CHICAGO Food

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2009 | EDITOR: JANET RAUSA FULLER | S

SHOPPING SMART | PAGE 4

Coffee crunch

Ways to trim your daily java expenses without actually cutting back on your caffeine range from the obvious (make your own) to the creative (freeze leftover coffee to make coffee ice cubes).

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FOOD DETECTIVE

Pasteurizing eggs kills salmonella bacteria — and allows home cooks to eat raw cookie dough without worrying.

Shelling out safety

BY LISA DONOVAN
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Because she has been dubbed the "Breakfast Queen," Ina Pinkney is picky about her eggs.

She keeps her eyes peeled for stories about egg recalls, including one on the West Coast involving organic eggs. She knows a fellow chef who won't eat the farm eggs served in Ina's restaurant at 1235 W. Randolph. And she knows diners with impaired immune systems would be hit especially hard by salmonella enteritidis, considered by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control to be a public health problem.

"We go into a sweat because every one of us lives in fear that we might hurt someone with a bad product," Pinkney says.

So last month, Pinkney began carrying pasteurized eggs. Pasteurization is a process that aims to kill salmonella enteritidis, found in intact and disinfected grade A eggs. This strain of salmonella infects the ovaries of what appear to be healthy hens; the eggs are contaminated before the shell even forms, according to the CDC.

Government inspections of farms and even testing on eggs are in place to detect the salmonella, but it's not fail-safe.

The CDC estimates that this strain of salmonella is found in about 1 in 10,000 eggs.

Greg West, president of the National Pasteurized Eggs Inc. in south suburban Lansing, says 10,000 eggs might be on a single palette on display at some of the the nation's largest grocery stores.

West's company sends salmonella-free eggs under the Davidson's Safest Choice label to area Panera Bread restaurants and supermarkets, including Strack & Van Til, Jewel-Osco and Dominick's.

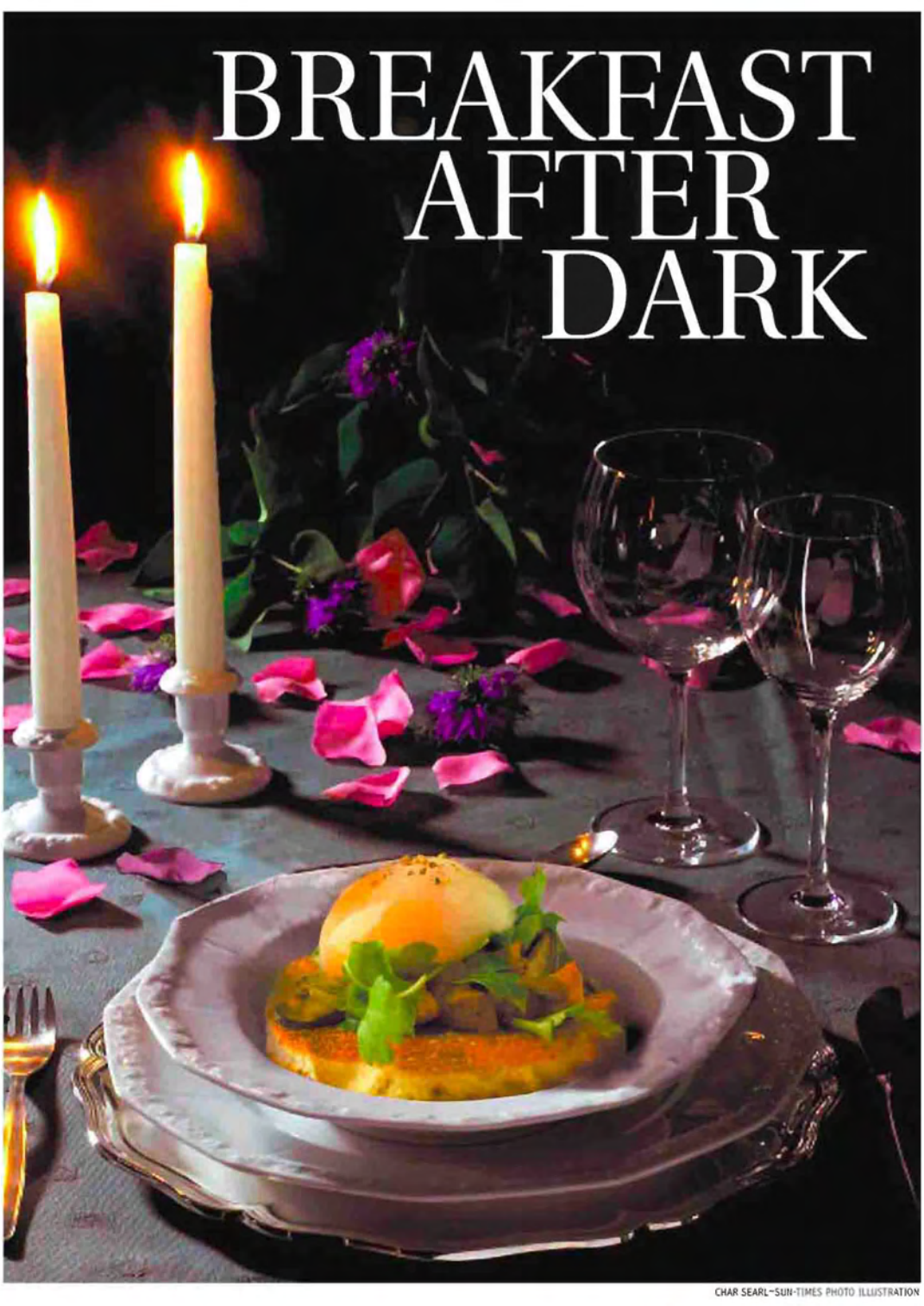
The pasteurizing process involves bathing shelled eggs in water hot enough to kill the bacteria — beginning at 125 degrees — without cooking the eggs.

