

Food



CHEF'S TABLE | PAGE 3

Unsung heroes

It's time to give carrots, celery, onion and salt their due, says Wave chef Kristine Subido. Without these kitchen workhorses, life — or at least your cooking — would be bland.

FAMILY TIES | PAGE 5

Soul searching

When Chicagoan Peggy McDowell went online to research her family tree, she dug into her rich culinary past and connected with a cousin she'd never met. Together, they're opening a soul food restaurant in Hyde Park next year.

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Let's get into it.®



At Mindy's hotchocolate, chef Mark Steuer makes a chilled cucumber soup with cumin, coriander and garlic confit. "I only do it when there are cucumbers in the farmers market," he says. | RICH HEIN/SUN-TIMES

The BIG CHILL

Cold soups can make even the steamiest days a breeze

BY SEANAN FORBES

For most of us, the word "soup" invokes welcome memories of bowls of hot comfort on late autumn or winter days. When we consider cold soups — if we do — then we view them as exceptions to a steamy rule.

It's a pity, because chilled summer soups make a refreshing meal in the swelter of a summer's day, while showing local ingredients at their best.

Cold soups are an international tradition, even in countries that aren't known for heat. Every Finnish family has a recipe for ke-sakeitto, summer vegetable soup. A market pot, it might feature green peas, carrots, beans, potatoes, spinach — any fresh young vegetables you can find — and shrimp.

If that isn't enough to get you moving to the Green City Market, then you must be chained to your desk.

The Ukraine gave us borscht, and Hungary is home to meggyleves, which is sour cherry soup made with sour cream and sugar.

Dating back to medieval times, fruit soups can be appetizers, entrees or desserts. Honestly, who's going to complain about strawberries and champagne, even in soup form, as any portion of a meal?

SEE COLD SOUP, PAGE 3A

FOOD DETECTIVE

Latin corn snack finds itself in midst of a makeover

BY LISA DONOVAN
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Street food is headed indoors. For years, Latin food vendors roaming the streets of Pilsen, Little Village and other neighborhoods throughout the city have hawked the dressed-up and delightfully messed-up corn-on-the-cob snack known as elote.

U.S. Cellular Field, which has been serving up elote for 10 seasons, has four carts that operate during games, says White Sox spokesman Luis Hernandez. The \$4 ballpark version lets customers choose what they want with their bowl of corn: butter, lime, red pep-

per, cheese and mayo.

But this summer, a few local chefs have re-invented the traditional Mexican street food.

MANA food bar, 1742 W. Division, offers elote-style "Baja corn" — grilled corn-on-the-cob with butter and chile-lime salt for \$3.

At Goose Island Brewpub, 1800 N. Clybourn, chef John Manion's version of elote (pronounced eh-LOW-tay) goes like this: Blanched corn is tossed on the grill with a bit of butter and dressed with cilantro-lime aioli, cotija cheese, smoked Spanish paprika and a lime wedge on the side.

Before cooking the corn, Manion pulls back the husk, tying it back to

create a natural handle.

He gets the corn from Nichols Farm and Orchard in Marengo. During a recent visit to the Nichols stand at the Daley Plaza farmers market, an employee told us that the Nichols family grows some 45 acres of corn on the McHenry County farm.

With his elote recipe, Manion says he is paying tribute to the Wicker Park and Ukrainian Village neighborhoods circa 1995.

Back then, he and his pals dubbed a stretch of Ashland Avenue between Division and North "Corn Cob Alley" because of all the elote carts.

Before living in those neighborhoods, he had never tried elote.

"I was like, 'Are you kidding me? Where has this been all my life?' And I'm a guy with a beard, so it's not pretty," Manion says, noting that the snack is a meal in itself. "You're full after you take that down."

Now that corn season is in full swing, Manion is mulling just what else to do with the harvest.

His version of elote is available as a side dish for \$5. He also serves it off the cob as an elote-inspired relish with pork chops.

Curious about an unusual edible or kitchen tool? Want to share some mysteries in your own cabinets? E-mail the Food Detective at ldonovan@suntimes.com.



Goose Island Brewpub features grilled corn, much like the street vendors sell. | BRIAN JACKSON/SUN-TIMES

FROM THE COVER

GOING GAZPACHO



Sunda chef Rodelio Aglibot came up with his Scattered Sashimi over Japanese Gazpacho on a day he decided he wanted to serve sashimi on something other than rice. | KEITH HALE-SUN-TIMES

COLD SOUP | A little creativity yields big results

Hint of spice

Just as cold soups can be sweet or savory, inspiration can come from ingredients or from meals.

Rodelio Aglibot of Sunda, 110 W. Illinois, wanted to serve chirashi (scattered) sashimi — but not on rice.

“I decided to do it on a chilled tomato soup. What gives it a Japanese accent is the acid — ponzu,” he says.

On a hot summer's day, it's easier to contemplate cold soup than a mound of rice.

