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D WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4, 2012
THE TENNESSEAN

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DAILY CRAVE
Today's top deals **2D**

CHEF DU JOUR



Jason Carty. CHRIS HOLLO

Jason Carty
Executive Chef
Opry Backstage Grill
2401 Music Valley Drive,
Nashville
615-231-8854
www.opry.com/backstagegrill

Inspired pork and a paring knife

Chef Jason Carty of the Opry Backstage Grill recently took first place in the Tennessee Pork Producers' Taste of Elegance competition, and he will represent the state at the national competition in St. Helena, Calif., later this month. We caught up with him to ask about his dish and inspirations at the restaurant.

How did you learn to cook?

I learned to cook mostly from my great-grandmother. She cooked every meal from scratch, and I would help with things like peeling potatoes and slicing tomatoes.

Please tell us about your dish at the Pork Producers' challenge and the inspiration for it.

The dish I prepared was a Seared Pork Tenderloin with Braised Pork Cheeks served with a Potato and Turnip Gratin, Roasted Beets and a Bacon Shallot Vinaigrette. My inspiration for the dish was that these ingredients work well with each other. The earthiness of the beets, turnips and potatoes helped elevate the natural flavor of the pork.

Other than pork, what are your favorite ingredients to work with at the moment?

Ramps, just got some in this week.

Please tell us about one of your most memorable food experiences.

Growing up on a farm, we always had a huge garden. Shucking corn, beans and peas is my most memorable food experience. As a kid, I hated it, but looking back I am glad to have had that experience.

Do you have a favorite cookbook? Favorite tool in the kitchen?

NASHVILLE COOKS

ABOUT THE SERIES

Cooking is nothing to be afraid of! It's easier and cheaper than you would imagine, and more healthy than eating out or buying prepared foods. In our Nashville Cooks series, we visit the home of one family each month who will teach us how to prepare a traditional family meal that's healthful, inexpensive, easy and made from scratch. At each session we put a meal on the table, but we also reconnect with the fun of cooking.

Part 20: Leslie Holt



Leslie Holt prepares her Aunt Eva's salad alongside daughter Maggie, 4. The Franklin woman involves her children in cooking as much as possible. PHOTOS BY JEANNE REASONOVER / THE TENNESSEAN

Dinner in a pinch

Online recipe group helps local woman keep family cooking tradition alive

By Jennifer Justus
The Tennessean

On a recent Wednesday, Leslie Holt stood in her bare feet chopping scallions in the kitchen. Her 4-year-old daughter made crafts with a friend in the next room, and Holt knew there were only a couple hours to finish dinner before an Easter egg hunt.

Most of us have been in this situation. Maybe not exactly, but we've had work to do and places to be and ingredients to somehow form into a meal. This is real life cooking.

As the Franklin-based online recipe club Just a Pinch celebrates its two-year anniversary this week, we

asked Holt, an active member of the group, to show us how she makes a meal for our Nashville Cooks series. On that night, she would make a salad — her aunt Eva's recipe — which she'd round out with pizza. Other nights it's pork chops, steak or baked chicken. She cooks for her family five to six nights a week and involves her children in the process when possible. And recipes like Eva's salad are part of the reason Holt connects with Just a Pinch.

"I was at my parent's 25th wedding anniversary, and my Aunt Eva showed up with this," she said as she tossed

» COOK, 6D



Eva's Green Salad is a staple for Leslie Holt.

ONLINE
Learn more about Just a Pinch Recipe Club at www.justapinch.com.

FRONT BURNER: TRENDS, NEWS, PRODUCTS

Ted's helps hungry kids

In honor of its 10th anniversary, Ted's Montana Grill — the western-style restaurant known for its bison — has pledged to raise \$150,000 for Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign, which aims to eradicate child hunger in



tured wines from Sicily and Campania. Each wine pairs with a different dish, such as risotto, salami, Sicilian pork calzone and lamb meatballs.

The tasting begins at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$50, including tax and tip. RSVP at 615-777-3436. Fido is at 1812 21st Ave. S.

