



DARRELL WONG FRESNO BEE

The California Opera Association held their Big Quiche Bakeoff June 26 in Fresno.

Quiche is a winner for brunch, anytime

BY JOAN OBRA
McClatchy Newspapers

Ah, the American quiche. There are many variations on this savory custard and crust, and they were on display last month during the California Opera Association's Big Quiche Bakeoff.

The contest brought forth nine quiches. Many resembled pies, while some were tucked into deeper quiche pans.

And the fillings supported the notion that you could create a quiche with just about anything: broccoli, tomato and even canned tuna were used as ingredients.

In fact, this tuna quiche, which also incorporates mushrooms and soup mix, was a big winner for home cook Brenda Joseph.

Tuna Quiche

Makes about 8 servings
4 ounces mushrooms,

- thinly sliced
- A little olive oil
- 2 eggs, beaten
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons flour
- ½ cup milk
- 7 ounces canned albacore tuna, flaked
- 4 ounces Swiss cheese, grated
- 4 ounces cheddar cheese, grated
- ½ package Lipton Recipe Secrets Onion Soup Mix 1 (9-inch) pie shell Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Instructions: In a large saute pan over medium-high heat, saute mushrooms in olive oil until browned. Set aside.

In a large bowl, mix eggs, mayonnaise, flour and milk until well blended. Stir in mushrooms, tuna, Swiss cheese, cheddar cheese and soup mix.

Pour into a 9-inch pie shell. Bake until set, about 40-45 minutes.

Le St. Germain learns to roll with the economy's punches

Michel Despras, owner and executive chef of Le St. Germain in Indian Wells, says he can see light at the end of the current financial tunnel for the restaurant business in the valley. He's cautious about it, but definitely optimistic.

"We see the banquets and conventions coming back, thank God!" he said last week.

In the onset of the financial crisis and banking scandals, conventions had become hard for companies to justify to shareholders; the very word became politically incorrect. A return to a more balanced attitude was desirable from most points of view.

It was, Despras said, an inevitable, if painful and slow, return. "The people have to do business with each other," he pointed out. "So we're going to do better."

The loss of convention, banquet and catering activity has been a major shock to the culinary system here in the valley, where parties of all sizes have been such a significant factor of social, philanthropic and business life. Le St. Germain, long established and well-known, has suffered probably less than most.

"We still had our regulars and our local business," Despras pointed out. Taking care of that business has always been a guiding principle, more so than ever in today's market.



henry fenwick

Despras is a pragmatic man, with a keen perception of what his customers want, and he makes sure that they get it. Though they can surprise him. For the restaurant's Bastille Day celebrations he had designed a very inclusive menu, with a wide range of interesting items, but he had expected a run on the fish and was even concerned that they might run out.

"But we served a lot of meat!" he said. "People ordered the pork chop (served with apples and Calvados, a nice Norman party touch) and lamb rack (with ratatouille Nicoise, proudly representing the South of France) and the flatiron steak."

Flatiron steak is one of the items that Despras is serving a lot this summer.

"It's fabulous," he declared simply. "People are changing. They're looking for new types of meat."

The regular menu is classic, with adjustments for summer and some spins to make the

dishes special to Le St. Germain. Their vine-ripe tomato and burrata cheese salad, for example, is removed from the usual tomato/basil/mozzarella salad with a Kalamata olive tapenade and basil pesto. "Very popular in summer," Despras commented. The iceberg lettuce salad isn't the general run, either. Usually I am of the anti-iceberg lettuce faction - in my opinion it's only fit to transport blue cheese dressing to the mouth. But here it sounded intriguing, and I ordered it.

"It's not a wedge," Despras pointed out, which is what people expect. "We do it differently."

They do indeed. It's an organic baby iceberg lettuce, more delicate than the big bland ones, and it's served with a small blue cheese soufflé, sun-dried tomato, scallions and two mouth-sized crab fritters. I enjoyed it.

For the summer, Despras told me, they cut back on sauces and go for lighter approaches to their entrees. The scallops, for example, are served with grilled eggplant and zucchini with a red pepper and lemon basil pesto. "Women like that," he said. The seared tuna has a soy teriyaki glaze, the Niman Ranch pork chop is accompanied by mango chutney, to give flavor without heaviness.

They are also experimenting with a \$6 bar menu, for those who'd rather snack at the bar than have a full meal in the dining room. The items are modified versions of what the restaurant serves, "small appetizers, a bit like tapas," Despras explained.

The menu includes Kobe beef sliders with Roquefort, a small portion of the lobster raviolis that are a star of the regular menu, sashimi ahi tuna tacos, steak tartare, and others. There's even a mini version of that baby iceberg. And there are four desserts.

It would be possible to make a meal of three or four of these small plates, going through three courses in small bites. The important thing, from Despras' point of view is that each item should represent the restaurant well, so that guests go away feeling they have had an experience of Le St. Germain. And it has to be a good one.

So far business is good at the bar one night, quiet the next.

"We'll see where it goes," he said. That sounds like a good philosophy for a restaurateur these long summer days. And it's certainly good for the customers.

Le St. Germain

74-985 Highway 111, Indian Wells; (760) 773-6511; www.lestgermain.com

Give your morning a light, nutty start

BY NOELLE CARTER
Los Angeles Times

QUESTION: On a recent trip to Silicon Valley, we went to breakfast one morning at a restaurant called the Country Gourmet in Sunnyvale, Calif. I had the whole wheat pancakes. These were some of the best I have ever had. I make my own whole wheat pancakes, but these were far better. A pleasant, nutty taste and a

smooth texture. Yum. I would love to have the recipe.

ANSWER: What a fun way to start the morning!

Country Gourmet's Whole Wheat Pancakes

Servings: Makes 8 to 10 pancakes

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 2 tablespoons cornmeal
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon baking powder

- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ cup egg whites (about 4 egg whites)
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2¼ cups buttermilk
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter, melted

Instructions: In a large bowl, sift together the all-purpose flour, wheat flour, cornmeal, salt, cinnamon, baking powder and baking soda.

In a blender, puree the egg whites, honey, vanilla, buttermilk and melted butter

until thoroughly combined, about 30 seconds.

Gently whisk the dry and liquid ingredients together to form a batter. This makes about 5 cups batter.

Heat a griddle or large skillet over medium-low heat. Grease the surface, then ladle half-cups of the batter to form each pancake. Cook until puffed and golden brown, about 1½ to 2 minutes on each side.

This makes 8 to 10 pancakes. The restaurant serves them with butter and maple syrup.



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