Aglibot has sampled numerous bowled summer chillers, including Korean noodles in cold broth with fish cakes, pickles and hot sauce. In Hong Kong, he enjoyed a lychee soup with tapioca pearls.

He's served cool corn and miso soup with grilled scallops and dollops of chili oil “for a bit of heat.” The spice balances the sweetness of the scallops and stimulates the appetite. (There's a reason you find spicy food in hot climates.)

Mark Mendez, chef of Carnivale, 702 W. Fulton Market, is devoted to the Green City Market. One of his favorite summer soups is white gazpacho (ajo blanco), a recipe that predates the arrival of tomatoes in Spain.

Ajo blanco incorporates leftover bread, almonds and garlic. Mendez is a chef, so of course he made some changes.

“I tweaked it a little bit and added a sweet component with raisins [plumped in white grape juice] and grapes,” he says.

He once made a melon soup with habanero — there's that heat again — and mint, garnished with king crab.

Mendez recommends playing with different heirloom tomatoes for gazpacho. How do you choose?

“It depends on what you're looking for, whether you like more sweetness or more acidity,” he says.

It's not just flavor; you can surprise guests with a green or yel-

low gazpacho. Mendez adjusts the balance with sherry vinegar — aged, if you want sweetness — and extra virgin olive oil. “I use it like water,” he cheerfully admits.

Ingredient-driven

Phillip Foss, chef of Lockwood, 17 E. Monroe, comes from a classic background, and he has a high respect for good ingredients and the traditions that treat them well.

France leads Foss' list of cold soups: “Your classic vichyssoise, which is plain potato-leek, chilled down, clean and refreshing,” he says.

Moving to Spain, he says, “When gazpachos were first made, they were made with the most basic ingredients peasants could find.”

If you want to round out a meal, Foss suggests serving your gazpacho alongside a salad of grilled fish, “with garlic and herbs, very light, crisp, clean. All the ingredients are fresh and cold, and the flavors just shine through.”

Foss keeps it simple: “Nothing, to me, is better than a good tomato soup in August and September when the tomatoes are at their peak. You just puree the tomatoes and a little bit of creme fraiche and add croutons, and you don't need anything else.

“Cantaloupe soup can be fantastic; if I'm doing that, I like to add a little bit of prosciutto, to add saltiness.”

At Mindy's hotchocolate, 1747 N. Damen, chef Mark Steuer makes a chilled cucumber soup with cumin, coriander and garlic confit.

“I only do it when there are cucumbers in the farmers market,” he says. “I get great local cucumber and organic yogurt.”

Steuer is another advocate of playing with your food — or your ingredients.

“Last summer, we did a peach and green tomato gazpacho that was excellent,” he says. “Right now, we're offering a cold pea soup. Really simple, with yogurt,

lots of lemon juice, a touch of honey and a little Thai chili paste — not enough to make it spicy, but it gives a nice balance — garnished with fresh mint.”

Easy as a smoothie

At North Pond, 2610 N. Cannon, sweet corn shows up every summer as a grilled corn on the cob soup.

North Pond chef Bruce Sherman appreciates the taste of corn “with a bit of that bitter char to it.” A beat later, he adds, “It can be great with other things, like avocado or jalapeno.”

Sherman is the president of Chefs Collaborative, a national organization of chefs dedicated to the seasonal and sustainable.

Given that, it's no surprise that he thinks of everything that can be done with what's at hand; when you're guided by the climate and the nearest farm, you have to be adaptable.

“Ninety percent of what people can find at the market in the summer could be made into a soup,” Sherman says. “It's changing the thinking paradigm.”

Consider the vegetable or fruit as a soup, rather than something to be cooked and served, Sherman says.

“Some of the things people might boil, steam, grill or fry could be made into a soup — grilled vegetable soup, for instance,” he says.

Is it easy to make a summer soup? “I think it is,” Sherman says. “If you can make a smoothie, it's no different for a soup.”

Now, that's a cool meal any cook can enjoy.

Seanan Forbes is a free-lance writer based in New York and London.



Bruce Sherman

COLD CUCUMBER AND YOGURT SOUP

MAKES 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

- 5 pounds cucumbers (preferably from farmers market), seeded and peeled (reserving some peel for garnish)
- 1 large white onion
- 1 cup garlic confit (see Note)
- ½ gallon organic plain yogurt
- 2 tablespoons ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- Salt
- Lemon juice
- Honey
- Chili paste
- Picked cilantro leaves, torn
- Extra virgin olive oil

Peel and seed cucumbers, reserving peel and discarding seeds. Roughly chop cucumbers and set aside in bowl.

Peel and chop onion. Mix with garlic confit and add to cucumbers.

Pulse cucumber mixture in batches in a food processor until finely chopped. Drizzle in yogurt until smooth (you may have extra yogurt). If mixture is still a little

coarse, transfer to a blender and pulse a few times.

Stir in cumin and coriander, and add salt, lemon juice, honey and chili paste to taste.

