

FOOD & WINE

NOVEMBER 2007

thanksgiving
best menus
from exotic to classic

17 incredible
south american
wine bargains



Roasted turkey with
sausage stuffing—delicious
with California Zinfandel

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the *ultimate*
american cheese plate



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**Dean Fearing's
Dallas Thanksgiving**

Star chef Dean Fearing celebrates the launch of his new restaurant, Fearing's, at a Tex-Mex holiday meal.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN KERNICK FOOD STYLING BY JEE LEVIN PROP STYLING BY DANI FISHER



DEAN FEARING'S DALLAS

thanksgiving

FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, DEAN FEARING WAS ONE OF DALLAS'S BIGGEST CELEBRITY CHEFS AT THE MANSION ON TURTLE CREEK. NOW HE CELEBRATES THE LAUNCH OF HIS NEW RESTAURANT, FEARING'S, AT A HOLIDAY MEAL THAT SHOWS OFF HIS MORE CASUAL STYLE.



Dean Fearing carves the beautifully moist holiday bird. "I'm a real turkey-basting kinda guy," he says.

Chef Dean Fearing's one-of-a-kind laugh reverberates through the north Dallas mansion where he has gathered friends and family together for Thanksgiving dinner. Part Woody Woodpecker cackle, part good ol' boy guffaw, the sound bounces off the domed rotunda in the two-story library.

This Thanksgiving season is a heady time for Fearing. After more than two decades as chef at one of Dallas's most notable restaurants in one of its most luxurious hotels, the Mansion on Turtle Creek, he has just opened his own place, Fearing's, in the city's new Ritz-Carlton. The fiercely ambitious project brings together a fistful of concepts: an elegant dining room; a casual, glassed-in garden pavilion; and indoor and outdoor bars. There's even a raucous space called Dean's Kitchen with an open cooking area, decked out with rough oak paneling and glowing rawhide chandeliers.

A lanky eastern-Kentucky boy with a playful drawl, Fearing arrived in Dallas in 1979 as a cook at the Fairmont hotel's Pyramid Room, then the city's most celebrated restaurant. He'd been headed there, in fits and starts, since junior high school, when his father, Tom, a Holiday Inn executive, pressed him and his older brother into service as kitchen jacks-of-all-trades. The family hopped all over the Midwest, wherever their dad's job took them. "We would fill in if the dishwasher got sick or the banquet chef got thrown in jail," Fearing recalls.

A culinary arts program at a local community college eventually led Fearing to the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. "I ate up that school like a piece of chocolate," he says. Right out of the gate, he landed a job as *saucier* at Maisonette in Cincinnati, under the fabled Georges Haidon. "Everybody else in the kitchen was French," Fearing recalls. The leap to Dallas and the Pyramid Room—and from there to his long reign at the Mansion on Turtle Creek, starting in 1980—made him one of the city's best-known chefs, and a leading proponent of New Southwestern cuisine, the elevated version of Tex-Mex food that was just starting to captivate the country.

These days, Fearing is moving away from the cooking genre he helped pioneer. "I don't want to be themed anymore!" he announces in a faintly self-mocking drawl. He describes his new style as "the way we eat now," and he works with more Asian touches and locally produced ingredients and uses healthier cooking techniques. The new restaurant's official motto is "Elevated American cuisine with bold flavors, no borders."

As his Thanksgiving guests arrive, Fearing serves them freshly mixed blood orange margaritas. The cocktails are an inspiration from Shinsei, the pan-Asian spot co-owned by Fearing's wife, Lynae, which has been wildly popular since it opened in Dallas a year-and-a-half ago. Lynae, a statuesque blonde who moves like the dancer she used to be, and the yoga teacher she now is, crosses the library in pursuit of her toddler nephew, Mason (she and Fearing have two sons, Jaxson, nine, and Campbell, seven). En route to her young nephew, Lynae stops to chat with her Shinsei partner and friend, Tracy Rathbun—the wife of another celebrated Dallas chef, Kent Rathbun of Abacus and Jasper's.

Soon, everyone gathers at the dinner table for the first course of Fearing's vivid Thanksgiving menu, a testament to the relaxed, eclectic mode in which the chef is cooking now. The smooth butternut squash soup is laced with ginger and topped with a pecan-spiked whipped cream, his riff on the heavy cream that is invariably added to holiday soups.

Fearing heads over to the glossy tangerine-and-sage-glazed turkey that sits on the buffet table. His roasting methodology is tried and true, and he's religious about cooking the bird for a strict 15 minutes per pound in a low and slow oven, basting every 15 to 30 minutes to keep the meat moist. "I'm a real turkey-basting kinda guy," he proclaims. "It's so important."

