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by the FOODday staff

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WHAT'S ON OUR DESK Creme Brulee Lou Seibert Pappas, Chronicle Books, \$14.95, 96 pages

In a nutshell: Little did you know that creme brulee isn't just a dessert — it's a lifestyle. How else to explain the need for 50 recipes? Pappas, author of seven other cookbooks, takes this simple, elegant classic and turns it into all things custardy and crusty, even savory. And where did she manage to come up with so many different ramekins? Take a taste: Thai-Style Lemongrass Creme Brulee; Apple-Calvados Creme Brulee; Cappuccino Creme Brulee; Gorgonzola and Leek Creme Brulee What's hot: Newbies will like the tips on caramelizing sugar with a blowtorch or broiler, oven-drying brown sugar and chilling custards before caramelizing. What's not: Peanut Butter Creme Brulee may be taking things a little too far. — Katherine Miller MARKET DISCOVERIES What's fresh at area farmers markets, and how to make the most of the bounty.

Peas What I found: Frozen peas are such a time-saving godsend that it's easy to forget how much better tasting freshly shelled peas can be. The trick is to get into the zone when you're shelling them, quickly cracking open pods and scooping out the plump seeds. At a recent Wednesday Portland Farmers Market, I found several vendors selling them. A 2-pound bag, which ran \$4, had enough to make a side dish for six. DREAMSTIME

What I did with them: In his wonderful cookbook "Simply Tuscan," superstar Italian chef Pino Luongo enhances their already-fabulous flavor by cooking them with sauteed prosciutto and leeks. Why you should try them: Grab a handful and toss into your next Indian curry as it stews, or add them halfway through cooking a risotto to give the dish a dash of color. However you use them, you'll be getting a nice dose of natural protein, as well as big doses of vitamins C and K. — Grant Butler Peas and Prosciutto Makes 6 servings

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

1 leek, white and light green parts coarsely chopped and washed well

4 ounces prosciutto, cut into 1/4-inch dice (see note)

1 1/2 pounds shelled fresh peas

1 teaspoon granulated sugar

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

1/2 cup vegetable broth

1/4 cup dry white wine

In a shallow saucepan over medium heat, warm the olive oil and butter. Add the leek and saute until it is soft, about 5 minutes. Add the prosciutto and continue cooking until the fat is translucent, another 2 to 3 minutes.

Add the peas and stir them around to coat with the leek and prosciutto. Add the sugar and season with salt and pepper. Pour in the vegetable broth and wine, bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook, covered, until the peas are tender but still bright green, about 12 to 15 minutes.

Serve alone or on top of plain white rice.

Note: If you have the option, buy the prosciutto at a butcher counter and have the meat cut into a single 1/4-inch slice, making it easy to quickly chop into uniform dice. Some markets, however, only sell it precut in thin slices, which also will work.

— Adapted from "Simply Tuscan" by Pino Luongo

QUOTABLE: Preach not to others what they should eat, but eat as becomes you and be silent. — Epictetus

WHAT WE'RE LOVING *La Tortilla Factory* Hand-Made-Style Corn *Tortillas*

Made with a blend of white corn and wheat gluten, these taco-size *tortillas* have a fresh-from-the-taqueria feel: soft, pliable, thick and tasty. Sure, they're not authentic, but we love how they taste with grilled vegetables or steak, and that they don't split when you roll up your enchiladas.

Find packages of eight 6-inch *tortillas* (in white or yellow) for \$2.99 at Fred Meyer stores.

— Leslie Cole **COOKING TIP** When making extra-crispy bacon for bacon crumbles, spoon off the fat from the pan while the bacon cooks. Then drain the bacon on a cooling rack set over a plate lined with paper towels. If you set it directly on the paper towels, the bacon will sit in its own fat and become soggy.

**DID YOU KNOW?** About one-tenth of the 7 million tons of rice grown in the U.S. each year goes into the making of beer. (Source: Farmers Almanac)

**WEB SITE OF THE WEEK** When it comes to Web sites devoted to health and nutrition, it's not easy to find something that's trustworthy and knowledgeable, that isn't trying to cram its agenda down your throat. So we were pleasantly surprised when we stumbled on

www.alive.com . The online version of a 30-year-old Canadian magazine, alive.com is well designed, well written, and offers health information pertinent to any age, income and lifestyle. To read the magazine's archive of health and nutrition articles, check out the index toward the bottom of the home page. You'll find hundreds of stories organized in subcategories like "Diets," "Whole Foods" and "Vitamins." There's also an extensive recipe database with healthful recipes chock-full of whole grains and vegetables. Health

**Miniportions cut budgets and waistlines** Restaurants are fighting shrinking wallets by shrinking their burgers, burritos and doughnuts into minifoods that give consumers a taste without feeling too guilty about the cost or the calories.

