



Sous Chef, Armando Salpas | Bobby Griffing, Executive Chef | Jonathan Bowden, Pastry Chef

From Their Kitchens to Yours...

Tips from the Pros

By Jillian A. Mills Photography by Russell Bamert



¡Sabroso! Magazine got the New Year started off right, hosting 2007's first Edible Education at National Restaurant Supply. With guest chefs the caliber of Executive Chef Bobby Griffing and Pastry Chef Jonathan Bowden from Greenery Restaurant and Market, it was a surefire success. The main course was Veal Osso Buco with Hot Italian Sausage Risotto, prepared by Chef Griffing. Osso Buco, cut from the shank of veal, is traditional Milanese cuisine. The term osso buco means "hollow bone", and it is the marrow (which is extracted from the bone) that is one of the key elements in the richness of the finished dish.

After indulging in Chef Griffing's decadent main course, the audience was treated to an equally luscious Lemon Meringue Tartlet for dessert, prepared by Pastry Chef Jonathan Bowden, who explained that although meringue always consists of two parts sugar to one part egg whites, there are three variations in preparing a meringue: Swiss, French and Italian. Chef Bowden likes using Swiss meringue because it more stable than French meringue and thus holds up better over time. While he will sometimes opt for Italian meringue because it is the most stable, he cautions that preparation is more difficult to master – especially for the novice.

During the class, guests indulged in the opportunity to watch Chef Griffing and Chef Bowden create wonderful dishes, which they would later sample. Edible Education students also had the opportunity to ask questions while the food was being prepared. In fact, so many questions were asked – and answered – that we felt it only fair to pass on some of the food preparation savvy to those of our readers who were unable to attend.

How many cuts of meat should I use when preparing osso buco?

According to Chef Griffing, you will need roughly two pieces of meat per person. When ordering the veal shank from a butcher, ask for 2-inch thick slices, preferably from the middle part of the hind shank where it will have more meat than if taken from the end.

Is it necessary to sear the meat?

Searing the meat is an absolutely critical step in preparing this dish. Try searing the meat with nothing more than salt, pepper and premium extra virgin olive oil. Look for a nice caramelization on both sides. This step is important in order to seal in the juices.

Should I be careful of how much vinegar I add?

Actually, Chef Griffing recommends using "more vinegar than you would ordinarily be comfortable with." This could be anywhere from a cup to two cups, depending on how much you are preparing. Once you've added the vinegar, it is important to let it reduce to less than half. What you achieve when using a lot of vinegar and reducing it properly is to give the dish the tartness needed to offset its rich nature.

Can I substitute something else for demi-glace when preparing osso buco?

According to Chef Griffing, you can substitute canned beef stock when preparing osso buco. You may also use a simple reduction of veal stock (which Julia Child once referred to as a "semi-demi-glace"). However, be aware that shortcuts generally do affect the final product. You can still come out with a lovely dish, but it will not be as rich as if you used a true demi-glace.

What brand of cooking wine is the best?

You should never cook with a wine you are not willing to drink, Griffing says. The problem with cooking wines is they often have salt and additives in them that are not in regular wine. Opt for the wine you enjoy with your dinner to assist you in preparing your meal.

How long should I cook osso buco?

While some recipes will indicate three hours to be sufficient, Chef Griffing advises, "the longer, the better." Think "low and slow" when cooking osso buco. If you can leave it cooking at 300 degrees all day you will be much happier with the finished product.

Risotto is the traditional side for osso buco and pairs wonderfully with it. However, it can be labor intensive and easily overcooked. Chef Griffing's suggested alternatives include: mashed or roasted potatoes, a simple rice dish or even egg noodles.

How is Swiss meringue (on the Lemon Meringue Tartlet) different from the meringue I usually make?

Most Americans have been taught to make French meringue, (also known as "common meringue") which is an uncooked product, with the exception of browning the outside. Swiss meringue is the result of combining the egg whites and sugar in a double boiler and cooking it – stirring constantly – until it reaches 130 degrees, at which point it is removed from the heat and whipped until thick.

May I substitute margarine for butter when making lemon curd?

No, only real UNSALTED butter should be used. Butter and margarine are molecularly different and this substitution will ruin your curd.

How much lemon zest should I use?

While recipes differ, Chef Bowden offers a good rule of thumb, which is to use half the amount of lemons you juiced. In other words, if you used the juice of four lemons, you would use the zest of two lemons. Also, be sure to only use the outermost yellow portion. Grating into the white part (or the pith) will make your curd bitter.

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Can I use lemon curd to make lemon meringue pie?

Chef Bowden stresses that lemon curd should not be used for lemon meringue pie because it is far too rich.

What other fruits are good for curds?

Virtually any citrus fruit can be used for curd. Curd requires a high acidity; therefore, when fruits other than lemons are used, you will oftentimes find lemon juice listed as a secondary ingredient to add the needed acidity.

Hopefully, these “insider secrets” and tips from the pros will help you in your next efforts to make these dishes at home. In addition, the chefs told us some of the brands that they prefer to use and where you can find them. ❁

** For similar recipes to Greenery’s Osso Buco and Lemon Meringue Tartlet, visit www.epicurious.com*

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Chef Picks:

- O Zinfandel Red Wine Vinegar available at the Greenery.
- Chef Griffing’s very own homemade demi-glace available for purchase at the Greenery as well as one made by Gourmet Foods.
- Plugra butter available at Greenery Market, Target Greatland and Wal Mart.