

**Soft-Shell Crabs with Basil-Almond Crust, Shaved Asparagus Salad, and Creole Dijonaise Sauce**

*Claire's at the Depot, Warrenton, VA*

The asparagus salad can be made right before soaking the crabs. Make the Dijonaise and basil-almond dust before cooking the crabs. — *chef David Scales*

Preparation time: 45 minutes 🍴 Cooking time: 15 minutes 🍴 Serves 4.

**For the asparagus salad**

- 1 bunch asparagus
- 1 shallot, finely diced
- 2 tablespoons chives, finely diced
- 2 tablespoons citrus champagne vinegar
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Thinly slice asparagus, starting from the tip to halfway down the stalk. Place in a bowl, add the other ingredients, and toss. Let marinate for a half hour in the refrigerator.

**For the crabs**

- 2 cups buttermilk
- 2 tablespoons Old Bay seasoning
- 4 jumbo soft-shell crabs, cleaned
- 2 cups basil-almond dust (recipe below)
- 4 tablespoons clarified butter

Combine buttermilk and seasoning in a bowl. Add crabs to the mixture and marinate for 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 350 F.

Heat an oven-safe saute pan large enough for all 4 crabs over medium-high heat and add clarified butter.

Take crabs out of the marinade and lightly shake off excess liquid. Coat crabs in basil-almond dust.

Sauté crabs topside-down. (Watch out for hot, splattering butter.) Flip them over and move pan to oven. Finish cooking in the oven for about 3 minutes. Remove the crabs from the pan and place on a plate lined with a paper towel to remove excess cooking oil before plating.

**For the basil-almond dust**

- ¼ cup basil, dried
- ¼ cup almonds, sliced
- 1¾ cups flour
- 1 pinch salt

In a food processor, add almonds and dried basil and pulse to a fine dust. Mix with flour and salt.

**For the sauce**

- 2 egg yolks
- 2 tablespoons water
- ½ pound clarified butter, warm
- 1 splash Tabasco
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon Creole mustard
- 1 pinch cayenne pepper
- Salt

Whip yolks and water over a double boiler with balloon whisk until yolks are at the "ribbon" stage.

Slowly emulsify warm clarified butter to and yolk mixture until incorporated.

Add Tabasco, juice, mustard, cayenne pepper, and salt to taste.

Keep in a warm spot.

**Assembling and serving**

Using a slotted spoon, spread the asparagus salad across each plate diagonally, in a long 1-by-6-inch line. On each plate, place a crab over the salad line. Circle plate with the sauce.

**Butter Lettuce Salad with Sugared Walnuts, Strawberries, and Gorgonzola**

*The Seasonal Cook, Charlottesville, VA*

Enjoy this salad when strawberries are at their peak! It takes a just few minutes to make and even less time if you prepare the walnuts in advance. — *chef Ashley Hightower*

Preparation time: 15 minutes 🍴 Cooking time: 15 minutes 🍴 Serves 4.

**For the dressing**

- ½ teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 small clove garlic, minced
- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- ⅓ cup extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Whisk mustard with garlic and vinegar. While still whisking, slowly drizzle in olive oil to emulsify. Season to taste.

**For the walnuts**

- 1 egg white
- 2 cups walnuts
- 3 tablespoons white sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line baking sheet with parchment paper or nonstick bakeware liner.

