

At your holiday dinner, don't neglect the side dishes

By DANIEL NEMAN
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The turkey is golden and steaming. The ham is in the oven. The prime rib is resting on the counter. The goose, so to speak, is cooked.

At your holiday dinner, it is the entrée that is the star attraction. It is what gets the attention and garners all of the obviously well-deserved praise.

But something seems unfair about that. Undemocratic. The mashed potatoes and green bean casseroles do the heavy lifting, yet it is those elitist beef wellingtons that bask in the glory.

We say it is time to stand up to this abuse. Time for vegetables of all shapes and varieties to come together in peas and harmony, and demand the recognition they deserve.

Side dishes of the world, unite!

With this stirring thought ringing through the clear skies, we set about to make side dishes for the holidays that are worthy of the occasion. Side dishes that are good enough that they can hold their own against the ceaseless bullying of a salt-crust leg of lamb.

But because the entrées are still the star of the show, no matter what we say, and they demand most of the cook's attention, I made side dishes that were not too difficult or time-consuming. Which is to say I did not make Delmonico potatoes.

Delmonico potatoes, named for the legendary New York restaurant that invented them, are potatoes au gratin that are served inside the hollowed-out skin of a baked potato. You can imagine how good they are, and how much effort they are to produce.

Instead, I made mashed potatoes — but not just ordinary mashed potatoes. I made the best mashed potatoes I've ever made. They are silky smooth and deliriously rich without being too, too caloric. Which is to say they have a lot of butter, but no cream.



Roasted Beet Goat Cheese Salad.

Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

Salt
¾ cup whole milk
8 tablespoons (1 stick)
unsalted butter
Pepper

1. In a medium saucepan, combine the potatoes, garlic, bay leaf and a large pinch of salt. Add enough water to cover the potatoes by an inch or so, bring to a simmer, and cook until the potatoes are just tender, about 15 minutes.

2. Drain the potatoes, discard the garlic and bay leaf, and toss the potatoes in the pan for about 1 minute to dry them out. Remove from the heat.

3. In a small saucepan, combine the milk and butter, and heat over medium heat until the butter is melted.

4. Meanwhile, transfer the potatoes to a ricer or food mill and process them back into the warm saucepan. Gently stir in the hot milk mixture, mix well and season with salt and pepper.

Per serving: 409 calories; 25 g fat; 15 g saturated fat; 66 mg cholesterol; 7 g protein; 42 g carbohydrate; 4 g sugar; 5 g fiber; 37 mg sodium; 90 mg calcium

— Recipe from "The Grammercy Tavern Cookbook" by Michael Anthony

ROASTED BEET GOAT CHEESE SALAD

Yield: 4 servings

For salad
6 medium beets, scrubbed
6 cups arugula
1 avocado, sliced
4 ounces goat cheese, crumbled
½ cup chopped toasted walnuts

For dressing
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
¼ cup balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon maple syrup
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Wrap each beet in foil and place on a baking sheet. Roast until tender (you can insert a fork or knife through the foil to test), about 1 hour. Let sit until cool enough to handle, then peel and cut into wedges.

See, Sides/Page B2



Silky Mashed Potatoes.

Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

A couple of tricks go into making them so smooth and satisfying. One is that they must never, at any time, be allowed to go cold. Another is that instead of smashing the potatoes with a crude masher, you push them through a ricer or a food mill, for a much finer result. And the final trick seems to be to that instead of melting the butter and pouring the milk directly into the potatoes, you melt the butter into the milk and pour the mixture into the potatoes

like that. They are the epitome of mashed potatoes, everything a mashed potato should be. Who needs Delmonico potatoes?

On the lighter side, I made a delightful — and delightfully colorful — salad: Roasted beet goat cheese salad.

It's a classic, and worth bringing out for the holidays. It begins with a base of bright and peppery arugula, which is topped with gemlike diced beets,

creamy dots of goat cheese, slices of rich avocado and crunchy bits of toasted walnut.

That is a delicate balance of flavors, and it needs the perfect dressing to make it even better and bring the most out of each ingredient. But that's easy: the recipe includes a simple vinaigrette that is lightly sweetened with balsamic vinegar and a touch of maple syrup.

Actually, you'll want to serve it when it isn't the holidays, too.

Roasted winter vegetables came next: Brussels sprouts and carrots, cooked with balsamic vinegar, olive oil, rosemary and thyme. You could use other winter vegetables if you like, but the Brussels sprouts and carrots strike me as a nice and festive mix for Christmas.

You could just serve the vegetables like that, and everyone would enjoy them. But for the holidays, I made them extra special. I sprinkled them with toasted pecans and dried cranberries. It's just the right touch to put everyone in the right spirit.

My final side dish of the season was another salad, and this time it's all about the dressing. Kale, Ginger and Peanuts Salad is pretty straightforward: It is shredded kale tossed in a dressing of peanut butter, ginger and lime juice. A bit of sugar cuts the bitterness, a single shallot adds depth and water thins out the mixture until it is a proper dressing.