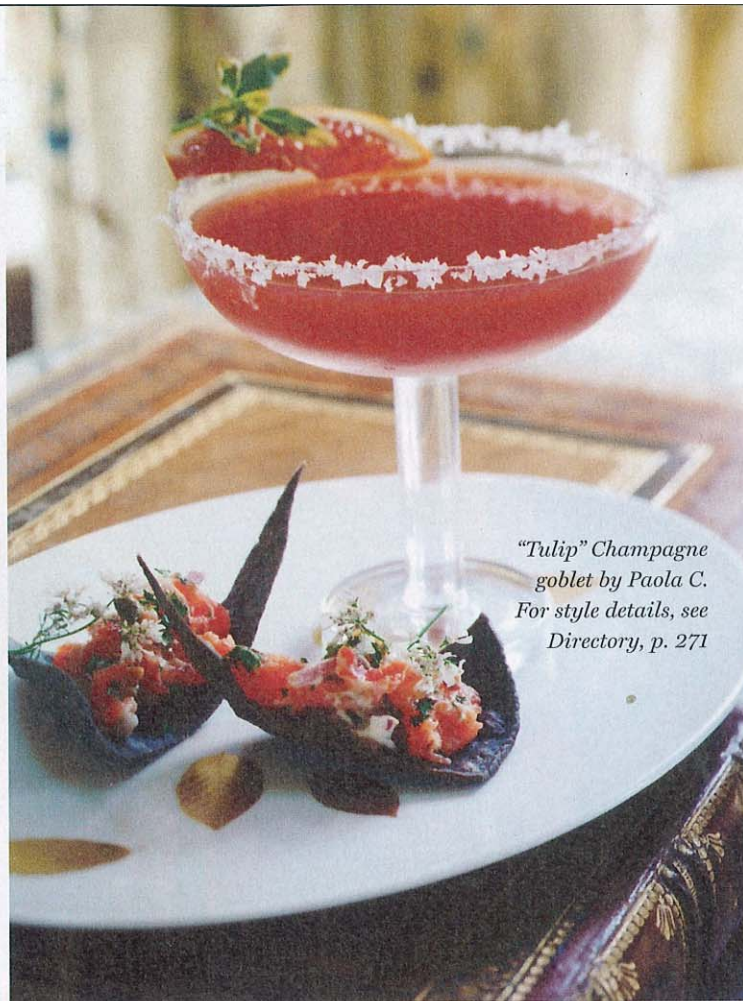
He came by these convictions the hard way. His childhood Thanksgiving memories are of his mother rising at 2 a.m. to put the turkey in the oven, where it would languish until 5 p.m. before emerging "as dry as the desert." After Fearing turned pro and got turkey religion, he jokes, "my family's world turned."

Now he stands over his masterwork with a carving knife as Lynae asks, "Can I please have some dark meat?"

"This is the Norman Rockwell moment that everyone loves," says Fearing. "But really, you should take the breast off the carcass and slice it across the grain, like meat loaf. Cut it with the grain and you get shreds."

The bird is perfect, and its tangerine glaze, with an alluring sage accent, gives the turkey a gorgeous, burnished color. More tantalizing still is Fearing's clever

Alison Cook has won a James Beard Foundation journalism award for her restaurant criticism at the Houston Chronicle.



"Tulip" Champagne goblet by Paola C. For style details, see Directory, p. 271

A SHORT HISTORY *texas wines*

PEOPLE ASSOCIATE TEXAS MORE WITH BARRELS of oil than bottles of wine, but the truth is, wine is a robust business in the Lone Star State. There are more than 130 wineries in Texas, mostly in the hill country west of Austin and the high plains near Lubbock. While Texas wines can be difficult to find outside the state, their reputation is growing nationally. Vintners are still determining which grape varieties grow best here, but there are several strong contenders. Viognier is one; Becker Vineyards, in the hill country, produces an aromatic bottling that's delicious with rich Thanksgiving soups. Cabernet Sauvignon and Sangiovese can also do well in Texas; in the high plains, Llano Estacado blends the two grapes for its robust Viviano, a good partner to turkey. And sweet Muscats, like Flat Creek Estate's citrusy Travis Peak Select Muscato D'Arancia, are ideal with any holiday dessert. —*Ray Isle*

Dean and Lynae Fearing, TOP, start the party with smoked salmon tartare on tortilla chips and blood orange margaritas (recipes, p. 228).



Fearing tops his butternut squash soup with whipped pecan cream (recipe, p. 228). OPPOSITE: He adds salsify to his green beans (recipe, p. 258) just because he likes it, and tops brussels sprouts with cranberry butter (recipe, p. 258).



Bowl by Christiane Perrochon; "Gold Leaf" plate by Dibbern; charger by Jaune de Chrome; "Montana" spoon by Alain Saint-Joanis. "Cocoa Blossom" bowl by Mikasa.

