

# A birthday potluck

BY DAVID CAMPICHE

I just celebrated another birthday. Let's not mention numbers. Friends and my wife, Laurie, decided on a potluck. It was joyous, at least by my standards.

Laurie baked up some slider buns. I smoked meats: sirloin, pork and — give it a chance — tongue.

These were all inexpensive cuts of meat, but slow smoke revealed all the taste of an expensive roast. Adding to the party were Nancy Main's superb cookies and a neighbor's baked beans, along with potato salad, second bean salad, Scandinavian cucumbers and stuffed mushrooms.

We drank cold beer and a lovely couple of bottles of Oregon wine. Of particular interest was a barrel-fermented Pinot gris, fully alive in bouquet and taste. I can't recommend these wines enough. What have I forgotten? Dennis' pate, of course. He is a master, and his appetizer gladdened the day. And then the sun appeared.

### Preparing the tongue

I boiled the offal in homemade beef stock for nearly three hours. While warm, I peeled off the outer skin, dry-rubbed the meat and then smoked it, as well as the beef and pork for better than four hours at 170 degrees Fahrenheit in my small smoker until all was smoky, tender, and super-rich with flavor. I would later concoct a mushroom sauce from the leftover stock to cover the meats for those who are gluten-free.

### Laurie's slider buns

*Yields 16 buns*

#### Starter

- 3 ounces water
- 6 ounces whole milk
- 4 ounces bread flour

Combine all ingredients in a small saucepan and whisk until no lumps remain. Place the saucepan over low heat and cook the mixture, whisking constantly until thick, about 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer the mixture to a mixing bowl and let cool to room temperature.

#### Dough

- 5 cups bread flour
- 4 tablespoons dry milk
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 tablespoons instant yeast
- 1 tablespoon dried or finely chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 cup whole milk
- Two large eggs
- 1/2 cup butter, melted



### Preparation

Combine starter with the remaining dough ingredients and then mix and knead by hand or mixer until a smooth dough forms. Shape the dough into a ball and let it rest in a lightly greased and covered bowl for 60 to 70 minutes.

Gently deflate the dough and divide it into 16 equal rounds. Then place rolls into a lightly greased pan. Cover the pan and let the rolls rest for 40 to 50 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Brush the rolls with milk or egg wash (consisting of one egg yolk and 2 tablespoons milk), then bake for 30 minutes, until golden brown on top and the interior of the rolls is at least 190 degrees Fahrenheit.

Allow the rolls to cool in the pan for 10 minutes, then transfer them to a rack to cool completely.

### David's spice rub

- 1/4 cup whole black pepper
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon curry, optional
- Salt and brown sugar to taste

Throw all into a shaker and sprinkle liberally over the meats. I keep this mix on the shelf and use it in many preparations.

*David Campiche is a potter, poet, writer and lifelong resident of the Long Beach Peninsula with a keen interest in adventure, fine and culinary arts. Find more about his work at davidcampiche.com.*



Photos by David Campiche

ABOVE: A pate, accompanied by toppings. RIGHT: Homemade slider buns made a great addition to any potluck.

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