

INN AT WEATHERSFIELD – Perkinsville, VT – February 27, 2016

Braising and Roasting with Molly Stevens

MENU:

- Sear-Roasted Steaks with Blue Cheese Butter
- Top Blade Steaks Smothered with Mushrooms and Onions
- Mustard-Crusted Roast Potatoes
- Braised Celery with Crunchy Bread Crumb Topping
- Slow-Roasted Grape Parfaits with Pistachio Brittle

Steakhouse-Style Sear-Roasted Strip Steak

Serves 2 to 4

Two 12- to 14-ounce New York strip steaks, 1 to 1 1/2 inches thick

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 tablespoons peanut oil, grapeseed oil, or other neutral-flavored vegetable oil

1 to 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

1. **Heat the oven.** Position a rack near the center of the oven and heat to 375 degrees (350 degrees convection). Let the steaks sit at room temperature while the oven heats.

2. **Heat the skillet.** Place a large cast-iron or black metal skillet (a 12-inch skillet will hold two steaks nicely) over medium heat and heat the skillet while you season the steaks.

3. **Season the steaks.** Sprinkle each steak aggressively all over with salt and pepper, turning the steak and pressing all sides down onto the seasonings that fall onto the work surface. You want the entire surface to be seasoned. If you prefer to measure, use 1/2 to 3/4 teaspoon salt and 3/4 to 1 teaspoon pepper per steak.

4. **Sear the steaks.** Once the pan is hot, increase the heat to high and add the oil to the pan, tilting to coat. When the oil begins to shimmer, after about 30 seconds, place the steaks side by side in the skillet. Let them sear without disturbing; nudging the steaks will interfere with the browning. After 2 minutes, lift the edge of one of the steaks to check whether it's well seared. If so, immediately flip both steaks and smear the tops with butter, dividing it equally. (If the steak isn't browned yet, continue to sear for another 45 seconds and check again.)

5. **Roast.** Immediately transfer the skillet to the oven. After 6 minutes, start checking for doneness either by touching the meat (the steak firms up as it cooks) or by taking the internal temperature with an instant-read thermometer. Baste the steaks with pan juices each time you open the oven, and check again every 2 minutes until the steaks are done to your liking. Depending on what degree of doneness you're after and how often you open the oven to check on them, expect them to roast for 6 to 10 minutes, or until they reach 115 to 120 degrees internal temperature for rare, 120 to 125 degrees for medium-rare, and 125 to 130 degrees for medium.

6. **Rest and serve.** Immediately transfer the steaks to a cutting board—preferably one with a trough—to rest for 5 to 10 minutes. Serve on individual plates if serving 1 per person, or cut in half to share. Pour the pan drippings and any juices from the cutting board over the top of the steaks and serve.

Recipe from All About Roasting by Molly Stevens (Norton 2011)

Blue Cheese and Chive Butter

This makes more than you'll need for 2 steaks, but it keeps for 10 days, tightly covered, in the refrigerator or for a month in the freezer. You might also try it on roast chicken or simply spread on a crusty baguette. Makes about 3/4 cup.

2 ounces creamy blue cheese, such as Roquefort, bleu d'Auvergne, or a favorite local cheese

8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature

1 tablespoon thinly sliced chives

1 scant teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Kosher salt

1. **Season the butter.** Crumble the blue cheese into a small bowl and mash it with a fork until smooth. Add the butter and work to combine the two evenly. Add the chives and pepper and stir with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula until smooth. Taste for salt; the amount needed will vary depending on the saltiness of the cheese.

Transfer to a small bowl or ramekin, wrap tightly, and refrigerate. Let the butter sit at room temperature for about 30 minutes before using.

2. **Serve.** Scoop a generous tablespoon of butter onto the hot steak as it rests. The idea is that the heat of the steak will melt just enough of the butter to lightly sauce the steak and leave a small amount unmelted so it's still visible when it comes to the table.