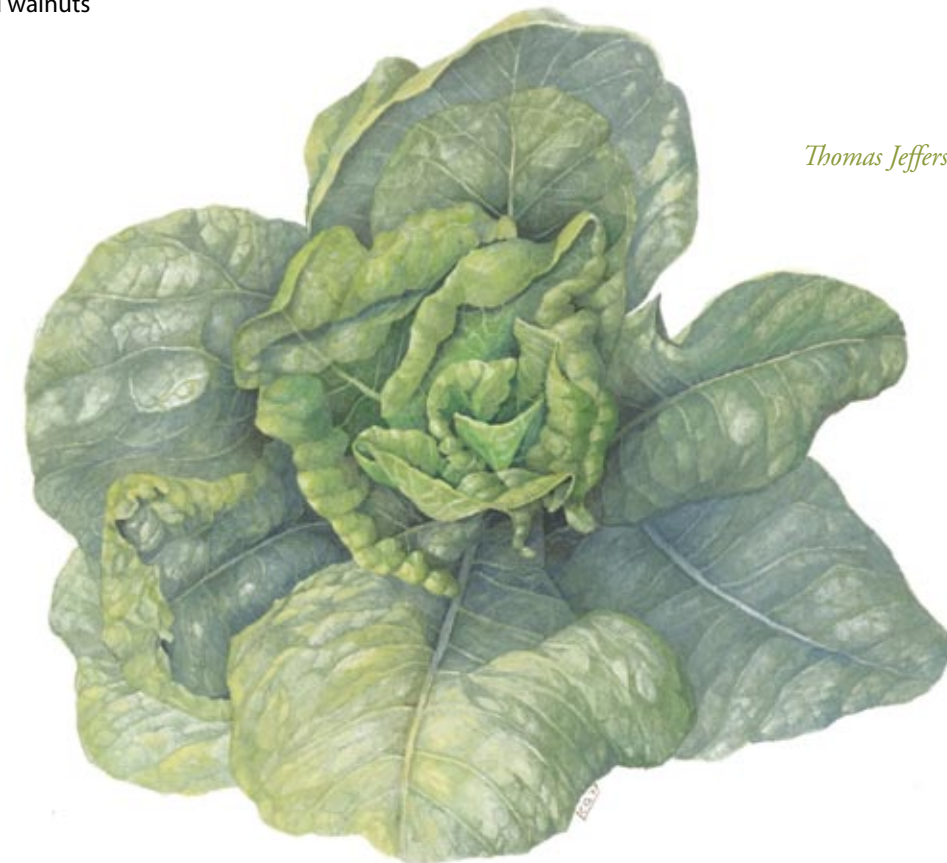
Whisk egg white in bowl until frothy. Add walnuts and toss to coat. Add sugar and salt and toss well.

Spread on baking sheet and bake for 15 minutes, stirring twice.

**Assembling and serving**

- 1 head butter lettuce (Bibb or Boston), washed and torn into large pieces
- Dressing (recipe above)
- 1 cup strawberries, washed and quartered
- 4 ounces Gorgonzola cheese, crumbled
- ⅔ cup sugared walnuts

Toss lettuce with dressing and then divide among plates. Top with quartered strawberries, crumbled Gorgonzola, and sugared walnuts.



*watercolor of  
Thomas Jefferson's "Tennis Ball" lettuce  
by Lara Call Gastinger*

Great Country Farms & Bluemont Vineyard, Bluemont, VA

We find that one of the joys and challenges our CSA members have in spring is deciding what to do with all the greens we give them, so here are a few recipes they love. 🌱 Store greens unwashed in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. To wash, soak them in a bowl or sink of cool water and swirl around to remove any clinging dirt. Remove from the water and drain. Repeat until the water is free of debris. Just running water over them may not be enough to remove the grit. — *Kate Zurschmeide*

**Fresh and Tender Kale Salad the Farm Way**

Start-to-finish time: 1 hour, 15 minutes  
Serves 6.

**For the marinade**

- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ½ cup lemon juice
- Bragg's Liquid Aminos (a liquid protein concentrate made from soybeans) or soy sauce, to taste

Combine oil and juice. Add Bragg's or soy sauce to taste.

**For the greens**

- 1 bunch fresh kale
- ½ cup sliced mushrooms
- 2 to 3 spring onions, thinly sliced
- ½ avocado, diced
- Sprouts, for garnish

Wash and tear kale into small pieces. Put all veggies into a large bowl and top with marinade (recipe above). Toss gently.

Marinate at least 1 hour, and serve.

