



Edible LOVE

Mama Rossi dishes out healthy comfort food for cold days

HELLO, MY LITTLE PEPPERCORNS!

Welcome to Mama Rossi's Edible Love, a column dedicated to impatient, technologically challenged but enthusiastic foodies just like you and moi. Read on if you've ever looked at a recipe and screamed, "What do you mean, 35-step marinating process?! That's longer than most of my relationships!" Together we'll explore a bold new universe in easy-as-a-breeze cooking, guaranteed to take the sting out of stirring and the grrrrr out of grilling.

Enough about my sex life!

Since this here premiere column happens to fall on fall — a lovely but chilly time of year — I thought it would be fitting to dedicate numero uno to rib-sticking, heart-warming autumnal yummys. Comfort city here we come!

What follows are some healthful harvesty recipes guaranteed to have you rolling in the leaves.

By the way, chitlins, since this is our first culinary journey together, I must explain that I don't use long, windy, anal-retentive recipes. I cook by the seat of my go-go shorts. So before you launch into the menu, please see "The Impatient Cook's Glossary" (*next page*) for a description of my less-than-lofty culinary concepts.

LE MENU DU JOUR:

Perky Pumpkin Soup
Roasted Root Veggie Anti-Pasto
Roast Cod in Horseradish Crust
Blueberry and Tart Apple Crisp

PERKY PUMPKIN SOUP

- 1 medium-size pumpkin
- a plop of butter
- salt and pepper
- chicken stock or vegetable stock
- a pinch each of ginger, cumin, coriander; or a pinch of curry powder
- garnish #1 — sour cream, chives
- garnish #2 — brown sugar, apple sauce

I like my pumpkin best as a soup. Take a pumpkin, cut it into quarters, butter and season the pieces generously with salt and pepper. Bake at 400°F/200°C until soft (this might take an hour). Scoop out the pulp, throw away the peel and purée the pulp in a food processor or by hand if you need the workout. (Do I have to tell you to remove the baked seeds before you purée?! Sheesh!)

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, have some nice chicken stock or vegetable stock sizzling away. I like to lovingly season my stock with a nice pinch each of ginger, fresh ground pepper, cumin and coriander (or, for you lazy sows, some curry powder is just fine). Once the soup comes to a simmer, I throw in a dash of brown sugar, but you don't have to.

Stir in your pumpkin mush, or you can throw the soup and the mush in a blender or food processor.

Garnish with a plop of sour cream and a sprinkle of chives if you're feeling real fancy. For you sweet-tooths, try adding a plop of apple sauce and a pinch of brown sugar. I once added a little Chinese five spice and no one complained.

ROASTED ROOT VEGETABLE ANTI-PASTO

- whatever root veggies thrill you; I like a bunch of carrots and a few handfuls each of turnips, red onion and fennel
- salt and pepper
- olive oil
- chopped parsley

This is one of my signature dishes. I like to use a whole bunch of different root veggies. This recipe includes my faves, but feel free to use whatever kinds float your boat.

Start off by peeling a bunch of carrots and 2 or 3 red onions. I slice the carrots at an angle into ¼-inch ovals, but you can cut them up differently if you want to express yourself. The onions can be cut into thick rings or half moons.

Cut up a few turnips and a few bulbs of fennel. I like thick half moons, which you get by cutting the veggies into rings and then cutting them in half, but rings are nice too (especially if they have diamonds on them!).

Toss your veggies in a generous amount of olive oil, salt and fresh ground pepper. Roast at 400°F/200°C until soft and brown.

When ready to serve, toss your veggies with a few good smidgens of chopped parsley. This dish will look so pretty you'll want to date it.

ROAST COD IN HORSERADISH CRUST

- 1 nice thick cod fillet for each of your guests
- a coffee-cup-full or so of shallots
- white horseradish
- salt and pepper
- olive oil

Cod is really meaty, so it's great for that "meat and potatoes" guy or girl who usually hates fish. Start with nice thick cod fillets, cut into individual-size pieces (for normal folks this is 6–8 ounces; in my family, it was half of Orca). Season your little fish fillets with salt and fresh ground pepper.

Now make a crust. Peel as many shallots as you can stand to peel, maybe a coffee-cup-full of them, and toss them in several good drizzles of olive oil, then roast in the oven until they're brown and soft. Purée the shallots with horseradish (about 3 parts shallots to 1 part horseradish).


Spread your crust on the top of the cod. Place the fish on an oiled baking pan and roast at 400°F/200°C for about 12 to 15 minutes or until the crust is crispy and the fish reaches your desired doneness. I serve this dish with mashed potatoes and beef gravy, or mushroom gravy for non-meat eaters.

BLUEBERRY AND TART APPLE CRISP

- 6 Granny Smith apples
- 1 container of blueberries
- 1 lemon
- white sugar
- at least a coffee-cup-full each of oats, flour and brown sugar
- salt
- cinnamon
- butter
- optional — vanilla ice cream or frozen yogurt

Peel and core 6 Granny Smith apples and slice into half moons. Toss with 2 handfuls of blueberries. Juice 1 lemon and toss juice with fruit. Add sugar to your liking, anything from ½ of a coffee cup to one full cup will do. Throw in a few pinches of cinnamon and toss again. Pour fruit into a greased baking pan.