Pick up spring plants

Ashland City's Little Marrowbone Farm welcomes spring planting with a

Experience the beauty and legacy of
Diana,
the People's Princess
See her Royal Dresses

Part of fun is in sharing recipes

» COOK FROM 1D

CREAM OF TOMATO SOUP

2 ounces of butter
 ½ of a large onion, minced
 1 tablespoon brown sugar
 2 16-ounce cans diced tomatoes
 2 tablespoons butter
 ¼ cup flour
 4 cups whole milk
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon pepper
 ½ cup chopped fresh parsley

Melt 2 ounces butter and saute onion until translucent (about 5 minutes). Stir in brown sugar and the tomatoes and simmer for 15 minutes. Puree in food processor, 2 cups at a time. Meanwhile, over low heat melt 2 tablespoons butter and stir in flour. Cook 5-8 minutes, stirring occasionally, stirring constantly, and cook 12 minutes. Add tomato puree and cook until almost boiling. Then add seasonings and parsley. Enjoy!

Recipe from Leslie Holt.

CHOCOLATE CHIP BANANA BARS

2 cups all-purpose flour
 2 teaspoons baking powder
 ½ teaspoon salt
 ¼ cup butter, softened
 ¾ cup sugar
 ½ cup brown sugar
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 1 cup of banana, ripe and mashed (about two bananas)
 1 egg
 2 cups chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Combine flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl. Beat butter, sugar, brown sugar and vanilla in a large bowl until creamy. Add bananas and egg to butter mixture and beat until combined. Gradually add flour mixture, beating until well combined. Stir in chocolate chips. Spread batter into a greased 9-by-13-inch (or 10-by-15) pan.

Bake for 20-30 minutes or until wooden toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool completely before cutting into bars.

Recipe from Leslie Holt.

EVA'S GREEN SALAD

4 tablespoons butter
 1 package Ramen Noodles, crushed (discard flavor packet in noodles or save for another use)
 ½ cup walnuts, chopped
 1 head romaine lettuce
 1 bunch broccoli, chopped

Melt butter, brown Ramen noodles and walnuts. Drain on paper towel.

Mix all ingredients and toss with dressing right before serving.

Recipe from Leslie Holt.

red leaf lettuce with a soy sauce dressing. Everyone loved it. So Eva handed out printed versions later with no recipe name at the top, and hence her salad just became Eva's Green Salad. That was about 14 years ago, but Holt still makes the salad — light, yet chock full of toothsome noodles and protein from the nuts. "It's easy to make and seems to be a staple in my repertoire," she said.

Holt, who works from her Franklin home consulting for physicians, often serves it just with hoagie sandwiches or with grilled meats. "We eat this a lot in the summers. It's really easy to take to picnics or family gatherings," she said. It travels well because she keeps the dressing in a Mason jar, which she'll give a quick shake before drizzling over the ingredients before the meal.

Holt thought so much of the salad that she wanted to share it. She uploaded it onto Just a Pinch, which in two years has gathered more than 385,000 members who, in turn, have shared 90,000 recipes. Rather than produced in a test kitchen by professionals, the recipes on Just a Pinch are user-generated, many of them with notes about who handed down the recipe, what changes have been made, and what worked there's a question about the recipe, members can ask the cook directly. This month, Just a Pinch also added a chat capability for even quicker response.

"I only put on recipes that I know," Holt said. "I like to add a little saying, like, 'this freezes well,' to help people. It seems like there are a lot of tried-and-true recipes" there.

It's also the kind of recipe Holt looks for even when she's not on the Internet. "I like cookbooks

from churches, because it's probably been eaten at a funeral or potluck," she said.

Growing good eaters

The day we visited the Holts, they had cooked up "snazzy eggs" for breakfast, a name given to the dish by Holt's 6-year-old son. "We're big breakfast eaters," she said.

The scrambled eggs include bits of ham, gouda cheese and onions. Holt said her kids are good eaters, partly because of their exposure. She once put a broccoli quiche before her son for supper. "He said, 'Ooooh, pie for dinner!'" she recalled. "Up until that point, he was not eating broccoli."

She pulls them into the process of cooking, as well, by encouraging them to make Christmas gifts for their teachers, family and friends rather than buying them. Her son picked strawberries, for instance, mashed them and helped turn them into jam (using Holt's grandmother's recipe) that he gave to his teacher and also enjoyed on his own sandwiches and toast.

"It gives the kids a sense of stewardship in terms of giving," she said.

Food of lifetime

Holt grew up "a military brat." Born in Alaska, she later lived four years in Germany, among many other places. But what stayed familiar to her was the food. Whether served here or overseas, it was often the only constant in her life. Because of that, Holt often gravitates toward comfort food, keeping it as healthy as she can.