**Baked Cheese Polenta with Greens**

Start-to-finish time: 55 minutes  
Serves 6.

**For the greens**

- 1 large bunch of greens (collards, kale, beet greens, or Swiss chard), washed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 2 tablespoons water

Remove stems and ribs from greens and chop into small pieces. Coarsely chop leaves.

Heat oil in a skillet. Add ribs and stems and sauté until tender. Add garlic and sauté 2 minutes. Add leaves and water to the pan, cover, and cook 2–3 minutes until tender. Remove from heat.

**For the polenta**

- 1¾ cups water
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 14-ounce can vegetable or chicken broth
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- ½ cup crumbled goat cheese (or other soft cheese)
- 3 tablespoons grated fresh Parmesan cheese

Place water, salt, and broth in a large saucepan. Whisk in cornmeal. Bring to a boil and reduce heat. Simmer 8–10 minutes, stirring constantly. Stir in cheeses.

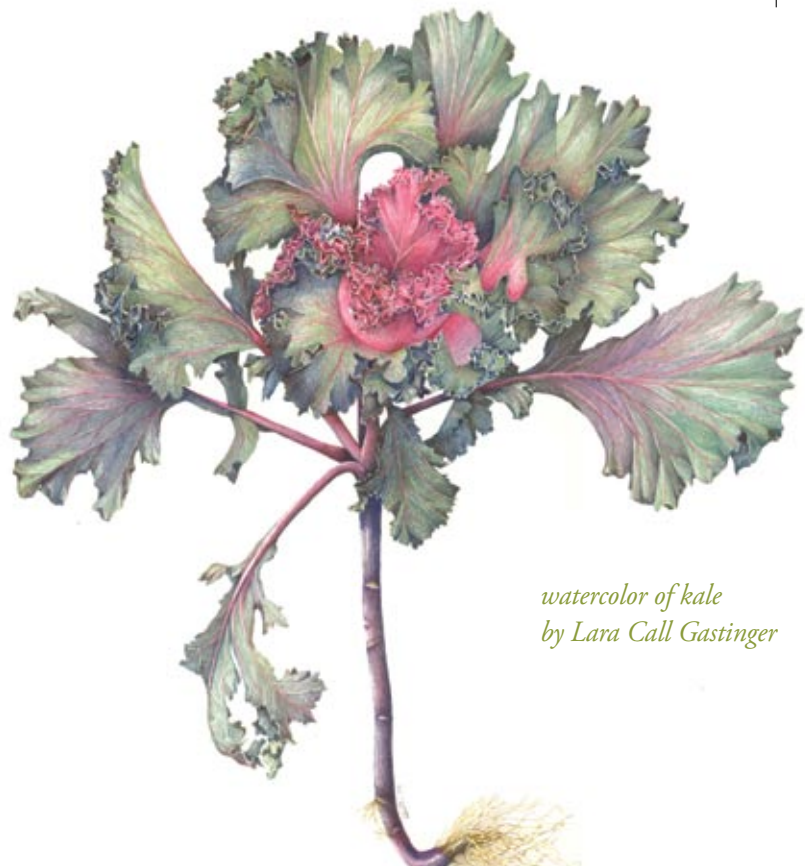
**Assembling and serving**

- ¼ cup reduced fat sour cream

Preheat oven to 400 F.

Spoon half the polenta into a small baking dish. Top with greens mixture and then sour cream. Cover with remaining polenta.

Bake at 400 F for 20 minutes. Remove and let stand for 10 minutes to set.



