfect for a spring special occasion.

A twist on Veal Oscar, it is said to be named for a Swedish king who loved veal, asparagus and crab. Traditionally made with a rich béarnaise sauce, this sauce is made lighter with chicken broth and reduced-fat onion and chive cream cheese.

When buying asparagus, look for thin to medium-size firm, unwrinkled stalks; the tips should be compact and not showing any sign of deterioration. Although thick asparagus is not as desirable, it is more nutritious than thin. Thick asparagus tends to be woody, but can be saved by peeling the stalk with a vegetable peeler.

To determine where to trim a bunch of asparagus, gently bend one, and where it breaks is where to cut the remaining spears in the bunch. They most likely are all the same size and were grown and harvested together.

Pounding a chicken breast to an even thickness allows for even cooking. Place a gallon-size zipper-top bag over the chicken before pounding to keep the mallet clean and to keep small bits of chicken or juice from contaminating kitchen surfaces. Plastic wrap can be used in a pinch, but I prefer the bag since plastic wrap can tear easily.

Fresh crab is preferable, but not always practical. Use a good-quality canned product instead. I avoid anything labeled imitation crab. It is usually Alaskan pollack processed to look like crab.

This is a lovely dish on its own, but if you desire a starch side, a buttery orzo or rice pilaf with peas, diced carrots, chopped scallions and parsley would work well.

Carol Borchardt owns A Thought For Food Personal Chef Service. She creates custom meals for clients in their homes. Find out more at athoughtforfood.com.



Carol Borchardt

Chicken Oscar with Lemon-Chive Sauce looks complicated, but is fairly simple to prepare.

Chicken Oscar with Lemon-Chive Sauce

12 medium-size asparagus spears
Salt
2 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
All-purpose flour, for dredging
Black pepper

1 tbsp. canola oil
1 tbsp. butter
3 oz. jumbo lump crab meat
Lemon - Chive Sauce
1 tbsp. butter
2 tbsp. all-purpose flour
¼ cup fresh lemon juice
¾ cup chicken broth

¼ cup half-and-half
2 tbsp. reduced-fat onion-and-chive cream cheese
Salt and white pepper, to taste
2 tbsp. chopped fresh chives plus more for garnish

Bring a saucepan of water large enough to hold the asparagus to a boil. Add 1 to 2 tablespoons salt, add asparagus and cook to desired tenderness. Drain and set aside until needed.

Place chicken breasts under a zipper-top bag and pound to an even thickness. Lightly dredge in flour and season with salt and black pepper.

In a nonstick skillet, heat oil and butter over medium heat. Add chicken and cook about 4 to 5 minutes per side or until thoroughly cooked through to 165 degrees in the center. Keep warm until ready to

serve.

For the Lemon-Chive Sauce: In a small saucepan over medium-low heat, melt butter. Add flour and whisk to blend. Cook 1 to 2 minutes and add lemon juice and chicken broth. Bring to a simmer and cook until thickened, 3 to 4 minutes. Add half-and-half and cream cheese, whisking until smooth. Season to taste with salt and white pepper, then stir in chives.

To serve: Place chicken on a plate. Top with crab and asparagus spears and drizzle with sauce. Top with chopped fresh chives.

— Adapted from *Food.com*

Continued from page M1

CHANDLER

"When I find something I really like, I've been known to sit there with a cocktail napkin and write down all the ingredients I can see," she said.

Such recipes are noted in the book. Jackson Kramer, chef at Interim restaurant in East Memphis, is credited for The Ultimate Burger. Chandler's friend Lucia Heros gets credit for her Grilled Artichokes with Lemony Dipping Sauce, and photographer Justin Fox Burks' Cashew Noodle Salad with Miso-Ginger Tofu Skewers made the cut, too.

"I was really excited that she asked me to contribute," said Burks, who with his wife, Amy Lawrence, runs the website chubbyvegetarian.blogspot.com; their first book will be released next spring.

"Working with Jennifer was amazing," he said. "She's just so easy to work with, and her food styling really made my job easy."