All it needs is something unexpected, a special treat to add flavor and crunch. All it needs are roasted peanuts scattered across the top.

It's light and surprisingly flavorful. It's just the sort of side dish that can stand up to an entrée, no matter how haughty it may be.

SILKY MASHED POTATOES

Yield: 4 servings

2 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into large chunks
1 garlic clove
1 bay leaf

Exploring the Huntington Block

GINNY MAMMEN
OUT AND ABOUT

The next building for some reason reminds me of a rhyme from my childhood. It went like this: "Late last night upon the stair I saw a man who wasn't there. He wasn't there again today. I wish that man would go away."

This building is currently housing the Grande Ronde Karate School between the West-Jacobson Building and the Wells-Fargo parking lot. In earlier days I remember it as the location of the Chuckwagon Restaurant. At this time, I don't know anything else about it except that it was not destroyed in the February 1959 fire located in the 1300 block of Adams Avenue. For the time it will have to remain a mystery waiting to be solved.

We will instead turn our attention to what was known as the Huntington Block in the middle of the block covering 1308-1312 Adams. Due to fires and demolitions over the years, little information remains about this bustling shopping center. Currently, it is the site of the Wells Fargo Bank parking lot.

Albert Clark Huntington was born in Maine in 1831 to William Huntington, a farmer, and his wife, Mary. He remained at home working on the farm until 1854 when he started west, the hard

way, by sailing to California via New York and then the Isthmus of Panama. When he arrived, the gold rush was well underway.

For a while he was a miner and in 1860 was living in Pine Grove, California, the crossroads of the mining activity. At some time he traveled farther south and purchased land in the area of present-day Los Angeles, but, unfortunately, sold it too soon to make his fortune. He joined with a party of prospectors and came up into the Walla Walla area and finally worked his way down into Oregon.

He settled in Old Town in the fall of 1863, when he started a furniture factory, making furniture and made-to-order caskets. It was reported by W. R. Gekeler in one of his "Do You Remember?" columns that "when people came from a distance they waited in town while the casket of the required size was put together." When A.C. opened his furniture store in Old Town it was the first furniture store in the Grande Ronde Valley.

In 1864, he married his sweetheart, Helen Elizabeth Baker, the younger sister of M. Baker, a pioneer attorney of Old Town. In 1866, he purchased the first La Grande schoolhouse, which had been used only two years, to use as an expansion for his furniture factory.

In the 1870s and 1880s he was shown as a cabinet maker in the census records. But A.C. was more than that. He was an

entrepreneur. He was a cornet player and music was in his soul. According to Bob Bull, A.C. left the furniture building around 1880 and "traveled over the country selling pianos and organs and was thus connected with the music trade until 1894 at which time he retired."

In 1886, he constructed the Huntington Building, known also as the Huntington Block, and opened the first music store in La Grande. In 1888, the building provided space for the music store, office, store room and dwelling.

By 1893 some of the Huntington Block businesses were J.C. Henry & Burke Furniture and Samuel Haworth, Mason and Contractor. They were joined by C.W. Harris Watchmaker and Jeweler and others. Bohnenkamp's first store opened here in December 1896. By March 1898, Huntington was excavating for his brick building adjoining the original building and stone was being hauled in three months later. After completion new businesses quickly moved in.

The store most remembered from early times in the Huntington Block was the Golden Rule Store. According to Bob Bull in his "A Little Bit of This & A Little Bit of That: La Grande and Union County Trivia" we learn there were two businessmen located in the Huntington Block around 1903, Mac Wood at 1308 and John Collier at 1312.

Both were selling similar department store-type items and



Contributed Photo

The store most remembered from early times in the Huntington Block was the Golden Rule Store.

decided to join forces and create the largest store in La Grande. They contacted E. Andross, of E. Andross and Company, the store located between them. They offered to buy out his furniture and undertaking business and he agreed. As a result, Mac Wood's original Golden Rule tripled in size and was in business until sometime between 1917-1920.

Over the years, the Huntington Block served many businesses. In February 1959, the entire building was destroyed by fire. There were four businesses located there at the time. The fire seems to have started in Schoen's Bakery at 1312, then onto The Photo Album, Fitzgerald Flowers and finally into The Town House Music and Gift Store. The structure remaining was torn down and the businesses were relocated.

The mystery building to the west housing Coleman Hard-

ware at 1306½ at the time was said to have extensive water and smoke damage but the owner had removed much of his merchandise when it seemed the fire might reach his place of business. However, it was determined that the fire wall between the buildings probably kept this from happening.

Albert Clark Huntington was an active member of the La Grande community throughout his life. He served as a member of the city council and was active in his church and Odd Fellows. A.C. Huntington passed away in La Grande in May 1921 at the age of 89 years, 8 months and 7 days.

Keep looking up! Enjoy!

Ginny Mammen has lived in La Grande for more than 50 years and enjoys sharing her interest in the history of people, places and buildings.