Make the crisp out of mixing equal parts oats, flour and brown sugar. Add a pinch of salt. Add just enough butter to this combo to create a crumbly texture (this can be done by mixing in a ratio of about ½ butter). Mix together until you get a crumble and sprinkle over fruit. Bake at 375°F/190°C until crusty — 45 minutes to an hour. Serve as is or à la mode.

Well darlins', there you have it. Bon appétit and remember... food is sexy! 

THE IMPATIENT COOK'S GLOSSARY

SMIDGEN: what fits between your thumb and forefinger without falling out

PINCH: a little less than a smidgen

SPRINKLE: a smidgen plus whatever usually falls out

HANDFUL: self-explanatory. But we're talking about a normal adult-size hand, not your toddler's hand and not Godzilla's hand

MESS: a heaping handful

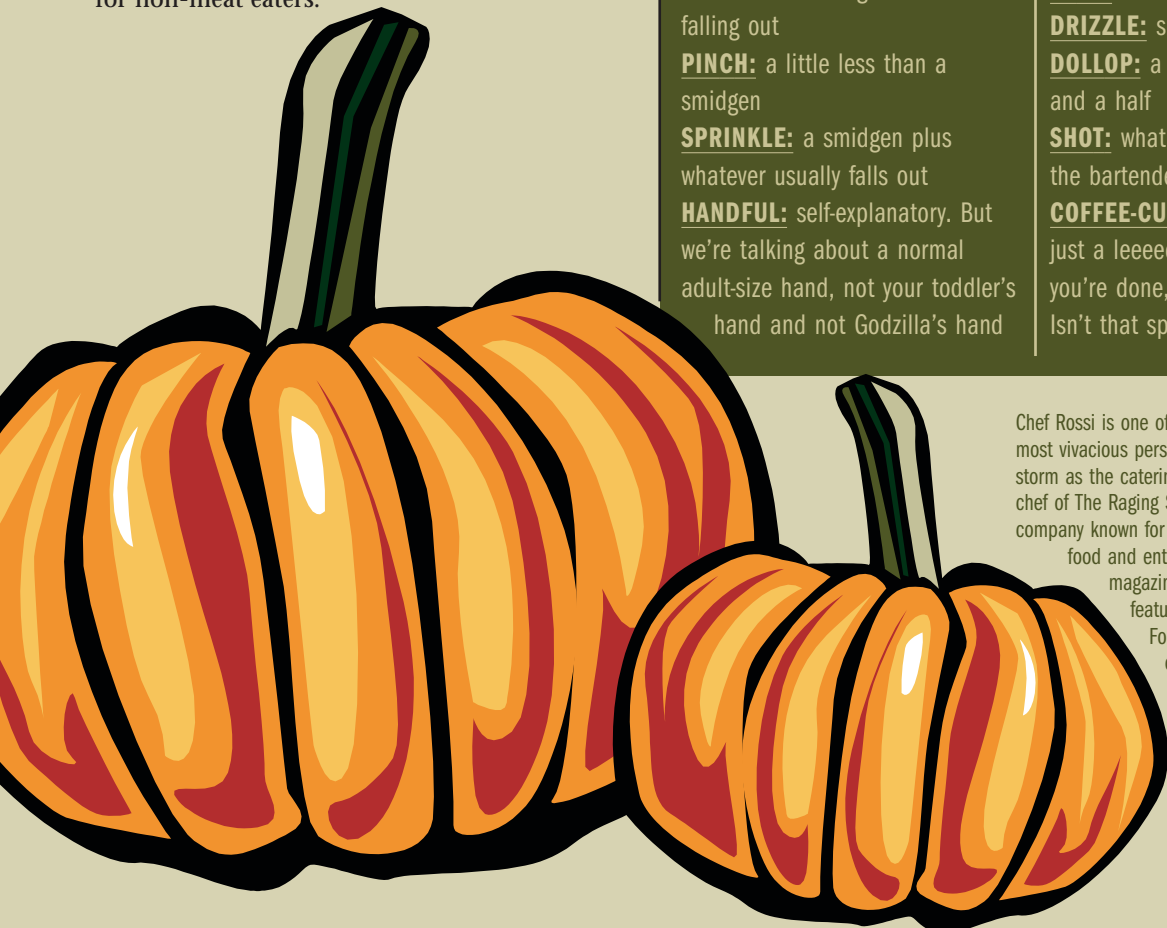
PLOP: a little more than a tablespoon

DRIZZLE: sort of like two wet plops

DOLLOP: a heaping tablespoon or a plop and a half

SHOT: what you get in your shot glass if the bartender likes you

COFFEE-CUP-FULL: sorta like a cup only just a leeeettlllee bit more. Plus, when you're done, you can drink coffee out of it! Isn't that special.



Chef Rossi is one of the New York catering world's most vivacious personalities. When not cooking up a storm as the catering director, owner and executive chef of The Raging Skillet, a cutting-edge catering company known for breaking the rules, Rossi writes food and entertainment columns for various magazines and newspapers, and is a featured guest on The Food Network.

For a taste of Chef Rossi, check out www.theragingskillet.com.