Finely julienne cucumber skin and submerge in ice water. (The julienned skins should curl up.)

Garnish soup with cilantro leaves and cucumber skin tossed together with a little extra virgin olive oil and lemon juice.

Note: To make garlic confit, place peeled cloves from 3 to 5 heads of garlic in an ovenproof dish. Cover with olive oil, wrap with aluminum foil and bake at 250 degrees for about an hour and a half or until the cloves are light golden brown and fragrant.

For the soup, use only the roasted cloves. The oil is great for salad dressings; the cloves also are excellent spread on bread.

Mark Steuer, Mindy's hotchocolate

Nutrition facts per serving: 291 calories, 6 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 9 mg cholesterol, 49 g carbohydrates, 16 g protein, 619 mg sodium, 7 g fiber



Chef Mark Steuer of Mindy's hotchocolate puts the finishing touches on Cold Cucumber and Yogurt Soup. | RICH HEIN-SUN-TIMES

SCATTERED SASHIMI ON JAPANESE GAZPACHO

MAKES 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

- 5 pounds tomatoes, seeded
- 1 cucumber, peeled and chopped
- ½ medium-sized red onion, peeled and chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 tablespoon dashi (Japanese soup stock)
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon ichimi (red pepper blend), plus extra for garnish
- 1 cup panko (Japanese bread crumbs)
- ½ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup ponzu (citrus-based dipping sauce)
- 1¼ cup white miso paste
- Sesame oil
- Chili oil
- 2½ pounds assorted sashimi (salmon, alba

core, tuna, hamachi, scallop, shrimp) (see Note)

Combine ingredients (through miso paste) in a blender and puree in batches, then strain through an Asian strainer (skimmer).

Portion gazpacho into bowls. Drizzle each serving with sesame oil, chili oil and ichimi; taste and adjust seasoning. Arrange sashimi slices on top and serve.

Note: Sushi-grade fish as well as the other Japanese ingredients in this recipe are available at well-stocked Asian markets such as Mitsuwa, 100 E. Algonquin Rd., Arlington Heights

Rodelio Aglibot, Sunda

Nutrition facts per serving: 448 calories, 17 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 6 mg cholesterol, 57 g carbohydrates, 10 g protein, 2,898 mg sodium, 3 g fiber

TASTINGS AROUND TOWN

Noilly Prat

Local venues spotlight the French vermouth this month in a salute to the late Julia Child by making her signature drink, the Upside-Down Martini — five parts Noilly Prat, one part gin. Participants include Brasserie Jo, 59 W. Hubbard; Carlucci's, 1801 W. Butterfield, Downers Grove; L'Eiffel Bistrot, 100 W. Higgins, South Barrington; Onesti Dinner Club, 18 N. Fourth, St. Charles, and FoxFire, 17 W. State, Geneva.

Hugo's Frog Bar and Fish House 55 S. Main Naperville

The restaurant hosts a summer menu and wine tasting at 6 p.m. Aug. 19; \$40. Reservations are required. (630) 548-3764.

Francesca's Tavola 208 S. Arlington Heights Rd. Arlington Heights

Cusumano wines are at the center of a Sicilian wine dinner at 7 p.m. Aug. 19; \$50. Chef Massimo Salatino and wine

expert Sergio Valsecchi of Vin Di Vito Imports will walk guests through the five-course pairings. (847) 394-3950.

Duke's Ale House and Kitchen 110 N. Main Crystal Lake

Duke's marks its one-year anniversary with a weekend celebration that includes an after-work party featuring \$3 vodka, gin and rum drinks from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday and a barbecue menu and Prairie Organic vodka samples on Saturday. On Sunday, the restaurant switches gears with a family day celebration. (815) 356-9980.

Signature Room at the 95th John Hancock Building 875 N. Michigan

The restaurant hosts the Chicago Great Taste Challenge featuring recipes that include Santa Margherita's Pinot Grigio, Chianti Classico or Prosecco varietals at 6 p.m. Aug. 19. The event is free but attendance is on a first come, first served basis.

Bin 36 339 N. Dearborn

The magic number is five as the restaurant, with just five months left of its yearlong 10th anniversary celebration, features \$5 glasses of sangria through August. (312) 755-9463.

D.O.C. Wine Bar 2602 N. Clark

Wine director Greg Sorrell walks visitors through a tasting of Sauvignon and Fume Blancs at 7 p.m. Monday; \$35. (773) 883-5101.

Shaw's Crab House 21 E. Hubbard

An Owen Roe wine dinner will begin at 6:30 p.m. Aug. 20; \$99.99.

David O'Reilly of Owen Roe Winery will be on hand to walk guests through each selection. Reservations must be made by Monday. (312) 527-2722.

Send details on drink-related events at least two weeks in advance to tastings@suntimes.com.



Julia Child's signature drink, the Upside-Down Martini — five parts Noilly Prat, one part gin — will be the drink of choice at a number of local spots this month.