Chandler has styled the food for all her books. Babcock Gifts (where she'll sign books on May 10) lends her items for photographs, and she borrows items from friends if needed. It's her friends and family who are featured in photographs in the book.

Chandler spent about a year gathering and testing recipes. She starts with a handwritten draft and cooks the recipe herself. When she's happy with it, instructions are sent to a group of friends who are her testers, people of varying skill levels. She asks them to follow the recipe precisely, then report the results to her. "That's where a lot of my tips came from, from questions they have that I might take for granted," she said.

Each recipe includes tips, variations, notes on what can be done ahead and if applicable, a note about how long to marinate an item so readers can tell at a glance whether they have time to



Photos by Justin Fox Burks

New Orleans-Style Barbecue Shrimp

Coming up

"Simply Grilling" by Jennifer Chandler will be released Tuesday and available in local bookstores and online.

She'll sign copies at 6 p.m. April 26 at The Booksellers at Laurelwood, 387 Perkins Ext. From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. May 10, she'll be at Babcock Gifts, 4626 Poplar.

On May 20, Chandler will be on QVC to sell the book; we'll get the time to you when it's announced.

prepare the dish.

Like her other books, the recipes are easy to follow. "Everything can be bought at the grocery," she said.

"I love summer, and I was trying to add to recipes that I already use, to show people that grilling can be done on a weeknight.

"That's my goal — to get people cooking. This book needs to be slightly singed."

— Jennifer Biggs: (901) 529-5223



Grilled Bananas Foster

New Orleans-Style Barbecue Shrimp

2 lbs. large shrimp, in the shell
¾ cup Creole seasoning
¾ cup olive oil
¼ lb. (1 stick) unsalted butter, divided
2 cloves garlic, minced

1 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
1 tbsp. freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 tbsp. freshly ground black pepper
½ cup dry white wine
Vegetable oil, for the grates

In a large nonreactive bowl, toss the shrimp with Creole seasoning and the olive oil. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or up to 1 hour.

In a medium sauté pan over medium-high heat, melt 1 tablespoon of the butter. Add the garlic and sauté until just fragrant, do not brown. Add the Worcestershire sauce, lemon juice and pepper. Add the white wine and stir to deglaze the sauté pan. Cook until reduced by half.

Reduce the heat to medium-low and add the remaining butter one piece at a time, mixing until completely incorporated after each addition and cooking until the sauce is thickened enough to coat a spoon. Keep warm over low heat.

Preheat a clean grill with a grill basket or screen to medium with the lid closed for 8 to 10 minutes. Lightly oil the grill basket or screen.

Place the shrimp in a single layer on the grill basket or screen. Close the lid and cook, turning once, until the shrimp turn pink, about 2 to 3 minutes per side.

Transfer the shrimp to a large bowl. Pour the warm sauce over the top and toss to coat. Serve warm with crusty French bread.

Serves 4.
Cooking tips: If you would like to make your own Creole seasoning, it's really not hard to do. Just whisk together 1 cup paprika and teaspoon each of dried thyme, dried oregano, cayenne pepper, garlic powder, onion powder, salt and black pepper. This mixture will store for several weeks, tightly sealed, in your spice cabinet.

If you don't have a grill basket or screen, you can cook the shrimp on skewers to prevent them falling through the grates. Marinate: At least 30 minutes, but no more than 1 hour.

Buffalo Sliders with Blue Cheese Slaw

¼ cup buffalo hot sauce
¼ cup mayonnaise
2 cups shredded coleslaw mix (or finely shredded green cabbage)
½ cup blue cheese dressing
¼ cup crumbled blue cheese

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 ½ lbs. ground beef chuck or sirloin
Vegetable oil, for the grates
16 slices baguette or 8 mini-hamburger rolls, toasted

In small bowl, whisk together the hot sauce and mayonnaise. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Place the slaw in a medium bowl. Add the blue cheese dressing and crumbled blue cheese. Toss until evenly coated. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Place the ground beef in a large bowl. Generously season with salt and pepper. Divide the meat into 8 equal portions. Being careful not to overwork or compact the meat too much, pat each portion into a ¾-inch thick patty.