"The eggs are in a giant 'Jacuzzi' and you have constant movement of the eggs so that they're not staying in one spot and cooking," West says. The heat transfers through the shell to the yolk where the bacteria might be, he explains.

Not only does Pinkney like that pasteurized eggs are safe, she likes the possibilities of going old school and safely making your own mayonnaise or Caesar dressing with them.

"The best part of these eggs — you can eat your cookie dough," Pinkney says with a laugh.

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.



CHAR SEARL~SUN-TIMES PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

COMFORT COOKING | Morning foods poach places on dinner menus

BY SEANAN FORBES

Comfort food knows neither hour nor season. The chameleon of the kitchen, it can appear as a baguette and Brie in a briefcase, a cold slice of pizza on the morning table, an extra scoop of ice cream on an August evening — or a nice hot breakfast for dinner, at home or in a restaurant.

Traditional breakfast items are poaching places on high-end menus. When meals migrate from morning to night, there's a solid connection between what chefs crave and what they dish.

Josh Adams is the chef and owner of June, 4450 N. Prospect Rd., in Peoria Heights. For him, breakfast is "the most craveable, comforting food we have ... there's part of us that's drawn back to wanting to eat it at dinner."

At June, Adams cooks a farm-fresh egg in a water bath, so the yolk is jammy. It is served with housemade guanciale (fatty bacon made from the cheek of a pig), deeply earthy coffee-smoked shiitake mushrooms, brioche crisped up in clarified butter and hollandaise (the dish is pictured above).

"It combines everything I like about breakfast," Adams says.

Bruce Sherman serves elegant, seasonal sustenance at North Pond, 2610 N. Cannon. Asked about putting breakfast foods on the dinner table, he gives a seductive list, starting with eggs, "poached, soft-boiled, scrambled with truffles — eggs are great, versatile ingredients."

That's a key word: ingredients. Sherman continues, incorporating eggs into other breakfast dishes: "savory crepes — perhaps an egg crepe, burrito style. A flat omelet stuffed with mushrooms. A buckwheat crepe with pheasant, baked or soufflied. Pancakes."

Most of this sounds like stuff an amateur could cope with cooking. That's important, especially if you're tired. You don't want to deal with extremes.

Laurent Gras of L20, 2300 N. Lincoln Park West, says it makes sense to cook breakfast for dinner. Breakfast foods are usually simpler, faster and easier to make — particularly if you are eating late at night.

