



TAILORED TASTE TIDBITS

VOLUME IX, ISSUE III SUMMER 2014 FOOD NEWS FROM TAILORED TASTE PERSONAL CHEF SERVICE

The First Decade

Ooh a decade sounds so much longer than 10 years! That's what I'm celebrating this July – 10 years in business as Tailored Taste Personal Chef Service.

Those who have known me longer than 10 years understand that this is quite a milestone as I've had multiple 'careers' along my way. Prior to Tailored Taste 7 years was a record amount of time at one job.

My four college majors in four years speaks to my wandering mind. I have come to terms with my short attention span and desire to learn a little about a lot and believe I have hit upon the perfect career that satisfies both needs. Cooking is never the same twice and food is an area with unending possibilities for learning.

The true bonus over these last 10 years is the sheer number of interesting people I've met. In no other business would I have become colleagues with pastry chefs, restaurant owners, food photographers, food stylists and other multi-talented folks in the culinary world. In no other business would I have had the opportunity to cook for and to know people in all walks of life from architects and artists, veterans and veterinarians, school principals and professors, politicians and government officials, historians, journalists and novelists, business entrepreneurs, lawyers (lots of lawyers – it is DC, you know) and priests.

I've watched families grow and (sadly) families dissolve; I've cooked for those undergoing life-saving medical treatments; I've helped celebrate births, graduations, holidays, marriages, retirements and many, many other significant days including two 90th birthdays! From each and every client I have learned something and my life has been enriched for that.

I'm grateful for everyone I have worked with and I'm looking forward to the next 10 years and those clients I've yet to meet who too will teach me something I need to learn.

CHEERS!

Zambeezi's Knees

The family bi-yearly trip to Disney World took us to Jiko restaurant in Animal Kingdom Lodge where this specialty cocktail caught our gin-loving family's eye. Although exact proportions of the ingredients have eluded me, I've made a decent re-creation and am sharing it here. Big thanks to my nieces who each called the restaurant directly to aid my search!



- 1 ½ ounces Hendricks Gin
- 1 ½ ounces sour mix*
- 1 tablespoon sage-honey syrup**
- 1 sage leaf for garnish

Fill a martini glass with crushed ice. Set aside.

In a cocktail shaker, place Hendricks, sour mix and honey syrup. Add a cup of ice. Shake.

Discard crushed ice in the martini glass and strain mixture into the chilled glass. Garnish with a perfect sage leaf.

* To make sour mix combine **1 cup of sugar** and 1 cup of water in a small pot. Boil to dissolve sugar. Off the heat, stir in **1 cup fresh lemon juice** and **½ cup fresh lime juice**. Decant to glass bottle or jar. Store in fridge. Makes plenty!

** For the sage-honey syrup: In a small pot combine **¼ cup honey + 2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage**. Warm gently. Makes enough for 4 drinks.

The Little Bent Fork

My twice-a-week client has a fork in her drawer that I use every time I cook. It's thin with bent tines and does not match the rest of the flatware. Most folks would pitch it or avoid it. I, however, adore it. It's perfect for fluffing rice or quinoa or millet; it is the best helper for juicing lemons and limes; and it is simply a comfort.



In honor of the little bent fork, here is a recipe where YOUR little bent fork will come in handy.

Baked Lemon-Thyme Rice

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 small shallot, minced
- 2/3 cup long-grain rice
- 1 1/3 cup broth* or water
- Zest of one lemon
- 2 Tablespoons lemon juice
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme

Heat oven to 325 degrees.

In an oven-proof pot with a lid, melt the butter and sauté the shallot for 2-3 minutes or just until soft (don't brown).

Add the rice and stir continually until all the grains are coated with butter and are starting to become slightly opaque.

Add the broth (or water), zest, lemon juice, and thyme. Bring to a boil. Turn off heat, cover pot and pop into hot oven. Bake for about 15-20 minutes. Remove lid and check to see if liquid is absorbed. Generally you will see 'holes' in the rice which means it's done. Pull pot from oven and let rest.

Fluff with your own 'little bent fork' and enjoy!

*Can use chicken or vegetable broth.

"Everything in moderation... including moderation"

Julia Child

As author Michael Pollan pointed out, our culture loves to serially glom onto a single ingredient and demonize it. In the early 1990s, fat was the devil incarnate. Eliminating fat from our diets was going to save us from heart disease and obesity. But we skirted the benefits of a lower-fat diet by consuming commercial products loaded with sugar and corn syrup in order to give the fat-free products some taste.

Up next were carbohydrates (think Atkins). Again we replaced all carbs versus simple carbs and ate vast quantities of protein in its place throwing our bodies into ketosis.

Today I see shelves and shelves of gluten-free cookies, candies, pastries, crackers and the like making it apparent that we have a new darling demon du jour – gluten.

For those who are truly allergic to gluten, and there are plenty who fit this category, gluten IS life-threatening. For others who have decided dropping gluten from their diets will help them lose weight, look great and win the lottery, this is crazy. Munching on boxes of gluten-free ginger snaps is not the answer.

The proliferation of gluten-free products on the grocery shelves is a double-edged sword. Some manufacturers are jumping on this bandwagon and once again replacing the item we have deemed 'bad' with sugars and chemical compounds that will ultimately cause other issues. Loading up on gluten-free junk food does nothing for a healthy life.

As a personal chef I am eternally grateful for gluten-free building blocks such as flour mixes, bread-crumbs and pastas so that I can create familiar dishes for my clients who are truly gluten-sensitive. I've skipped the boxes of gluten-free cookies and opted to make nut- and fruit-based sweets to end their meals.

I believe the real answer to healthy living is moderation. Yet we Americans want a quick-fix, a box of something off the shelf that will be the answer to all our health issues. Reasonable amounts of good fat, naturally sweet produce, complex carbohydrates and a modicum of restraint should be the order of the day, in my humble opinion.

For other recipes and previous Tailored Taste Tidbits, visit www.tailoredtaste.net

Chef Monica Thomas, CPC

240.299.6463

chefmonica@tailoredtaste.net

 [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/TailoredTastePersonalChef) www.facebook.com/TailoredTastePersonalChef