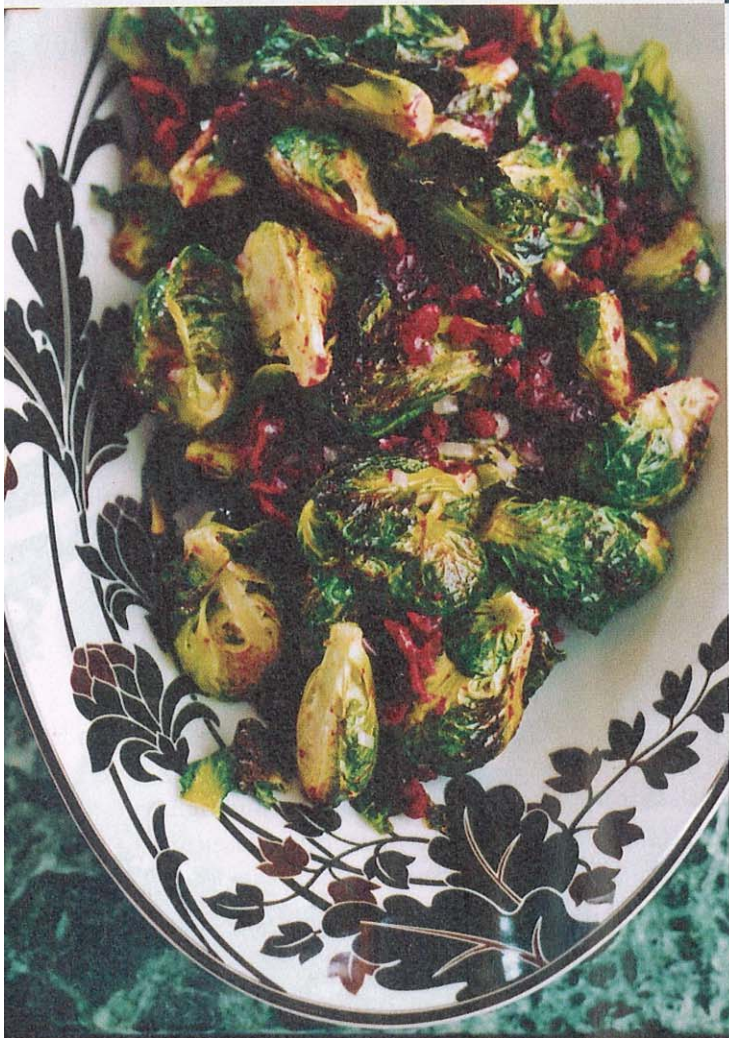
DEAN'S PERFECT
holiday feast

Blood Orange Margaritas
Texas Smoked Salmon Tartare

Gingered Butternut Squash Soup
2006 Becker Vineyards Viognier

Roasted Turkey with Tangerine Glaze
Tortilla-Corn Bread Dressing
Avocado Relish with Caramelized Onions
Creamed Onions with Thyme & Sage
Green Beans & Salisify with Country Ham
Brussels Sprouts with Cranberry Butter
2004 Llano Estacado Viviano

Texas State Fair Pecan Pie
Pumpkin Pudding with Meringue
*2006 Flat Creek Estate Travis Peak
Select Muscato D'Arancia*



Glazing the turkey with sage, tangerine and brown sugar turns it a rich, burnished brown. (recipe, p. 256) OPPOSITE: Fearing's pecan pie is inspired by a State Fair of Texas blue-ribbon winner (recipe, p. 258).





Texas answer to traditional cranberry relish: a lush, chunky combination of avocado and red pepper laced with pieces of caramelized onion. The relish is also terrific with the jalapeño-tortilla turkey dressing, a beloved staple from Fearing's Mansion years. Made up of crumbled, slightly sweet corn bread and earthy tortilla strips, the stuffing is baked so that it caramelizes a little where it hits the baking dish. (Those well-browned pan scrapings are the bits worth fighting over.)

Once guests have carried their plates to the long dining table, for a few moments nothing is audible but the clinking of forks. But Fearing's parties don't stay quiet for very long, and soon, the stories start rolling. The Fearing's friend Ashley Lavish, who is in Lynae's yoga class, claims to have once won the title of Miss Austin. "What was your talent?" deadpans Lynae. "I twirled fire batons," Lavish shoots back.

Amid the hubbub from the kids at the table, Greg O'Neal—who designed the bold green-and-brown interior of Shinsei, which includes photos of both the Fearing and Rathbun children—sits up in his chair at his first bite of brussels sprouts in cranberry brown butter. "These are amaaaaazing," he cries, drawing the word so far out it almost snaps in two.

Instead of predictable mashed potatoes, Fearing serves creamed onions infused with sage and thyme. It's an idea he dreamed up after Neil Manacle, the chef de cuisine at Bobby Flay's Bar Americain in New York City, served him wilted greens in a little cream. Fearing loved them, and he also loved Manacle's recollection that for Thanksgiving, his grandmother creamed everything in sight.

Even the glossy green beans show Fearing at his best: He's injected them with Kentucky-boy soul by adding country ham, and he's folded in strips of salsify just because he likes it. It's low-key sophistication without a shred of self-importance.

Dessert arrives. "I need a rest!" comes a groan from the table. But soon the slices of lustrous pecan pie are gone, and attention turns to the individual pumpkin puddings capped with large swirls of meringue, a dessert that's the result of a collaboration between Fearing and Jill Bates, the pastry chef at his new restaurant. Tracy Rathbun makes her way over to Fearing's elbow. "I love the vanilla in the meringue," she tells him. "I told Lynae we should use it for the banana parfait with ginger snaps at Shinsei." But Fearing is busy making sure there won't be any leftover pudding. "No crust!" Fearing exhorts his lagging troops. "Isn't that great?"

Blood Orange Margaritas

TOTAL: 40 MIN PLUS CHILLING

12 SERVINGS

Chef Dean Fearing calls this drink, which is a best seller at his wife Lynae's popular Dallas restaurant Shinsei, "the fall margarita." The sweet-tart blood orange flavor intensifies the margarita-ness of it.

