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Award-Worthy Southern Cuisine, on a Budget

Star Chef and '09 James Beard Award-Winner John Currence Preps Pork Pot Roast, Chocolate Espresso Cake, More

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(CBS) John Currence won the prestigious James Beard Foundation Award this year as Best Chef in the South.

He owns four of the most popular restaurants in Oxford, Miss.: City Grocery, Big Bad Breakfast, Bouré and Snackbar.

Still, was he up to making a three-course meal on a slim, \$35 budget, as "The Early Show Saturday Edition's" "Chef on a Shoestring"?

Currence accepted our challenge and, in doing so, automatically was entered into our "How Low Can You Go?" competition. The "Shoestring" chefs whose ingredients' costs are lowest will be invited back to prepare our year-end holiday extravaganzas.

Southern cuisine is synonymous with comfort food. But that doesn't mean it can't be refined, as Currence showed Saturday, making some of that refined comfort food.

MENU

- Wild Mushroom & Goat Cheese "Pop Tart" with Balsamic Drizzle
- Garlic-Studded Pork Pot Roast with Sweet Potatoes, Pearl Onions & Roasted Mushrooms
- Chocolate Espresso Cake

"Early Show" Recipes Galore

FOOD FACTS:

Shitake Mushrooms: Through originally from Japan and Korea, the delicious shitake mushroom is now being cultivated in the United States. The meaty flesh has a full-bodied (some say steak-like), bosky flavor. Shitake stems are extremely tough and therefore usually removed. Spring and autumn are the seasons when fresh shitakes are most plentiful. Choose plump mushrooms with edges that curl under. Avoid any with broken or shriveled caps. The versatile shitake is suitable for almost any cooking method including sauteing, broiling and baking.

Pork Shoulder: The pork shoulder is taken from the upper part of the foreleg and includes a portion of the shoulder. It is smoked, which gives it a very ham-like flavor. It often has the bone removed. Though it's slightly tougher (requiring longer cooking) and has more waste because of the bone structure, pork shoulder is a good, inexpensive substitute for regular ham. (Source: Food Lover's Companion)

Chutney: This spicy condiment contains fruit, vinegar, sugar and spices. It can range in texture from chunky to smooth and in degrees of spiciness from mild to hot. Chutney's a delicious accompaniment to curried dishes. The sweeter chutneys also makes interesting bread spreads and are delicious served with cheese. (Source: Food Lover's Companion)

RECIPES

Wild Mushroom & Goat Cheese "Pop Tart" with Balsamic Drizzle

INGREDIENTS: Tart Dough
1-1/4 cup All-Purpose Flour
1/4 teaspoon Salt
1-1/2 teaspoons Dry Thyme
1/4 teaspoon Cayenne Pepper
1/2 cups Chilled, Unsalted Butter, cut into small pieces
2-1/2 tablespoons Ice Water

METHOD:

In the bowl of a food processor, combine the flour, thyme, cayenne and salt; pulse to combine. Add butter to the flour mixture and pulse again until mixture resembles coarse cornmeal.

Remove to a separate bowl and, using a fork, stir in the ice water just until dough comes together nicely. Knead briefly, form pastry into a ball and chill for 1 hour.

Roll pastry out on a lightly-floured work surface into a circle approximately 1/4-inch thick. Cut into rectangles just smaller than a typical Pop-Tart. Re-roll scrap and cut again.

Place the 8 rectangles on a cookie sheet in the refrigerator, covered in plastic.

INGREDIENTS: Wild Mushroom Pop Tart Filling
3 cups Seasonal Mushrooms (Shitakes are perfectly acceptable), sliced
5 tablespoons Shallot, diced
6 tablespoons Garlic Clove, thinly sliced
4 tablespoons Peanut Oil
2 teaspoons Dry Thyme
2 teaspoons Salt
2 teaspoons Black Pepper

METHOD:

Combine 4 tablespoons oil, shallot and garlic in a sauté pan and bring to a simmer stirring constantly. Remove garlic and shallot when browned and add rest of the oil to the pan. Stir in sliced mushrooms and season immediately with salt and black pepper. As mushrooms begin to wilt, add thyme and remove from heat.

Once cooled, add crispy shallot and garlic to mix. Reserve to make "Pop Tarts"

ASSEMBLY INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup Goat Cheese
1 Egg
Tart Dough
Recipe Filling

METHOD:

Lay four of the tart dough rectangles on a lightly floured work surface. Cover each with a thin layer of the wild mushroom mixture, making sure to leave 1/2-inch of the edge exposed all the way around.

Crumble 2 Tbsp of goat cheese onto each of the four tart bases. Brush the edge of each tart with egg and lay a second piece of tart dough over the top. Crimp the edges with the tines of a fork. Brush the tops of each with a bit more egg, cut small vent holes and sprinkle with a pinch of salt.

