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Chef Dan Barber's Kale Salad and Creamy Parsnip Rice

By TARA PARKER-POPE

Diners at the Blue Hill at Stone Barns restaurant in Pocantico Hills, N.Y., rarely forget their first bite. Mine was a tiny floret of purple cauliflower, served raw, lightly marinated and bursting with fresh flavor. Although pork also was on the menu, the evening ended up being a celebration of vegetables, including beets, wild mushrooms and tiny carrots, and finishing with an enticing fresh herbal tea.



Dan Barber, executive chef at the Blue Hill at Stone Barns restaurant.

This month, the Blue Hill restaurant menu is dominated by root vegetables and cabbage, said the executive chef, Dan Barber. You may remember the Blue Hill restaurant in Greenwich Village as the dining choice by the Obamas for their date night this spring. And Mr. Barber is also an occasional contributor to the Op-Ed page of The New York Times, most recently to discuss reasons for the disastrous tomato blight that afflicted Northeast tomato crops this summer.

So I was thrilled when Mr. Barber offered two fall vegetable dishes for the latest Eat Well series. For your holiday salad, try ribbons of black, also known as Tuscan, kale flavored with a honey-balsamic dressing, marinated currants, pine nuts and Parmesan. And instead of potatoes, consider a creamy rice flavored with a parsnip puree and fall root vegetables. Both dishes are certain to become new holiday favorites that will make it easy to forget the turkey.

Mr. Barber said he was a traditionalist about Thanksgiving side dishes and liked to use the vegetables and fruits of the season. "Adventure doesn't please me for this meal," he said. "Repetition does, so it's always brussels sprouts, cranberry, parsnips, squash, etc."

RECIPES:

Kale Salad With Pine Nuts, Currants and Parmesan

2 bunches of black (also known as Tuscan) kale, stems removed and rinsed well
2 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon rice vinegar
1/2 tablespoon honey, or more to taste
1 to 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons lightly toasted pine nuts
2 tablespoons currants, soaked in white verjus overnight
1/4 cup shaved Parmesan cheese
Freshly ground black pepper

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1. Arrange the kale leaves in small piles of 4 or 5 leaves; roll into a tight “cigar” shape and cut into 1/4-inch ribbons; repeat with remaining leaves.
2. In a large bowl, toss kale with all ingredients except the Parmesan cheese; let stand at room temperature for 20 minutes; adjust seasoning with salt and pepper.
3. Serve with Parmesan cheese sprinkled over the salad.

Yield: Serves 6.

Creamy Rice With Parsnip Puree and Root Vegetables

Parsnip Puree:

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
8 ounces parsnips, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
2 cups (or more) vegetable stock or vegetable broth

Blanched Vegetables:

1 cup peeled carrots, cut into 1/4-inch cubes
1 cup peeled parsnips, cut into 1/4-inch cubes
1 cup peeled turnips, cut into 1/4-inch cubes

Rice:

2 1/2 cups water
1 1/4 cups basmati rice
3/4 teaspoon coarse kosher salt
1 1/4 cups vegetable stock or vegetable broth

1. The parsnip puree, root vegetables and rice can be prepared 2 hours in advance. Heat oil in heavy medium saucepan over medium heat. Add parsnips and sauté until beginning to soften but not brown, about 5 minutes. Add 2 cups vegetable stock and bring to boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium; boil gently, uncovered, until parsnips are tender and stock is reduced by about half, about 35 minutes.
2. Transfer parsnip and stock mixture to blender and puree until smooth, scraping down sides occasionally and adding more vegetable stock by tablespoonfuls if puree is very thick. Transfer to bowl. Season puree to taste with salt and pepper. Let stand at room temperature.
3. To blanch the vegetables, bring medium saucepan of salted water to boil. Add cubed carrots, parsnips and turnips. Simmer just until tender, about 5 minutes. Drain. Transfer vegetables to bowl of ice water and let stand 10 minutes. Drain well. Let stand at room temperature.
4. Make the rice by combining 2 1/2 cups water, rice and 3/4 teaspoon coarse salt in medium saucepan. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook until rice is tender and liquid is absorbed — about 15 minutes. Remove from heat. Let stand uncovered at room temperature.
5. To create the dish, combine cooked rice and 1 3/4 cups vegetable stock in heavy large saucepan. Bring to simmer. Add parsnip puree and stir until heated through and well blended. Stir in blanched vegetables and cook 2 minutes longer. Season rice to taste with salt and pepper. Divide among plates and serve.

Yield: Serves 6.