Recipe from All About Roasting by Molly Stevens (Norton 2011)

Top Blade Steaks Smothered with Mushrooms and Onions

Serves 6

Braising time: 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 hours

Six 3/4- to 1-inch thick boneless top blade steaks (about 2 3/4 pounds)

Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper

All-purpose flour, for dredging

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

3/4 pound button or cremini mushrooms, sliced about 1/4-inch thick

4 medium portabello mushrooms (about 3/4 pound), sliced about 1/4-inch thick

2 large yellow onions (about 1 pound total), sliced about 1/4-inch thick

1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme

1 1/2 teaspoons sweet paprika

1/2 cup plus 4 teaspoons dry sherry

1/4 cup heavy cream

1/2 lemon

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

1. Dredging the steaks: Using a meat mallet or straight rolling pin, pound the steaks to 1/2-inch thickness. Season all over with salt and pepper. Put the flour into a shallow dish (a pie plate works well) and dredge half the steaks one at a time by placing one in the flour, turning to coat both sides, lifting and patting lightly to shake off any excess. Set the steaks on a large plate or sheet of wax paper, without stacking.

2. Browning the steaks: Heat 1 tablespoon of butter and 1 tablespoon of oil in a deep, large skillet (12-inch) over medium-high heat. Sear the dredged steaks until nicely browned on both sides but not cooked through, about 4 minutes per side. Transfer the steaks to a platter as they are browned. Dredge and brown the and the remaining steaks. If there are many burned bits of flour in the pan, wipe them out with a paper towel before proceeding.

3. Sautéing the mushrooms. Add another 1/2 tablespoon of each butter and oil to the pan and melt over medium-high heat. When hot, add the mushrooms, season lightly with salt and pepper, and sauté, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms are tender and just starting to brown, 15 to 20 minutes. The mushrooms will at first throw off a good deal of liquid, then as they sauté, the liquid will evaporate and the mushrooms will begin to brown. Transfer the mushrooms to a bowl.

4. Sautéing the onions. Return the skillet to medium-high heat and add the remaining 1/2 teaspoon each of butter and oil. When hot, add the onions, thyme, and paprika. Season lightly with salt and pepper, and sauté, stirring, until the onions are soft and almost translucent, about 8 minutes. Pour in the 1/2 cup of sherry, and bring to a boil. Stir to loosen any bits stuck to the bottom of the pan.

5. The braise. Reduce the heat to a gentle simmer, and return the mushrooms and their juices to the pan. Stir to combine. Tuck the steaks into the onion-mushroom mixture, adding any juices that have leaked from the meat. Spoon some of the mushrooms and onions over the steaks so that they are buried or “smothered”. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover tightly (use foil if you don’t have a proper lid), and simmer gently until the

steaks are fork tender, 1 hour and 15 minutes to 1 1/2 hours. Check the heat periodically to see if the liquid is bubbling to vigorously. Lower the heat if necessary to maintain a gentle simmer.

6. The finish. Remove the steaks to a serving platter. Increase the heat to a boil, add the cream and boil until the mushroom-onion sauce is the consistency of thick cream soup, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in the remaining 4 teaspoons of sherry, a squeeze of lemon, and half the chopped parsley. Taste for salt and pepper. Spoon the mushroom-onion sauce over the steaks. Sprinkle with the remaining parsley and serve.

Recipe from All About Braising by Molly Stevens (Norton 2004)

Mustard-Crusted Roast Potatoes

Serves 4 to 6

1/3 cup Dijon mustard
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary
1/2 teaspoon Aleppo or Marash pepper or 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 pounds red potatoes, cut into 3/4- to 1-inch cubes

1. **Heat the oven.** Position a rack in the center and heat the oven to 400 degrees (375 degrees convection). If desired, line a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

2. **Make the coating.** In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the mustard, olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, rosemary, Aleppo or Marash pepper or crushed red pepper flakes, and salt and pepper to taste. Add the potatoes and toss to coat.

3. **Roast and serve.** Transfer the potatoes to the baking sheet and spread them in a single layer. Scrape the bowl with a rubber spatula and drizzle any leftover coating onto the potatoes. Roast, tossing with a spatula a few times and shaking to restore an even layer, until the potatoes are crusty on the outside and tender throughout, 50 to 55 minutes. Serve hot.

Recipe from All About Roasting by Molly Stevens (Norton 2011)

Braised Celery with Crunchy Bread Crumb Topping

Do your best to get all the strings out of the celery - or else you will end up with tender celery streaked with strong, stringy fibers.

Serves 4

Braising Time: about 1 1/2 hours.