Bake these in a 350° oven for 20 minutes or until golden brown.

INGREDIENTS: Balsamic Drizzle

1-1/2 cups Balsamic Vinegar
1 orange, zest and juice
2 tablespoons Brown Sugar
1 tablespoon Soy Sauce

METHOD:

Combine the above ingredients in a non-reactive saucepan and bring to a boil. Simmer over medium heat until reduce by half. Drizzle over warm Pop Tarts.

Garlic-Studded Pork Pot Roast with Sweet Potatoes, Pearl Onions & Roasted Mushrooms

INGREDIENTS:

1 Bone-in Pork Roast (Boston Butt or Pork Shoulder)
4 tablespoons salt
4 tablespoons Black Pepper
20 Cloves of Garlic
2 tablespoons Dry Rosemary
2 Medium Sweet Potatoes, peeled and quartered
3 cups Whole Mushrooms, cleaned
2 cups Pearl Onions
1/3 cup Peanut Oil
2 cups Pineapple Juice
1 cup Soy Sauce
3 tablespoons Worcestershire Sauce
2 tablespoons Apple Cider Vinegar
2 cups Water

METHOD:

Pierce the pork roast all over with a boning knife and insert a garlic clove in each hole. Rub the roast with 3 Tbsp each of the salt and black pepper and the dried rosemary. (Allow to stand overnight, if possible.)

Drizzle the onions, sweet potatoes and mushrooms with about 2 Tbsp of the oil and sprinkle with the rest of the salt and pepper.

Heat a Dutch oven and add remaining peanut oil. Brown the pork roast on all sides and remove. Add the vegetables and brown in the pork oil. Return the pork roast to the Dutch oven and add liquid. Bring to a simmer, and place in a 300°F oven for 5 hours covered. Raise heat to 375°, remove lid and brown top of roast for approximately 20 minutes.

Remove from oven, rest briefly and remove roast and vegetables to a serving platter.

Green Apple Chutney

INGREDIENTS:

3 Granny Smith Apples, peeled, cored, diced
1/2 cup Yellow Onion-diced
2 tablespoons Fresh Grated Ginger
2 tablespoons Butter
7 tablespoons Brown Sugar
4 tablespoons Cider Vinegar
Zest and Juice of 1/2 a Lemon
1/8 teaspoon Cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon Mustard Seed
1/2 teaspoon Curry Powder
1/4 teaspoon Red Pepper Flakes
2 tablespoons Chopped Cilantro
Salt and Black Pepper to taste

METHOD:

In a non-reactive saucepan, melt butter. Stir in onion, apple and ginger and stir until they begin to wilt. Stir in rest of the ingredients and bring to a simmer. Allow to cook over medium heat until liquid turns to thickened syrup. Cool, stir in chopped cilantro and spoon over pot roast.

Chocolate Espresso "Soufflé" Cake

METHOD:

1 cup Unsalted Butter
1/2 cup Espresso (or left over strong coffee)
1/2 cup Sugar
1 orange, zest and juice
8 ounces Semi-Sweet Chocolate
4 Whole Eggs

METHOD:

Slowly melt butter in a sauce pan. Stir in sugar, espresso, zest and orange zest. Melt chocolate over double-boiler and stir into butter mix. Mix eggs in a bowl well, until slightly frothy and pale. Fold eggs into chocolate mix, combine well (mix will thicken substantially).

Butter and line 10-inch straight-sided cake pan with parchment, making sure that the parchment makes a collar at least 3-inch high. Fill lined cake pan with mix. Place pan in a water bath covering half of the pan.

Bake at 350°F for 1 hour or until cake soufflés nicely. Remove from oven carefully and allow to cool in water bath.

So, how did John do in our "How Low Can You Go?" competition?

Mushroom Pop Tart

Mushrooms \$4.74

Shallot \$0.62

Garlic \$3.39

Goat Cheese \$2.99

orange \$.39

soy Sauce \$1.39

Total \$10.52

Pork Roast

Pork Roast \$7.47

Garlic \$.78

Sweet Potatoes \$.99

Mushrooms \$4.74

Pearl Onions \$.50

Pineapple Juice \$.65

Worcestershire Sauce \$.99

Apples \$.93

Onion \$.32

Ginger \$.40

Lemon \$.66

Mustard Seed \$1.99

Curry Powder \$.92

Cilantro \$.69

Total \$22.03

Espresso Cake

Orange \$.39

Chocolate \$1.79

Total \$2.18

Grand total: \$34.73

Our current leader's board:

1. Robert Carter \$32.24

Peninsula Grill

2. Paul Liebrandt \$32.35

Corton

3. George Mendes \$32.49

Aldea