- 1 quart fresh blood orange juice or fresh orange juice (about 12 blood oranges or 8 large navel oranges)
- 1½ cups fresh lime juice (about 12 limes)
- 1½ cups Cointreau or other triple sec
- 3½ cups silver tequila
- Kosher salt
 - 1 blood orange or orange wedge, plus 12 thin blood orange or orange slices

Ice

- 1 dozen small sage sprigs or leaves
1. In a large pitcher, mix the blood orange juice with the lime juice, Cointreau and silver tequila. Refrigerate until chilled, at least 30 minutes.
 2. Spread a small mound of salt on a small plate. Moisten the outer rim of 12 martini glasses with the orange wedge, then dip the rims into the salt to lightly coat.
 3. Add ice to the pitcher and stir well, then strain into the prepared glasses. Garnish each margarita with a blood orange slice and a sage sprig and serve.

MAKE AHEAD The margarita recipe can be prepared through Step 1 and refrigerated, covered, overnight.

Texas Smoked Salmon Tartare



TOTAL: 30 MIN

12 SERVINGS

These spicy, tangy little hors d'oeuvres are Fearing's take on the classic combination of smoked salmon, red onion and capers—he throws in roasted garlic, lime juice and jalapeño and replaces the standard cream cheese with sour cream. To make the dish especially Southwestern, he serves the tartare on tortilla chips. "Everything is good on a chip," he says.

- 2 oil-packed anchovy fillets, drained and coarsely chopped
- 2 teaspoons roasted garlic paste (see Note)
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup sour cream
- 2 teaspoons fresh lime juice
- One ½-pound piece of skinless smoked salmon, cut into ¼-inch dice
- 1 small jalapeño, seeded and minced
- ¼ cup finely chopped red onion
- 1 tablespoon capers, drained and coarsely chopped
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped cilantro, plus 4 dozen cilantro leaves, for garnish

Salt and freshly ground pepper

- 4 dozen sturdy corn tortilla chips
1. In a medium bowl, using the back of a fork, mash the anchovies with the roasted garlic paste, cumin and extra-virgin olive oil. Stir in the sour cream and lime juice. Fold in the smoked salmon, jalapeño, red onion, capers and chopped cilantro and season with salt and pepper.
 2. Arrange the tortilla chips on a platter. Spoon a heaping teaspoon of the smoked salmon tartare onto each chip, top with a cilantro leaf and serve.

NOTE To make your own garlic paste, roast 3 unpeeled garlic cloves with 1 teaspoon of olive oil in a foil packet in a preheated 350° oven for about 45 minutes. Let the garlic cool slightly, then mash it.

MAKE AHEAD The smoked salmon tartare can be refrigerated for up to 1 day. Bring to room temperature before serving.

Gingered Butternut Squash Soup with Spicy Pecan Cream

ACTIVE: 40 MIN; TOTAL: 2 HR 15 MIN

12 SERVINGS

Fearing loves the holiday feel of butternut squash, especially when it's combined with ginger, as it is for his smooth, gently sweet soup. He tops it with whipped cream flecked with chopped pecans for a number of reasons: "Usually holiday soups have a

dollop of cream—adding pecans gives it a dollop of flavor. And crunch. I think everything should have a little bit of crunch to it. Plus, this is Texas, and pecans are Texas."


- 2 large butternut squash (5½ pounds), halved lengthwise and seeded
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- ¾ cup pecans (2 ounces)
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 large onion, cut into ½-inch dice
- 1 small fennel bulb—halved, cored and cut into ½-inch dice
- One 1½-inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled and finely chopped
- 6 cups chicken stock
- One 14-ounce can of unsweetened coconut milk
- ¾ cup chilled heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon hazelnut oil
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Kosher salt

1½ tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. Rub the cut sides of the squash with the olive oil and set them, cut side down, on a large rimmed baking sheet. Bake the squash for about 1 hour, or until very tender. Remove from the oven and let stand until cool enough to handle. Spoon the squash flesh into a large bowl; discard the skins.
2. In a pie plate, toast the pecans for about 8 minutes, or until lightly browned and fragrant; let the nuts cool.
3. In a large pot, melt the butter. Add the onion, fennel and ginger and cook over moderate heat until softened, about 8 minutes. Add the squash and the chicken stock, cover and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Uncover the pot and continue cooking until the squash starts to fall apart, about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the coconut milk.
4. Meanwhile, in a food processor, pulse the pecans until they are finely chopped. In a medium bowl, beat the cream until soft peaks form. Fold in the chopped pecans, hazelnut oil and cayenne pepper and season with salt.

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"For me, as a meringue lover, it doesn't get better than this," says Fearing of this pumpkin pudding with a meringue swirl (recipe, p. 260).

"Pure Red" ramekin by Mikasa; "Mahogany" salad plate (under ramekin) by Calvin Klein.

SQUASH SOUP continued

5. Working in batches, puree the squash soup in a blender until smooth. Stir in the lemon juice and season with salt. Ladle the soup into bowls, top with a dollop of the pecan cream and serve.

