



## SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2008

From Chef John Sharpe:

### The Squash Blossoms Are Coming

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 tortilla chips and squash blossoms. Whole-wheat tortillas filled with cheese, roasted corn salsa and squash blossoms, served with a locally grown salad. We expect the first to be here by mid May.

### The Churro Lamb

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 breed's demise over the years. It is suffice to say that it 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 that not only does this breed produce some of the finest wool it also has distinctly delicate meat. The breed develops much slower than other breeds; 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, at this cost it is as close as you can find.

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. The lambs I am serving at this time were raised on the reservation by Jay Begay Jr. We are grateful to Jay for the hard work and dedication he puts into the raising of these animals. Do not miss this opportunity to enjoy a rare "American Heritage Breed of Sheep".

I have now added Chocolate Grand Marnier Soufflé to the dinner menu dessert selection. This is the same soufflé we served for over 10 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.

### Coming Soon In June ----The Farmers Market

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

This is often full of surprises 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.

### The Cookbook

As many of you know I have been working on a cookbook for a long time. Well the time has come and I am under the gun to finish it. We have entered into an agreement with a local team of publisher, editor, designer and photographer to get this book finished and off to the printer by July 4th. Providing I hit the deadline we will have the books here in October of 2008.

**If we have your email address you will soon receive a notice on the book and how to pre-order you own custom autographed copy.**

I will be hand writing in each of the first 1000 copies ordered.

We will keep you informed as to final title, size, and a peek at some content and of course the cost. This will be a full size, coffee table book with many beautiful full color plates of my food as well as the hotel and the surrounding attractions. This will be the perfect memento of your visit here at La Posada and The Turquoise Room.

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## From Our Churro Lamb Source:

### **Diné Woven**

### **Navajo-Churro Sheep Ranch**

### **Textiles & Art**

Their faces will be Dawn  
The sun put down all the wild animals,  
and when the sheep were placed,  
this is what was said:

“Their faces will be dawn,  
their eyes will be rock crystal,  
their ears will be plants,  
their wool be white fog.”

*From the Navajo Blessingway ceremony*

### **About Our Animals**

Diné Woven lambs and sheep are produced under carefully applied holistic Navajo traditional standards. Our production methods are modeled after the Navajo natural cycles found in nature, resulting in a natural and comfortable life cycle for our land, animals and self. Diné Woven Ranch pastures are a mixture of medicinal herbs, sage and perennial grasses growing at four majestic elevations starting in the desert at 3,000 feet above sea level to 9,000+ feet high on the Carrizo mountain. Where the true pastures of salad for sheep grows and the flavor of these pastures flavor the meat and keep them healthy.

Diné Woven's scared animals are rangeherded on the land, no antibiotics,steroids, or western medicine are administered to them, they are all holistically raised, using only what nature has to offer.

Diné Woven

Navajo-Churro Sheep Ranch

Textiles & Art

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