In his restaurant, Gras serves pork belly with golden egg yolk, Crayola-bright luxury shining on a plate. The indulgence goes more than belly deep. It's breakfast intensified, kind of like wrapping yourself in a thick cashmere blanket and shutting out a chill.

Gras is not hasty to define breakfast — or put constraints on it.

SEE BREAKFAST, PAGE 3A

Looking to make dinner out of your morning meal? It'll be easy on your wallet. Here's a look at what average prices of some typical breakfast foods were during the first week of April, compared with last year.

	2009	2008
Eggs (dozen)	$1.88	$2.39
Whole milk (gallon)	$3.13	$3.33
White bread (pound)	$1.26	$1.28
Orange juice (64 ounces)	$2.98	$3.05
Coffee (26 ounces)	$9.20	$8.64

Source: Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection

For Breakfast for Dinner recipes, turn to Page 3A

FROM THE COVER

BREAKFAST | Morning meal at night makes for a comforting evening

"Breakfast is very different from country to country," he says. "For me, breakfast is simply an espresso with hot milk and Viennoiserie like brioche or croissant. This is how it is in France and this is what I'm eating every morning. When I traveled in South America it was fish tacos for breakfast. In Asia it is usually fish and rice."

While you likely won't see fish and rice on your cafe's breakfast menu, go to upscale restaurants and you'll find diner fare — with a twist.

At one sixtyblue, 1400 W. Randolph, chef Michael McDonald serves hash browns with duck fat dust and foie gras. These are not greasy spoon potatoes, but they have that roadside ability to make you lean back and slowly celebrate your existence — and that of root vegetables.

At home, McDonald is all about eggs.

"I love going to the markets, especially Whole Foods, and shopping the vegetable section. It's inspiring," McDonald says. "Make a vegetable omelet or frittata. If I'm really feeling healthy, then it will be egg whites. If not so healthy, I'll just use the whole egg."

His shopping advice is simple: Go to the store and see what strikes you.

That approach works especially well if you're filling omelets, which will welcome cheese or broccoli rabe as readily as jam.

Dan Smith and Steve McDonagh are the Hearty Boys, caterers with senses of food and joy.

A "huge comfort food fan," Smith enjoys out-of-hours breakfast items on the menu and at home.

"I love breakfast for dinner and I'll mix it up," Smith says. "I made a meatloaf and served it with a fried egg on top. I'll do the same thing with waffles, serve them with a cream-based gravy."

Breakfast is like that. It crosses barriers: night, day; work, home. It's friendly stuff. Maybe that's why we like it so much. It comes with permission to relax.

Grant Achatz of Alinea, 1723 N. Halsted, talks about the "ritual of breakfast," an uncomplicated, stress-free meal.

"There's no pretense involved in it, no artful manipulation, no high-concept breakfast," Achatz says. "It's simply, you wake up, you're hungry, you just slept for eight hours, there's nothing in your stomach and you want to 'start the day right.'"

From Achatz's perspective, there isn't much distance between breakfast items and Alinea's molecular magic.

"They're all things that are easy to manipulate and the flavor profiles lend themselves really well to what we do," Achatz says. "You go get your two pancakes and you dump syrup on them, and right next to it you have a few over-easy eggs and sausage — and if you're dealing with that on a very basic level, you're dealing with that blending of sweet and savory, which is kind of our hallmark."

Breakfast at Alinea — now, that would start your day off with a spark. And these days, people need a bit of a buzz.

"Comfort food is needed right now with the economy the way it is," Smith says.

Asked what draws people to breakfast in the darker hours, Sherman says, "There's a notion of comfort in breakfast foods. The reference of having breakfast, whether it's coffee and toast in the confines of your own, warm kitchen ... "

Achatz captures the concept: "Comfort, hey? Oatmeal. Mom cooking you breakfast in the morning. It totally makes sense."

It does. As glorious as an intricate meal may sound, sometimes you just want to relax. After a day of housework, meetings or job-hunting, who needs more complications?

As Gras says, "Breakfast is usually simple food, easy to digest and makes you feel good. Is a nice way to end the day too, no?"