MAKE AHEAD The soup can be refrigerated for up to 2 days. Reheat gently, adding a little chicken stock to thin the soup.

WINE A fruity, aromatic Viognier will have enough body to stand up to this rich soup. The 2006 Becker Vineyards Texas Viognier would be terrific; or consider the peachy 2006 Stags' Leap Viognier from Napa Valley, an easier-to-find alternative.

Roasted Turkey with Tangerine Glaze

ACTIVE: 45 MIN; TOTAL: 4 HR 30 MIN

12 SERVINGS

The tangerine, brown sugar and sage glaze on this gorgeous turkey gives it a rich, burnished color when it comes out of the oven. Besides making the turkey look so impressive, the citrus-herb glaze adds an alluring holiday flavor.

TURKEY

One 18-pound turkey, neck reserved

Salt and freshly ground pepper

2 tablespoons vegetable oil, plus more for rubbing

2 quarts chicken stock or low-sodium broth

1 medium onion, coarsely chopped

1 large carrot, coarsely chopped

1 large celery rib, coarsely chopped

½ cup all-purpose flour

GLAZE

3 cups plus 3 tablespoons fresh tangerine or orange juice (about 6 large tangerines or 6 large navel oranges)

1 tablespoon finely grated fresh ginger

1 tablespoon light brown sugar

2 tablespoons cornstarch

1 tablespoon minced sage

Salt

1. **PREPARE THE TURKEY:** Preheat the oven to 400°. Set the turkey in a large roasting pan. Fold the wing tips under the bird and season the cavity with salt and pepper.

Rub the bird generously with oil and set it breast side up in the pan; season with salt and pepper. Roast for 20 minutes.

2. In a bowl, combine 2 cups of the stock with the 2 tablespoons of oil. Baste the turkey with the stock mixture and scatter the onion, carrot and celery in the pan. Lower the oven temperature to 325° and roast for 3½ hours longer, basting every 30 minutes and rotating the pan a few times, until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the inner thigh registers 165°.

3. Rub the turkey neck with oil and season with salt and pepper. In a saucepan, cook the turkey neck over moderately high heat until starting to brown, 3 minutes. Turn the neck, lower the heat to moderate and cook until browned, 10 minutes. Add the remaining 6 cups of stock and bring to a boil. Cover and simmer over low heat, skimming, for 2 hours. Discard the neck; you should have about 4½ cups of stock.

4. **MAKE THE GLAZE:** In another saucepan, combine 3 cups of the tangerine juice, the ginger and brown sugar and bring to a boil over moderately high heat. In a small bowl, blend the cornstarch with the remaining 3 tablespoons of tangerine juice until smooth. Whisk the cornstarch mixture into the juice in the saucepan and bring to a boil, whisking until thickened, about 2 minutes. Off the heat, stir in the sage and season with salt; let cool.

5. When the turkey is done, remove it from the oven. Increase the oven temperature to 400°. Generously spoon half of the tangerine glaze over the turkey and roast for about 10 minutes, or until the skin starts to brown. Coat the turkey skin with the remaining tangerine glaze and bake for 10 minutes longer, or until richly browned. Transfer the turkey to a carving board and let rest for 15 to 25 minutes.

6. Meanwhile, set the roasting pan over 2 burners on moderately high heat. Add 1 cup of the turkey stock and boil, scraping up the browned bits. Strain the roasting pan juices into a medium saucepan, pressing down on the vegetables.

7. Skim the fat from the pan juices and add ¼ cup of the fat to a bowl; discard the remaining fat. Blend the flour into the fat

to make a smooth paste. Whisk the paste into the pan juices and bring to a boil, whisking constantly. Simmer until thickened, about 2 minutes. Whisk in the remaining 3½ cups of turkey stock and simmer over moderately low heat, whisking often, until thickened, about 10 minutes. Carve the turkey and serve, passing the gravy.

MAKE AHEAD The tangerine glaze and turkey stock can be refrigerated for 2 days.

WINE This tangerine-glazed turkey—and the flavorful side dishes—will go best with an equally intense wine, like the ripe, black cherry-rich 2004 Llano Estacado Viviano, a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Sangiovese from one of Texas's best-known wineries. Or seek out Napa Valley's peppery 2005 Luna Vineyards Sangiovese.

Tortilla-Corn Bread Dressing

ACTIVE: 1 HR 30 MIN;

TOTAL: 3 HR 30 MIN

12 SERVINGS

"My sister Amy Reisner will not come over for Thanksgiving unless I serve my tortilla dressing," says Fearing. His delicious twist on corn bread stuffing is a kind of Thanksgiving *chilaquiles*, combining crispy fried tortilla strips with crumbled corn bread, jalapeño and cilantro. "If I didn't serve it, it would be like a birthday party without the cake," says Fearing.

Vegetable oil, for frying

Fourteen 6-inch corn tortillas, halved and cut into ¼-inch strips

6 cups crumbled Skillet Corn Bread (recipe, p. 257) or store-bought corn bread

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for the baking dish

1 large onion, cut into ¼-inch dice

2 celery ribs, cut into ¼-inch dice

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 large jalapeño, seeded and minced

1 tablespoon minced cilantro

2 teaspoons finely chopped sage

2 teaspoons finely chopped thyme

2 teaspoons chili powder

1 quart Tortilla Broth (recipe follows)

Kosher salt

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TORTILLA DRESSING continued

1. In a large saucepan, heat 2 inches of vegetable oil to 350°. Working in batches, fry the tortilla strips over moderately high heat, stirring a few times, until golden and crisp, 3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to paper towels to drain. Put the strips in a bowl and add the Skillet Corn Bread.