Rick Shea, president of Shea Marketing in Minneapolis, says restaurants in general are known for portion sizes that are larger than most people need, and the smaller items give consumers better control over how much they eat and how much they spend.

But not all miniproducts take a smaller bite out of your wallet. Read the menu carefully and compare selections with regular-size items. For instance, Burger King has introduced BK Burger Shots, two

miniburgers for \$1.39. You can get a double cheeseburger off the dollar menu, which probably is a bit more food.

Dessert contest Local pastry chefs vie for best fruit tart Le Concours de Tartes aux Fruits: fruit tart throwdown between local chefs!

It's time again for Le Concours de Tartes aux Fruits, that friendly dessert competition sponsored by the Portland branch of the Alliance Francaise. Petite Provence Bakery & Bistro, winner of the 2008 Concours, will defend its title against more than two dozen competitors from top-notch restaurants and bakeries.

You can attend for \$20, which includes a sampling of the tarts and a tasting of French dessert wines. The event is July 8 from 5:30 to 7 p.m, followed by an optional meal at the Oregon Culinary Institute restaurant, which offers a student-prepared, four-course meal for \$18 (quelle deal!). For reservations for the tart competition and the dinner call 503-223-8388 or e-mail [info@afportland.org](mailto:info@afportland.org).

For more Francophile fun, don't miss Portland's Bastille Day Festival, which will be held noon to 8 p.m. Saturday, July 11, in Jamison Square in the Pearl. There you'll find waiters' races; a French-themed market; French food and wine; petanque demonstrations and lessons; and much more. Details:

[www.afportland.org/bastillepdx/index.html](http://www.afportland.org/bastillepdx/index.html) Food additives

The creepy side of food coloring The pink in your lemonade and the strawberry-colored hue in your yogurt in many cases comes from the dried body of a little critter called a cochineal bug -- and its presence in your food is obscured under the terms "artificial colors" or "color added."

But earlier this year, the Food and Drug Administration imposed a rule saying that any food or cosmetic containing cochineal, or a related additive called carmine, be labeled as such.

The change comes after a decadelong campaign by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, which was spurred by a University of Michigan allergist who found that a patient suffered severe allergic reactions after ingesting the additives. After petitioning the FDA in 1998, the group received several dozen reports from consumers saying they'd also experienced adverse reactions from ingesting the extracts.

The watchdog group says it celebrates the decision but believes the FDA should have banned the ingredients altogether. And, it points out, the new labeling rule doesn't require companies to explicitly say their products contain additives from insects, information that might be valuable to people with dietary restrictions such as vegetarians, Jews and Muslims.

The rule takes effect in January 2011.

Grilling safety

Test your BBQ IQ Barbecue season is in full swing, and with it come warnings about potential links between grilling and cancer. With just a little work, barbecuers can mitigate the threat. Take the safe grilling quiz.

1

. Heterocyclic amines (HCA) form on meat (including beef, pork, poultry or lamb) when this high-protein muscle compound in the meat is mixed with amino acids under intense heat: a) creatine

b) synthetic growth hormone

c) estrogen

2. What condition has HCA been scientifically proved to induce? a) hyperactivity in lab rats  
b) atherosclerosis in lab rats  
c) cancer in lab rats
3. True or false: When cooked at high temperature, the proteins in eggs and tofu do not result in HCA formation. 4. HCAs are concentrated in which part of the meat? a) the few millimeters farthest from the heat source  
b) the few millimeters around the edges of the meat  
c) the few millimeters closest to the heat source
5. According to laboratory tests, meat fried for 10 minutes at 450 degrees contains how much more HCA than meat fried at the same temperature for four minutes?  
a) twice as much  
b) 4.7 times as much  
c) 20 times as much
6. True or false: Another cancer-causing chemical, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, results from smoke wafting from burning coals and flare-ups from dripping fat. Answers:

1: a; 2: c; 3: false; 4: c; 5: c; 6: true Sources: Harvard Health Letter; <http://blog.nutritiondata.com/ndblog/> See more in Living Top Stories , Small Bites .post-footer img { margin-top: -10px }

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***Highlights: La Tortilla Factory, Tortillas, tortillas***