Yes.

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

Chef Michael McDonald offers hash browns, re-interpreted for dinner, at one sixtyblue, 1400 W. Randolph — topped with caramelized shallots, duck fat dust and foie gras. | KEITH HALE~SUN-TIMES

BROWN SUGAR GRANOLA FRUITINI

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

GRANOLA

- **¼ cup brown sugar, packed**
- **¼ cup butter**
- **½ teaspoon cinnamon**
- **1½ cups oats, uncooked**
- **¼ cup raw hazelnuts, chopped**
- **¼ cup sliced almonds**
- **¼ cup golden raisins**
- **¼ cup dried apricots, chopped**
- **¼ cup dried cherries**
- **1 (32-ounce) container plain or vanilla yogurt (preferably organic)**
- **1 pint strawberries (preferably organic), diced**
- **1 pint blueberries**
- **½ pint raspberries**
- **Mint leaves for garnish**

For the granola: Preheat the oven to 300 degrees. Combine the brown sugar, butter and cinnamon in a small pot over low heat until the sugar dissolves and the mixture becomes homogenous. Pour over the oats, nuts and dried fruit (through cherries) and toss to combine.

Spread the mixture on a cookie sheet and place in the oven. Bake for 30 minutes, stirring at 10-minute intervals. The granola can be made up to one week in advance and kept in an airtight container.

For the fruitini: Gather 8 martini glasses. Place 1 tablespoon of the granola mixture in the bottom of each glass. Spread 2 tablespoons of the yogurt evenly over the top. Place ¼ cup of strawberries over the yogurt.

Sprinkle another layer of granola on top, followed by yogurt, blueberries, granola and, for the final layer, yogurt. Garnish each glass with a small pile of raspberries and a sprig of mint.

Adapted from Bruce Sherman, North Pond

Nutrition facts per serving: 312 calories, 12 g fat, 5 g saturated fat, 19 mg cholesterol, 46 g carbohydrates, 9 g protein, 79 mg sodium, 7 g fiber

GAGUTZ

MAKES 2 SERVINGS

If you ever watched "The Sopranos," you would have heard Tony call someone a gagutz, which, loosely translated, means idiot. In culinary terms, it is traditionally a ratatouille soup.

My grandmother, who grew up in the Puglia region of Italy, would make this dish morning or night. Somehow, it was tweaked and changed in her family until it wasn't a soup at all — more of a creamy, robust egg and vegetable dish.

- **Extra virgin olive oil**
- **1 small yellow onion, thinly sliced**
- **8 cherry tomatoes, quartered**
- **4 small zucchini, sliced ¼-inch thick**
- **6 eggs**
- **¼ cup sharp Romano cheese**
- **Salt and pepper**

Lightly coat the bottom of a large skillet with the oil and place over medium heat. Add the onions and sweat them for 3 to 4 minutes.

Add tomatoes, turn the heat to high, and cook until the tomatoes start to break down, another 2 to 3 minutes. Add zucchini, lower the heat to medium, and cook until soft, another 7 to 10 minutes.

Beat the eggs with the cheese and a little salt and pepper and add to the pan. Cook as you would scrambled eggs. Serve immediately with a crusty loaf of Italian bread.

Dan Smith, The Hearty Boys

Nutrition facts per serving: 404 calories, 25 g fat, 7 g saturated fat, 645 mg cholesterol, 21 g carbohydrates, 28 g protein, 374 mg sodium, 6 g fiber

SPICY FRIED EGGS ON CHIPOTLE CREAM TORTILLAS WITH SALSA RANCHERO

MAKES 2 SERVINGS

SALSA RANCHERO

- **2 tomatoes, chopped**
- **½ onion, chopped**
- **2 serrano peppers, remove seeds**
- **2 cloves garlic, chopped**
- **½ bunch cilantro**
- **2 cups water**
- **3 (6-inch) flour tortillas, each cut into four wedges**
- **1 teaspoon melted butter**
- **2 eggs**
- **½ cup heavy cream**
- **⅓ of a canned chipotle chile in adobo**

For the Salsa Ranchero: Place tomatoes, onion, serranos, garlic, cilantro and water in a pot, bring to a boil and let simmer for 1 hour. Cool slightly; puree in a blender, season with salt to taste and chill.