2. In a large, deep skillet, heat the 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Add the onion and celery and cook over moderate heat, stirring, until softened, about 6 minutes. Add the garlic and jalapeño and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in the cilantro, sage, thyme and chili powder and cook until the chili powder is fragrant, about 1 minute.

3. Add the Tortilla Broth to the skillet and bring to a simmer over moderate heat. Pour the mixture over the tortilla strips and corn bread, season with salt and toss gently to coat. Let stand until the broth has been absorbed, about 30 minutes.

4. Preheat the oven to 350°. Lightly oil a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Transfer the dressing to the prepared dish and cover with foil. Bake for about 20 minutes, until heated through. Uncover and bake for about 15 minutes longer, until the top begins to brown. Serve at once.

MAKE AHEAD The unbaked dressing can be refrigerated for up to 2 days. Bring to room temperature before baking.

Tortilla Broth

ACTIVE: 20 MIN; TOTAL: 50 MIN
MAKES 1 QUART

This key component of the tortilla dressing, made with garlic-infused corn tortillas and tomatoes, also makes a delicious soup topped with pieces of chicken (or leftover turkey) and torn-up fried tortillas.

- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- Two 6-inch corn tortillas, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 medium onion, minced
- 1 cup canned tomato puree
- 5 cups chicken stock
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 bay leaf
- ½ tablespoon ground cumin
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- Salt

1. In a large saucepan, heat the oil. Add the chopped tortillas and garlic and cook over moderately high heat, stirring occasionally, until the tortillas are crisp and the garlic is browned, about 3 minutes.

2. Add the minced onion to the saucepan along with the tomato puree and bring to a boil. Add the stock, chili powder, bay leaf and cumin and bring to a boil. Simmer over low heat until reduced to 1 quart, about 30 minutes. Discard the bay leaf.

3. Working in batches, puree the mixture in a blender. Add a pinch of cayenne and season with salt.

MAKE AHEAD The broth can be refrigerated for up to 3 days or frozen for 1 month.

Skillet Corn Bread

ACTIVE: 10 MIN; TOTAL: 30 MIN
MAKES ONE 9-INCH CORN BREAD OR 8 CUPS CRUMBLED CORN BREAD

This crispy, lightly sweet corn bread, a favorite at *Food & Wine*, was developed by our Test Kitchen's Grace Parisi.

- 1½ tablespoons vegetable oil
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1¼ cups cornmeal, preferably stone-ground
- 1 cup milk
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

1. Preheat the oven to 425°. Warm a 9-inch cast-iron skillet over moderate heat. Add the oil and heat.

2. Meanwhile, in a bowl, sift the flour with the sugar, baking powder and salt. Stir in the cornmeal. Add the milk and eggs and stir lightly. Add the melted butter and stir just until blended. Scrape the batter into the hot skillet; the oil should bubble. Transfer the skillet to the oven and bake for about 18 minutes, or until the center springs back when gently pressed. Turn the corn bread out onto a rack to cool. If using for stuffing, coarsely crumble the corn bread.

MAKE AHEAD The unmolded corn bread can stand at room temperature for 2 days.

Avocado Relish with Caramelized Onions

TOTAL: 35 MIN
12 SERVINGS

Fearing serves this chunky avocado condiment with turkey as an alternative to cranberry sauce. He likes the Southwestern richness it adds to turkey, particularly the lean breast meat; it's also terrific with the tortilla-corn bread dressing.

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion, cut into ¾-inch dice

Salt

Juice of 2 limes

- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into ¾-inch dice
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and minced
- 4 large Hass avocados, cut into ¾-inch dice
- 1 tablespoon slivered basil leaves

1. In a medium skillet, heat the oil. Add the onion, season with salt and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until richly browned, about 10 minutes; let cool.

2. In a large bowl, combine the sautéed onion with the lime juice, garlic, red pepper and jalapeño. Gently fold in the avocado and basil. Season with salt and serve.

MAKE AHEAD The avocado relish can be refrigerated overnight; press plastic wrap directly onto the relish.

Creamed Onions with Thyme and Sage

ACTIVE: 25 MIN; TOTAL: 1 HR
12 SERVINGS

For Fearing, these creamy onions, spiked with fresh herbs and nutmeg, have a melt-in-your-mouth lusciousness that's similar to mashed potatoes. Using large onions, which are easier to peel, makes the dish much simpler to prepare than the standard pearl-onion version.

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 4 large onions (about 2 pounds), cut into 1-inch dice
- 1½ teaspoons minced thyme
- 1½ teaspoons minced sage
- ½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

continued on p. 258

CREAMED ONIONS *continued*

½ teaspoon freshly ground
white pepper

1½ cups heavy cream

Salt

In a large skillet, melt the butter. Add the onions and cook over moderately low heat, stirring, until softened, about 30 minutes. Add the thyme, sage, nutmeg and white pepper and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes. Add the cream and bring to a boil. Simmer over low heat, stirring occasionally, until thickened, about 5 minutes. Season with salt, transfer to a bowl and serve.

