



SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2007

From Chef John Sharpe:

As the summer starts so does my quest for squash blossoms. The most popular appetizer on my dinner menu is Crispy fried Stuffed Squash Blossoms filled with sweet corn tamale, served on a bed of salsa verde with roasted corn salsa. The squash blossom is a sacred food of many Native American tribes. The symbol being that of fertility.

Each plant produces typically one male bloom every night. This has to be picked at around or just before dawn so they will keep for a couple of days. If picked too late in the morning they will have opened too wide and will have lost their shape and ability to hold the filling. These ones we can use as a garnish for the squash blossom soup or in a quesadilla. I make a clear chicken or turkey stock as the base for my Squash Blossom, tortilla soup. These soups are made with peppers; tomatoes, onions, garlic and oregano served over a scoop of creamy polenta and then topped with crispy fried corn tortillas chips and squash blossoms. Whole-wheat tortillas filled with cheese, roasted corn salsa and squash blossoms, served with a locally grown salad. Farmers Market Salad with Seared Fresh tuna is also a favorite dish on both the lunch and dinner menus.

The first Churro lambs of the season are now arriving so I expect to be serving my Churro Lamb Sampler Platter for the next few months as long as the supply lasts. I buy only whole lambs not just the choice cuts. The reason for this is that we have so few available each year.

A brief history of the Churro.

The Spanish brought the early Churro lamb to the New World in the 16th century and it adapted quickly to the land of the southwest. It became a mainstay of the Native tribes and was used for meat and especially by the Navajos as the wool for their blankets.

Looking back over the years this became a huge part of the Navajo tradition and the Churro was a major source of food, shelter and goods for trade. I will spare you the details of the breeds demise over the years. It is suffice to say that was discouraged by the wool industry due to the fine texture of its fleece that made commercial spinning very difficult. Other breeds were introduced and the Churro all but disappeared. A few weavers refused to switch breeds and continued to raise the sheep in remote areas. The breed was registered some 20 years ago and a few dedicated people have saved it from extinction. Today we have also discovered the not only does this breed produce some of the finest wool it also has distinctly delicate meat. The breed develops much slower than other breed; therefore its flavor is milder for many more months before becoming mutton. I consider this meat to be some of the finest tasting lamb you will find anywhere. Raised out on the ranges of the Navajo reservation without hormones or antibiotics, feeding off the land far away from pollution and pesticides. While not certified organic (this costs a lot of money to go through this process) it is as close as you can find.

continued on next page

The flavor is delicate and sweet, not strong and gamy as some lamb is. Most of the animals I buy are very small by commercial standards weighing only 45 to 70 lbs live weight. Compared to commercial Colorado lamb that comes in over 100 lbs. As is the case with heritage breeds and small local farms, the flavor of the meats is very distinct. These animals have not been force fed in feedlots for weeks at a time on food pellets whose origin is in question. Our Churro has eaten off the land and their flavor reflects their diet. You can taste the difference. So visit us this summer to experience squash blossoms and Churro lamb.

I have now added Chocolate Grand Marnier Soufflé to the dinner menu dessert selection. This is the same soufflé we served of years at Bistro 201 in Newport Beach. If you have never had a soufflé now is the time. Served with fresh whipped cream and a grand Marnier Chocolate sauce.

Every Sunday morning at 8.00am I am on the Flagstaff Community Farmers Market buying my vegetables and fruits for the week ahead.

This is often full of surprises so as I do not always know what the farmers will be selling on any given week. Most of the summer growers are in the Chino Valley area north of Prescott. I also have growers right here in Winslow and east of us in Woodruff. There will be herbs galore from the secret garden of Esperanza! My own small garden produces squash blossoms, squash, peppers and fresh herbs.

So remember when you dine here you will be supporting local growers. As a member of Slow Food and the Chef's Collaborative I support my local growers and ranchers.

I hope when you visit us you will enjoy our local foods.

Cook Book Update!

Many of you know I have been working on The Turquoise Room Cook Book for quite some time.

The narrative section and historical notes are complete. I am now wading through all of my recipes and rewriting them in smaller quantities.

This is very time consuming, as I have to cook every recipe and rework it at home as if done by you. Once this has been completed I will travel to Singapore and meet with the publishers to start the publishing process. I am hoping to do this next step in January, which should bring the release date to May of 2008. The book will have many beautiful full color plate photos of the hotel, my dishes and food being grown in the area. It will be a wonderful keepsake for everyone visting La Posada.

It will be worth the wait.

Owner/Executive Chef - John Sharpe