

COOK'S NOTEBOOK

ON THE WEB // For area food-related events, visit baltimoresun.com/foodevents

BOOKMARK

Working with spices and sweets

WINE FIND

2003 MUSEUM REAL

From: Cigales, Spain
Price: \$30
Serve with: Beef roast, venison

This blockbuster Spanish red wine from the little-heralded Cigales region conveys much of the character of its neighboring region of Ribera del Duero. It's a big-boned wine with lots of chunky, layered black fruit. The flavor nuances of black currant, spice, earth, chocolate, coffee and sweet oak are quite complex and rounded. The aroma has the cigar-store nuance often found in fine Bordeaux. While accessible now, this Museum could be cellared for two decades or more.

[Michael Dresser]



EVENTS

MURDER MYSTERY // A dinner buffet will precede a murder-mystery game from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. June 25 at the Elkridge Furnace Inn, 5745 Furnace Ave., Elkridge. \$56 per person (includes tax and tip). Reservations required. Call 410-379-9336 or go to elkridgefurnaceinn.com.

MEDITERRANEAN COOKING // Learn to make dishes from Italy, Spain, Turkey and Greece at 7 p.m. Tuesday at Whole Foods, 2504 Solomons Island Road, Annapolis. \$10. Preregistration and prepayment are required; both may be done at Customer Service. Call 410-573-1800.

SITE DU JOUR

»» FOODCHAMPS.ORG

The educational site, produced by the nonprofit organization Produce for Better Health Foundation and aimed at 2- to 8-year-olds, attempts to put fun into fruit and veggies with games, coloring sheets and recipes that children can make (with adult guidance).

[CHICAGO TRIBUNE]

BY LAURA MCCANDLISH
[SUN REPORTER]

»» THE SPICE BIBLE
Essential Information and More Than 250 Recipes Using Spices, Spice Mixes and Spice Pastes
By Jane Lawson
Stewart, Tabori & Chang / 2008 / \$29.95

Don't know what to do with that dust-collecting jar of zatar? Ever dreamed of making your own curry paste? Wondering why you sprang for that bag of star anise?

Let the spices lead you. With a pinch of the exotic and a dash of everyday, you can plan a full-course meal revolving around the ones you have stashed at home. *The Spice Bible* is just that, and an invaluable resource to treasure.

The book is organized into chapters on seeds and pods, berries and flowers, roots and bark, spice pastes and mixes, instead of the tired appetizer-salad-soups-meats-poultry-seafood-desserts categories. Jane Lawson offers recipes from the world over: Indian curries, Mediterranean and North African flavors, East Asian stir-fry and hot-pots.

Tangy sumac gave bite to the zatar I custom-mixed, a perfect accent for the sweet orange dressing served over the Fava Bean, Preserved Lemon and Feta Salad. I blended fresh parsley, cilantro, paprika, cumin and coriander together to make Moroccan chermoula, a pestolike paste and perfect baste for meat or fish.

But it is the simple Honey-and-Cardamom Cookies I will make again and again. I've already made them twice. The cardamom,



PRUNE MUFFINS

MAKES 20 MINI MUFFINS

½ cup sugar
12 tablespoons (1½ sticks) unsalted butter
1 medium egg
½ teaspoon vanilla paste
½ cup all-purpose flour, sifted
1 teaspoon baking soda
pinch of kosher salt
⅓ cup sour cream
⅓ cup sliced, pitted prunes

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spray 20 mini-muffin cups with oil.

Place the sugar and butter in the bowl of a standing mixer and beat on high speed with a paddle attachment until the butter is fluffy and light, about 5 minutes. Add the egg and vanilla paste and mix for 1 minute.

Add the flour, baking soda, salt and sour cream. Mix for 20 seconds more. Add the prunes. Mix for 10 seconds. Remove the bowl and paddle and use a spatula to mix batter thoroughly. Spoon the batter into the muffin cups until each is ¾ full.

Bake the muffins for about 12 minutes, or until golden brown. Allow them to cool before serving.

From "Mantra: The Rules of Indulgence"



BILL DURGIN

Per muffin: 109 calories, 1 gram protein, 8 grams fat, 5 grams saturated fat, 9 grams carbohydrate, 0 grams fiber, 29 milligrams cholesterol, 75 milligrams sodium

with the honey, melted butter and ground almonds in these light biscuits, really packs a punch.

»» MANTRA: THE RULES OF INDULGENCE

By Jehangir Mehta
with Christopher Kelly
Ecco / 2008 / \$34.95

I was surprised to read a medical disclaimer in the front of this ambrosial sweets cookbook: "The information contained in this book should by no means be considered a substitute for the advice of a qualified medical professional."

But in drawing on the ayurveda science of his Indian-Persian heritage, New York chef Jehangir Mehta still promotes the holistic health of body, mind and spirit, encouraging readers to indulge in the inventive desserts he illuminates in sections on fragrant flowers, tropical fruit

and pungent herbs and spices.

Many of those choice ingredients must be ordered in advance from Asian or Middle Eastern specialty shops: palmyra (palm fruit), licorice powder, shiso leaves, basil seeds.

Making Mehta's baked confections seemed the more modest task. I had the ingredients for Prune Muffins on hand, substituting Greek yogurt for the sour cream. The spongy, butter-rich muffins were the perfect vehicle for the dried fruit.

Mantra's numerous sorbets and cooling cocktails would be refreshing choices for summer.

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baltimore's daily conversation starts here

free daily

these locations



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