MAKE AHEAD The onions can be refrigerated for up to 2 days. Reheat gently.

Green Beans and Salsify with Country Ham and Pecans

 **ACTIVE: 25 MIN; TOTAL: 35 MIN**
12 SERVINGS

For his simple side dish, Fearing sautés crisp green beans with caramelized salsify, toasted pecans and strips of intense country ham. At home, he jokingly calls them “all-day” green beans—in fact, they take about half an hour to prepare.

2 pounds green beans, trimmed
½ lemon
1 pound salsify
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
¾ cup pecan halves
4 ounces country ham,
cut into 2-by-¼-inch strips
½ tablespoon pure maple syrup

Salt and freshly ground pepper

1. In a large pot of boiling, salted water, cook the beans until tender, 7 minutes. Using a wire skimmer, transfer the beans to a baking sheet to cool. Keep the water boiling.
2. Squeeze the lemon into a medium bowl of water. Working with one stalk at a time, peel the salsify, slice it ½ inch thick on the diagonal and transfer to the lemon water. Drain the salsify and add it to the boiling water. Cook until just tender, about 4 minutes, then drain and pat dry.
3. In a large, deep skillet, heat the oil. Add the pecans and salsify and cook over high heat until browned on the bottom, about 4 minutes. Add the country ham, reduce the heat to moderate and cook, stirring,

until heated through, about 1 minute. Add the green beans and cook, stirring, until hot, about 3 minutes. Stir in the maple syrup and season with salt and pepper. Transfer to a bowl and serve.

MAKE AHEAD The recipe can be prepared through Step 2 and refrigerated for 2 days; let return to room temperature.

Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Cranberry Brown Butter

ACTIVE: 40 MIN; TOTAL: 1 HR

12 SERVINGS

“This is where I like to use Thanksgiving cranberries,” says Fearing, who mixes them into the maple-butter sauce topping his brussels sprouts. He roasts the sprouts to bring out their nutty sweetness. “This dish turns a non-brussels sprouts lover over to the other side,” he says.

4 pounds brussels sprouts,
halved lengthwise
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
½ pound fresh or thawed
frozen cranberries
3 tablespoons pure maple syrup
1 tablespoon finely grated
fresh ginger
1½ teaspoons finely grated
orange zest
2 sticks (½ pound) unsalted butter
1 large shallot, minced
1 teaspoon chopped thyme

1. Preheat the oven to 400°. On 2 large rimmed baking sheets, toss the brussels sprouts with the oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast for about 40 minutes, stirring halfway through, until the sprouts are tender and browned in spots.
2. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, combine the cranberries, maple syrup, ginger and orange zest. Cook over moderately low heat, stirring, until the cranberries break down and thicken, about 10 minutes.
3. In a medium skillet, cook the butter over moderately high heat until deep golden, about 4 minutes. Remove from the heat, add the shallot and thyme and stir into the cranberry sauce. Transfer the butter to a bowl, add the brussels sprouts and toss. Season with salt and serve.

MAKE AHEAD The cranberry brown butter can be refrigerated for up to 3 days. Gently reheat the butter before tossing with the brussels sprouts.

Texas State Fair Pecan Pie

ACTIVE: 40 MIN; TOTAL: 3 HR 30 MIN
PLUS COOLING

MAKES ONE 10-INCH PIE

This extraordinarily rich and sweet dessert was the winner at the 1996 State Fair of Texas State pie competition, which Fearing helped judge. “Out of 140 pies, this one was it,” he says. “Her name was Bobby Lee; she never told me her last name.”

PIE SHELL

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1 stick plus 4 tablespoons unsalted
butter, cut into ½-inch dice
¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon ice water

FILLING

1½ cups pecan halves (5½ ounces)
1½ sticks cold unsalted butter
1½ cups dark brown sugar
¾ cup granulated sugar
½ cup light corn syrup
3 tablespoons whole milk
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
½ vanilla bean, split, seeds scraped
½ teaspoon salt
4 large eggs

Unsweetened whipped cream or
vanilla ice cream, for serving

1. MAKE THE PIE SHELL: In a food processor, pulse the flour with the sugar and salt. Add the butter and pulse until it is the size of small peas. Add the ice water and pulse until the pastry is evenly moistened. Turn it out onto a work surface and knead 2 or 3 times, just until it comes together. Form the pastry into a disk, wrap in plastic and refrigerate until firm, about 1 hour.
2. Preheat the oven to 350°. On a lightly floured surface, roll out the pastry ⅛ inch thick; transfer into a deep 10-inch glass pie plate and trim the overhang to ½ inch. Fold the edge of the pastry under and crimp the edges. Prick the bottom with a fork in a few places. Freeze for 30 minutes.

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TEXAS PECAN PIE continued

3. Line the pie shell with parchment paper and fill with pie weights or dried beans. Bake for about 25 minutes, or until lightly browned around the edge. Remove the paper and weights and bake the shell for 15 minutes longer, or until lightly golden. Leave the oven on.