Preheat a clean grill to medium-high with the lid closed for 8 to 10 minutes. Lightly brush the grates with oil.

Place the burgers on the grill. Close the lid and cook, turning once, until desired temperature, about 4 to 5 minutes per side for medium. About 1 minute before the burgers are done, place the buns, cut-side down, on the grill and cook until lightly toasted.

To serve, place the burgers on the toasted bread. Spoon the buffalo mayonnaise on the burgers and top with the blue cheese slaw.

Serves 6.
Variation: For a leaner burger, substitute ground turkey for the ground beef.

Grilled Herb Chicken with Kalamata Olives, Cherry Tomatoes, and Feta Cheese

Greek Tomato-Olive Relish:

1 cup cherry tomatoes, quartered
¼ cup Kalamata olives, pitted and coarsely chopped
¼ cup finely diced red onion (½ small onion)
1 tbsp. olive oil
1 tsp. red wine vinegar
¼ cup crumbled feta cheese
2 tbsp. thinly sliced fresh mint

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Herb Chicken:

Vegetable oil, for the grates
4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 1 ½ lbs.)
4 tbsp. dried Italian seasoning
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

To make the Greek Tomato-Olive Relish: Place the tomatoes, olives, red onion, oil and vinegar in a medium bowl. Toss to combine. Add the feta cheese and mint and gently toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

To make the chicken: Preheat a clean grill to medium-high with the lid closed for 8 to 10 minutes. Lightly brush the grates with oil.

Season both sides of the chicken with the Italian seasoning, salt and pepper. Place the chicken on the grill. Close the lid and cook, turning once, until no longer pink in the middle, 6 to 8 minutes per side.

To serve, place the chicken on the plate and top with a generous spoonful of the tomato-olive relish.

Serves 4.
Cooking tips: To evenly cook boneless, skinless chicken breasts, I suggest pounding them to a uniform thickness before grilling.

Dried Italian seasoning is a mixture of several dry herbs. To make your own, combine 1 tablespoon each of dried basil, dried parsley, dried oregano, dried marjoram, dried thyme leaves, dried rosemary and dried sage. Store in an airtight container in a cool, dark place for up to six months.

Do-ahead: The tomato-olive relish can be made 4 hours ahead. Store covered in your refrigerator until ready to serve.

Variation: Fresh basil would be a delicious substitute for the fresh mint.

Grilled Bananas Foster

Vegetable oil, for the grates
½ cup (2 sticks) plus 2 tbsp. unsalted butter, divided
4 firm but ripe bananas

½ cup light brown sugar
¼ cup dark rum
1 pint vanilla ice cream

Preheat a clean grill to medium-high with the lid closed for 8 to 10 minutes. Lightly brush the grates with oil.

Melt 2 tablespoons of the butter. Leaving the skin on, cut the bananas in half lengthwise. Brush the bananas with the butter and place them on the grill, cut-side down. Close the grill and cook until lightly golden brown, about 2 to 3 minutes. Turn the bananas over and continue cooking until the skin begins to pull away from the banana, about 1 to 2 more minutes. Transfer to a plate and remove and discard the skins.

In a large sauce pan over medium heat, melt the remaining butter. Add the brown sugar and cook until the sugar dissolves, stirring constantly. Add the rum and stir. If using a gas stove, gently tip the pan to cause the rum to flame. If using an electric stove, ignite the sauce with a long lighter or long match. Continue cooking until the flame dies out, about 2 to 3 minutes. Add the grilled bananas and cook for 2 to 3 more minutes.

To serve, place the bananas and a generous spoonful of the sauce in a bowl. Top with vanilla ice cream and serve immediately.

Serves 4.
Cooking tip: Firm, just-ripe bananas will hold their shape better on the grill than ripe fruit.

Source, all recipes: "Simply Grilling: 105 Recipes for Quick and Casual Grilling," Jennifer Chandler