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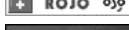
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Recipe Treats From My Travels

Many of you know that over the past month, I've been on the road, getting to know the [foodways of Charleston, S.C.](#) and volunteering in a still struggling, [post-Katrina New Orleans](#).

Tucked in my goodie bag of souvenirs and trinkets were a few recipes from the road, the best kind of souvenir because the experience isn't just remembered, it's recreated.

While I was in New Orleans, Creole tomatoes were at their peak, and their praises sung at the 21st annual Creole Tomato Festival. The start of June is a tad early for East coast tomatoes, but now that July has come 'round the bend, their beams of red light should be making an appearance any day now. (I've heard reports that south Jersey, where I cut my teeth on real-deal tomatoes, began harvesting last week.)



Creole tomatoes for sale in New Orleans. (Jessica Su)

The recipe in the goodie bag comes from culinary legend [Leah Chase](#), who whipped up Creole stuffed tomatoes at a demo at the tomato festival. It was about 95 degrees that afternoon, but it was worth the sweat to watch a culinary great at work, sharing her passion.

On a whim (and because of the 2007 debut of Jersey tomatoes), I made Miss Leah's stuffed tomatoes for Fourth of July supper. They came out sweet, soft and comforting, and loaded with all the charm and mysticism that seduced me in June and will lure me back sooner rather than later.

Moving on to Charleston... To say that history is part of everything in Charleston may be oversimplifying matters, but even the food and drink here are steeped in history. I loaded myself up with cookbooks that reflect Carolina's heritage, but today I share a dish that reflects the here and now. I'm talking about a warm shrimp and radicchio salad spiked with pancetta from the kitchen of Mike Lata, chef/owner of [F.I.G.](#) (Food Is Good). It was crazy good, a beautiful balance of acid and fat, crunch and cushion, that had me yearning for a second helping.

I managed to get my hands on the recipe details, which are simple and straightforward. Lata serves this dish in a wooden bowl, a rustic and playful touch that inspired me to buy one since my return home.

Ever bring home a recipe from your travels that takes you on a repeat

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journey? Share in the comments area below, if you please.

Both recipes below the jump.

Creole Stuffed Tomatoes

Adapted from Leah Chase, Dooky Chase Restaurant, New Orleans

Ingredients

6 medium or large vine tomatoes (avoid small tomatoes as they easily tear)
3 tablespoons olive oil or butter
1 medium onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1/2 pound ham steak, diced
6-8 small or medium shrimp, peeled and roughly chopped
3 sprigs fresh thyme or 1 teaspoon dried thyme
1 tablespoon fresh chopped basil leaves
1 tablespoon chopped parsley
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon cayenne
1/4 cup plain bread crumbs (optional)

Method

Cut tops off tomatoes. With a small spoon or melon baller, scoop out pulp and seeds and reserve in a small bowl.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Heat oil or butter in a skillet over medium heat. Cook onion and garlic until soft, about three minutes. Add ham until brown, about three minutes. Add shrimp, cooking until opaque, about three minutes. Add tomato pulp, herbs, salt and cayenne, and bring mixture up to a boil.

Lower heat and simmer, allowing liquid to reduce by half. You do not want mixture to be soupy. Taste for salt and adjust accordingly. Stuff tomatoes with filling and top with bread crumbs, if using.

Place a dollop of butter on top of each tomato and place in oven. Cook until bubbly, about 20 minutes. Serve immediately.

Warm Shrimp and Radicchio Salad With Pancetta and Mustard Vinaigrette

From Chef Mike Lata, F.I.G. (Food Is Good) Restaurant, Charleston, S.C.

Vinaigrette

2 garlic cloves, minced
2 ounces sherry vinegar
2 tablespoons Dijon-style mustard
5 ounces neutral-flavored vegetable oil (Canola, grapeseed, safflower)

Place garlic in a shallow and whisk in vinegar. Add mustard and oil, whisking until blended and smooth. Taste for salt and add as needed. Set aside.

Salad

1/2 pound white shrimp, peeled and rinsed
1 head radicchio slices, 1/4 inch thick
1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced (alternatively, a few sliced garlic scapes
4 ounces pancetta, sliced thin and julienned (speck would work here, too)
1 cup small tomatoes -- (grape, cherry, sungold) - halved
1 tablespoon olive oil

In a large sauté pan, over medium heat, add olive oil and pancetta and cook until it starts to become translucent. Add shrimp and continue cooking until shrimp are opaque and pancetta is crispy.

Add radicchio, scallions and tomatoes to pan and quickly toss to warm up. Be careful not to let it get too hot or radicchio will wilt and get too soft.

Transfer salad to a mixing bowl and add some of the vinaigrette to taste. Season with salt and pepper and divide into four salad bowls. Serve immediately.

By Kim O'Donnel | July 6, 2007; 11:58 AM ET [Travel](#)
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I am a vegetarian--what do you think would work as a replacement for the ham and shrimp of the tomato stuffing?

Posted by: m | July 6, 2007 3:37 PM

M, I'd do a rice filling. Cooked rice, with onion and garlic, tomato pulp, lots of fresh herbs, a little lemon zest, even some chopped olives.

Posted by: Kim O'Donnel | July 6, 2007 3:43 PM

m, you could use eggplant.

Posted by: Anonymous | July 9, 2007 10:13 AM

I don't have a travel recipe exactly, but I'm hoping to get one. While in Italy for my honeymoon last summer, I had this incredible white bolognese sauce (no tomatoes). Anyone know how I could recreate it? I'm thinking olive oil, white wine, crumbled beef...what else?

Posted by: Amanda | July 10, 2007 2:51 PM

Try chickpeas and/or whole unsalted cashews.

Posted by: Anonymous | July 11, 2007 2:08 PM

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