4. MEANWHILE, MAKE THE FILLING: In a pie plate, toast the pecans for 8 minutes, or until lightly browned. Let cool.

5. In a medium saucepan, melt the butter. Add the brown sugar, granulated sugar, corn syrup, milk, flour, vanilla seeds and salt. Cook over moderate heat just until the mixture comes to a boil. Remove from the heat and let stand for 5 minutes.

6. In a heatproof bowl, lightly beat the eggs. Gradually whisk in the hot sugar mixture until thoroughly blended. Spread the toasted pecans in the bottom of the pie shell and pour the filling on top. Bake for about 45 minutes, or until the center is just barely set and the crust is golden brown. Transfer the pecan pie to a rack to cool completely. Serve with unsweetened whipped cream or vanilla ice cream.

MAKE AHEAD The pie can be baked up to 1 day ahead. Store, covered, at room temperature. The pie shell can be wrapped well and frozen for up to 1 month.

WINE A Muscat's citrus and honey notes will accent the flavors in this pie. The vibrant 2006 Travis Peak Select Muscato D'Arancia from Texas's Flat Creek Estate is terrific. Or look for the gingery 2004 Terre Rouge Muscat à Petits Grains, from California.

Pumpkin Pudding with Mile-High Meringue

ACTIVE: 40 MIN; TOTAL: 1 HR 40 MIN

PLUS COOLING

12 SERVINGS

Fearing and Jill Bates, the pastry chef at Fearing's, collaborated on this spiced pumpkin pudding covered with meringue swirls. "It's what all Southerners love about their pies, whether they're coconut, chocolate or banana—the meringue," Fearing says.

2½ cups sugar

3 tablespoons water

2 cups heavy cream

1 cup whole milk

One 15-ounce can unsweetened pumpkin puree

8 large eggs, 6 separated

1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon

½ teaspoon ground ginger

¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

⅛ teaspoon ground cloves

Pinch of freshly ground pepper

Salt

1 vanilla bean, split, seeds scraped

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. In a medium saucepan, mix 1 cup of the sugar with the water. Using a wet pastry brush, wash down the pan's side to remove any sugar. Cook over moderately high heat until an amber caramel forms, about 8 minutes. Off the heat, stir in the cream and milk. Cook the caramel over moderate heat, stirring, until smooth, about 1 minute.

2. In a medium bowl, whisk the pumpkin puree with the 6 egg yolks and 2 whole eggs. Add the cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves, pepper and a pinch of salt. Gradually whisk in the hot caramel cream.

3. Pour the pudding into twelve ¾-cup ramekins set in a roasting pan. Pour enough hot water into the roasting pan to reach halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Cover the pan with foil and cut 4 small slits in the top. Bake the puddings for about 40 minutes, or until the centers are just set. Remove the puddings from the water bath. Let cool on a wire rack then refrigerate until completely chilled, at least 1½ hours.

4. Preheat the broiler. In a large bowl set over a pot of simmering water, whip the 6 egg whites with the remaining 1½ cups of sugar, the vanilla seeds and a pinch of salt. Whip until the sugar has dissolved, 3 minutes. Remove the bowl from the water bath. Beat the whites until stiff, glossy peaks form, 6 minutes. Spread the meringue in swirls over the pudding. Broil 4 inches from the heat for 2 minutes, until golden, and serve.

MAKE AHEAD The pudding can be refrigerated for 1 day. It can be topped with the meringue and broiled 2 hours before serving; keep at room temperature. ●

Fearing's, 2121 McKinney Ave., Dallas; 214-922-4848.

Roasted Beet Salad with Lemon Crème Fraîche

ACTIVE: 30 MIN; TOTAL: 1 HR 15 MIN

PLUS OVERNIGHT PICKLING

8 SERVINGS

As a teenager growing up in Los Angeles, Becerra made regular forays to Canter's Delicatessen for borscht (beet soup) topped with a dollop of sour cream. Memories of that soup helped him create this spectacular salad, which combines earthy-sweet beets, vinegary pickled red onions and a lemony crème fraîche dressing.

1 large red onion, sliced crosswise ½-inch thick and separated into rings

1½ cups balsamic vinegar

1 tablespoon yellow mustard seeds

1 tablespoon acacia honey

5 bay leaves

2 pounds baby beets (without tops)

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

¼ cup water

Salt and freshly ground pepper

1 cup dry red wine, such as Syrah

1 tablespoon sugar

½ cup crème fraîche

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

½ teaspoon finely grated lemon zest

1 bunch watercress, thick stems discarded

1. Place the onion rings in a large heatproof jar or bowl. In a medium saucepan, combine the balsamic vinegar with the mustard seeds, honey and bay leaves. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low and simmer for 15 minutes. Pour the hot liquid over the onion rings; press to submerge them. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

2. Preheat the oven to 375°. In a medium roasting pan, toss the beets with the olive oil and water. Cover tightly with foil and braise until tender, about 45 minutes. Let the beets cool in their braising liquid. Peel the beets, return them to the liquid and season with salt and pepper.

3. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, boil the red wine with the sugar over high heat until reduced to a syrup, about 10 minutes. Let the wine syrup cool.

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