*watercolor of kale  
by Lara Call Gastinger*

**Spaghetti Carbonara**

The Local, Charlottesville, VA

The key to a great bowl of carbonara is fantastic eggs. Make sure that the eggs are from a reputable source and very fresh. This is important not only for flavor, but also for safety concerns, as we are dealing with essentially raw eggs. Another important aspect of the dish is the pork. We make guanciale and pancetta at the restaurant, and although both can be used to make carbonara, the guanciale (cured pork jowls) is preferred. In a pinch, bacon can be used, although the smokiness can overpower the delicate flavor of the eggs. This recipe contains no vegetables or cream, which is the way I prefer my carbonara, although I would not object to adding some blanched peas when they are in season. To ensure that the pasta is very creamy, I nestle a raw egg yolk in each serving of pasta, which the diner stirs with the pasta right before eating. — *chef Matthew Hart*

Preparation time (carbonara): 15–20 minutes 🌱 Cooking time (carbonara): 8–10 minutes 🌱 Serves 4.

**For the carbonara**

- 2 whole eggs
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil, divided
- ½ pound guanciale (recipe below) or pancetta, diced small
- 1 pound dried spaghetti
- Salt and pepper (use only high quality, freshly ground pepper for this dish)
- 4 egg yolks

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.

Beat whole eggs with ¾ cup Parmesan and ¼ cup olive oil.

Render the guanciale, along with the remaining olive oil, in a pan large enough to hold all of the pasta over medium heat. When guanciale is crisp, remove one quarter of it to a paper towel.

Add pasta to the boiling water. Cook until al dente and then drain, reserving about ½ cup of the cooking water, and add the pasta to the pan containing the guanciale.

Toss the pasta with the fat and guanciale. Remove from heat and then add the beaten egg mixture. The heat from the pasta will be enough to cook the eggs and bind the mixture to the pasta. If the pasta appears to be too dry, add some of the reserved water used to cook the pasta. Season with salt and pepper, making sure to use plenty of the fresh cracked pepper.

Distribute the pasta evenly between four bowls and, working quickly, nestle a yolk in the middle of each bowl of pasta. Season the yolk with salt and pepper. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of Parmesan over each serving of the pasta. Top with reserved, crisp guanciale.

Instruct your guests to stir the yolk into their pasta and enjoy. Be sure to serve the pasta immediately after completing, as cooled pasta will not create the desired effect when the yolk is stirred.

**For the guanciale**

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup kosher salt
- ¼ cup cracked black pepper
- 7–10 juniper berries
- 2 fresh hog jowls



Combine all spices in a bowl. Mix thoroughly.

Liberally cover jowls on all sides with the mixture. Place jowls in a resealable plastic bag and refrigerate for 7 days.


Remove jowls from the bags and rinse with cold water. These can be sliced thinly and used like bacon at this point, but they will be better if you first hang them in a dry, cool place for 2 to 4 weeks.



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## Strawberries and Cream Cupcakes

*Thyme Market, Culpeper, VA*

Cupcakes are becoming more popular these days and are one of our best sellers. We made strawberry, carrot, and spring cupcakes decorated for Easter, and we are planning many more for the spring and summer seasons. Strawberries are fresh and plentiful and are a welcome change after the winter months of dried fruits.

— owner *Connie East*

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 20–25 minutes

Makes 24 large cupcakes.

### For the cupcakes

- 2¾ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup cake flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- 2¼ cups sugar
- 3 large eggs, plus 1 egg white
- 1 cup 2% milk
- 1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 2 cups finely chopped strawberries

Preheat oven to 350 F.

Mix together flours, baking powder, and salt in a bowl. Set aside.

Using the paddle attachment in a standing mixer, whip butter and sugar. Add eggs (including the extra egg white), one at a time, and mix well.

Alternating between dry ingredients and milk, add these to wet mixture, beginning and ending with dry ingredients.

Add vanilla and mix well. Stir in strawberries.

Bake in cupcake molds at 350 F for 20–25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.

### For the buttercream frosting

- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 pound confectioners' sugar
- ½ cup unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon 2% milk

Put ingredients in a stand mixer and beat for 1–2 minutes. Add more milk if needed to reach spreading consistency.

### Assembling and serving

Chopped strawberries

When cupcakes are cool, frost with buttercream frosting and top with chopped strawberries.