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature

1 head celery (about 1 3/4 pounds)

1 large shallot or 1 small yellow onion, finely minced (about 1/4 cup)

1 1/2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh thyme or 1/2 teaspoon dried

Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper

1/4 cup dry white wine or dry white vermouth

1 cup chicken stock, homemade or store-bought

1/3 cup freshly grated Gruyere, or half Gruyere and half Parmigiano-Reggiano

3 to 4 tablespoons fresh bread crumbs made from day-old rustic white bread

1. Heat the oven to 325 degrees. Using about half the butter, generously butter a large gratin dish or baking dish (9- to 10-by-13- to 14-inch).

2. **Washing and trimming the celery:** Tear the celery stalks from the head. You should have about 10 or 12 sturdy outer stalks. Stop tearing off the stalks when you reach the shorter, pale, tender stalks, or the heart. Set it aside. Rinse the celery stalks, giving special attention to the inside of the base of each stalk, where dirt tends to lodge. You may need a vegetable scrubber to remove stubborn dirt. Trim off the top part of the stalk where it branches into leaves, and set the tops aside with the heart. Using a small paring knife or vegetable peeler, scrape the outside of each celery stalk to remove the fibrous strings that run its length. Cut the stalks into 3- to 4-inch lengths. Arrange them in a layer in the baking dish. It's fine if the sticks overlap some; they will shrink and flatten into a single layer as they braise.

3. **The aromatics:** Finely chop the reserved celery heart, with the celery tops and leaves. Melt the remaining butter in a medium skillet (10-inch) over medium-high heat. Add the shallot, thyme, and chopped celery heart and leaves. Season with salt and pepper. Saute, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are soft and beginning to brown, about 10 minutes. Pour in the wine and simmer until the pan is almost dry, about 3 minutes. Add the stock and simmer until reduced by half, another 6 minutes or so.

4. **The braise:** Pour the celery-shallot-stock mixture over the celery sticks. Cover with foil and slide into the middle of the oven to braise until the celery has collapsed and feels very tender when prodded with a knife tip, about 1 hour and 15 minutes.

5. **The finish:** Remove the celery from the oven, and increase the oven heat to 400 degrees. Sprinkle the cheese and bread crumbs over the celery, and return to the oven until the cheese is melted and the top is crusty and browned, about 10 more minutes. Serve hot or warm.

Recipe from All About Braising by Molly Stevens (Norton 2004)

Slow-Roasted Grapes

Makes about 1 cup, enough for 4 servings

Roasting time: 2 1/4 to 2 1/2 hours

3/4 pound red grapes (2 heaping cups), preferably seedless, such as Red Globe, Crimson Seedless, or Red Flame; rinsed and stemmed

1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted

1. Heat the oven. Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat to 250 degrees (225 degrees convection). Line a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone mat.

2. **Roast.** Arrange the grapes in a single layer on the baking sheet. Drizzle with the olive oil or butter and toss to coat. Roast, stirring with a spatula once or twice during cooking, until shriveled and lightly caramelized, 2 1/4 to 2 1/2 hours. The grapes may be made ahead and kept refrigerated for several days. Return to room temperature before serving.

For parfaits:

Season 2 cups Greek yogurt with 2 tablespoons honey or maple syrup, or to taste.

Layer in parfait glasses with roasted grapes.

Add chopped nuts as desired.

Recipe from All About Roasting by Molly Stevens (Norton 2011)

Salted Pistachio Brittle

Makes about 4 cups

Nonstick vegetable oil spray

1 cup sugar

1/2 cup light corn syrup

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

3 tablespoons water

1 cup unsalted, shelled raw natural pistachios, very coarsely chopped

3/4 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon kosher salt

Coarse gray sea salt (such as fleur de sel or sel gris)

Special equipment: A candy thermometer

1. Prepare the baking sheet for cooling the brittle. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper; spray with nonstick spray and set aside.

2. Make caramel. Combine sugar, corn syrup, butter, and 3 tablespoons water in a heavy-duty saucepan. Stir over medium heat until sugar dissolves. Fit saucepan with candy thermometer, bring mixture to a boil, and cook it registers 310 degrees and is tan around the edges, 12 to 16 minutes.

Remove from the heat and quickly remove the thermometer. Immediately, whisk in baking soda and then the kosher salt; DO NOT OVERMIX. Stir in the pistachios.

4. Quickly pour and cool. Immediately pour caramel onto prepared baking sheet and, using a heatproof spatula, quickly spread out as thin as possible. Sprinkle sea salt over and let caramel cool completely. Break brittle into pieces. DO AHEAD: Brittle can be made 1 week ahead. Store airtight between sheets of parchment paper (to prevent sticking) at room temperature.