Fry tortilla wedges in some vegetable oil in a skillet to crisp them up slightly; set aside.

Heat a nonstick skillet, add the butter and crack in two eggs. Fry until done and set aside.

Meanwhile, in a medium saucepan, heat cream until it comes to a boil and start to boil. Add chipotle and simmer, using a spoon to break up the chile. Add tortilla chips and cook in the cream until slightly softened.

To serve, spoon the tortillas onto a plate, slide the fried eggs on top and spoon some salsa over the eggs.

Adapted from Michael McDonald, one sixtyblue

Nutrition facts per serving: 573 calories, 35 g fat, 18 g saturated fat, 299 mg cholesterol, 52 g carbohydrates, 16 g protein, 449 mg sodium, 5 g fiber

TASTINGS AROUND TOWN

Nacional 27
325 W. Huron

Adam Seger's monthly Happy Hour cocktail class resumes at 5:30 p.m. Thursday; $15. Featured drinks center around passion fruit and will include the Smokey Passion Fruit Margarita, made with single village mezcal. (312) 664-2727.

Bistro 110
110 E. Pearson

The eatery launches its new Tour de France wine tasting series at 6 p.m. April 23; $25. Tasting stations will offer the wines and food of France's Provence region. (312) 266-3110.

The Berghoff
17 W. Adams

The restaurant has launched the 2016 Olympic cocktail: orange juice, brandy and triple sec; $5.50. Half of the proceeds from the drink's sales will be donated to World Sport Chicago, which promotes awareness of the Olympic and Paralympic Games among youth. (312) 427-3170.

Shaw's Crab House
21 E. Hubbard

Joy Anne Sterling of Iron Horse Winery talks about her company's wines during a five-course dinner at 7 p.m. April 23; $89.99. Courses include black sea bass in a sweet pea broth paired with a 2005 Iron Horse Chardonnay. (312) 527-2722.

N9NE
440 W. Randolph

The restaurant and its Ghost Bar lounge kicks off its Campfire Ball 2009 at 7 p.m. Saturday; $75 ($110 at the door). The event supports the One Step at a Time camps for children with cancer. The event, which runs until 11 a.m. Sunday, will feature beer, wine and cocktails along with campfire-themed foods. (312) 575-9900.

mk
868 N. Franklin St.

The restaurant pairs old favorites and new finds in its wine cellar with small plates from chef Erick Williams during its Wine on Wednesday event from 6 to 9 tonight; $25. (312) 482-9179.

Via Ventuno
2110 S. Wabash

The newest restaurant from Jerry Kleiner is asking guests to drink, dine and donate during its Dinner Checks for Charity event from 5 to 11 p.m. Friday. A portion of the night's proceeds will be donated to Chicago Right Angle Educational Foundation, which supports summer enrichment programs on college campuses for low-income high school students from Noble Street Charter School. (312) 328-1198.

Pops for Champagne
601 N. State

Drop in to the restaurant and raise a glass during Toast on Tuesday, which launched this week. The weekly promotion supports the Chicago Jobs Council, which helps find employment for poor residents. Champagne by the glass begins at $8; $1 from each glass will go to the charity. (312) 266-7677.

Arrowhead Restaurant and Bar
26W151 Butterfield Rd.
Wheaton

A wine tasting at 7 p.m. Thursday will feature Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Chardonnay, Petite Syrah and Pinot Noir from New Zealand, California and Australia; $10. (630) 653-5800.

200 East Supper Club
200 E. Chestnut

Mixologist George Cozzi has created one new drink and brought back a popular cocktail for the restaurant's second anniversary. New is the Nuts 'n' Berries — amaretto and frangellico, cream and Chambord, garnished with chopped hazelnuts. Returning is the Patini, made with Snow Queen vodka, pineapple juice and champagne. The cocktails are $10 each. (312) 266-4500.

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

Half of the proceeds from sales of the Berghoff's new 2016 Olympic cocktail will be donated to World Sport Chicago, which promotes awareness of the Olympic and Paralympic Games among youth.