These days both her parents, who live nearby, and her husband's parents have gardens and are generous with their harvests. She has a pantry of canned peaches and pears, bags of pecans from their pecan trees, about 70 bags of corn on the cob in the freezer, and meat from a cow that the family buys each year. She said her family likes knowing where their food comes from.

And like her mother, Holt likes giving her family something familiar to come home to.

"Mom was consistent with meals," she said.

Contact Jennifer Justus at 259-8072 or jjustus@tennessean.com.

ON WINE

On wine is a column written by a rotating panel of experts and enthusiasts, including, each month, a column written by a local wine shop owner. Send questions, suggestions and comments to wine@tennessean.com.

Salute Argentina with Malbec and grilled meat

By Tom Gannon
 For The Tennessean

As spring approaches and a young man's fancy turns to grills, we have a wide array of options of what to drink with our backyard delicacies. A new holiday should be noted in pursuit of all of spring's fancies.

April 17 is the second celebration of Malbec World Day commemorating the day in 1853 when Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, the future president of Argentina, submitted a proposal to the government with the aim of diversifying and increasing the scope of Argentina's wine industry. Sarmiento had retained the services of Michel Aimé Pouget, a French agronomist who brought vines from France — Burgundian varieties and Bordeaux varietals, which included Malbec (a grape that is rarely encountered in Bordeaux in the present day).

Malbec World Day is a marketing ploy, to be sure, but also a good excuse to grill meats of all kind and drink red wine that pairs with it. The wines of Achaval-Ferrer were the first truly serious collectible wines that made the world take notice with minuscule yields from high elevation single vineyards in Mendoza. These are rare and correspondingly expensive. But they do make entry level wine more suited to casual grilling.

The **Achaval-Ferrer Malbec 2010** retails for \$18 and shows nice red fruit, crushed violets and licorice. Very versatile with any grilled red meats.

Even more affordable but perhaps with less pedigree is the **Finca La Anita Tonada Malbec 2010** from Mendoza. Blackberry, plum, fig and a touch of red hot cinnamon candy on the nose. Juicy black fruit on the palate. Great bacon burger wine.

Mendoza is the Napa of Argentina, recognizable to casual consumers, but good wines are being made south in Patagonia and north in the vineyards of Salta. One of the leaders of the development of the region of Salta is Donald Hess, who owns wineries on four continents. He now owns the oldest vines in Argentina at his Colome estate and also the highest elevation vineyard in the world at more than 10,000



Achaval-Ferrer Malbec 2010, \$18.



Finca La Anita Tonada Malbec 2010, \$14.



Colome Amalaya Malbec 2010, \$16.



Colome Estate Malbec 2010, \$28.

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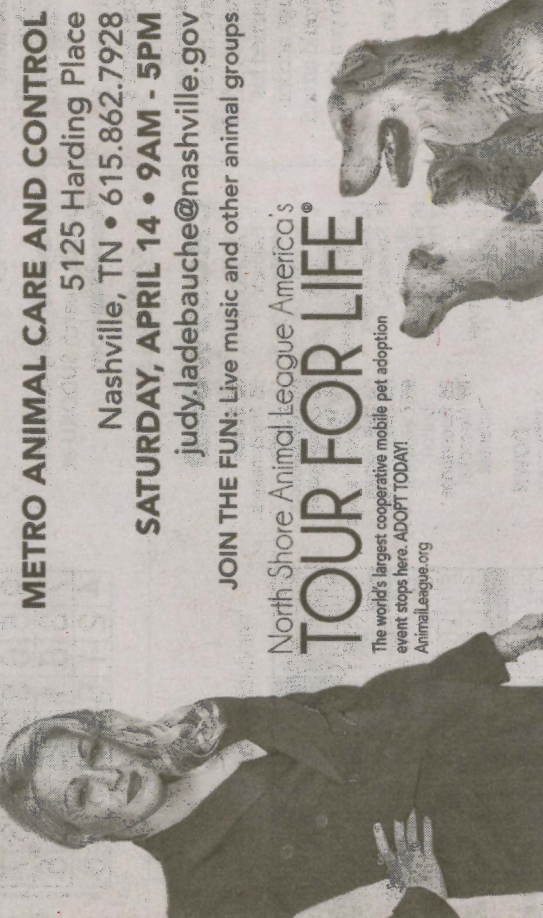
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