

CANAL HOUSE COOKING, VOLUME N° 3, WINTER & SPRING

is a collection of our favorite winter and spring recipes, ones we cook for ourselves, our friends, and our families all during the cold winter months and straight through the exciting arrival of spring. It's filled with recipes that will make you want to run into the kitchen and start cooking.

We are home cooks writing about home cooking for other home cooks. Our recipes are easy to prepare and completely doable for the novice and experienced cook alike. We make jars of marmalade for teatime and to gift to our friends. We warm and nourish ourselves with hearty soups and big pots of stews and braises. We roll out pasta and make cannelloni for weekend or special occasion gatherings. We roast root vegetables in the winter and lamb in the spring. Take a peek at some of the pages to the right and see what we are up to.

Canal House Cooking, Volume N° 3, Winter & Spring is the third book of our award-winning series of seasonal recipe collections. We publish three volumes a year: Summer, Fall & Holiday, and Winter & Spring, each filled with delicious recipes for you from us.

Cook all winter and through the spring with *Canal House Cooking!*

Christopher & Melissa

CANAL HOUSE



COOKING

VOLUME N° 3

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CANAL HOUSE COOKING

Volume N° 3

Hamilton & Hirsheimer



Christopher and Melissa in the Canal House kitchen

Welcome to Canal House—our studio, workshop, dining room, office, kitchen, and atelier devoted to good ideas and good work relating to the world of food. We write, photograph, design, and paint, but in our hearts we both think of ourselves as cooks first.

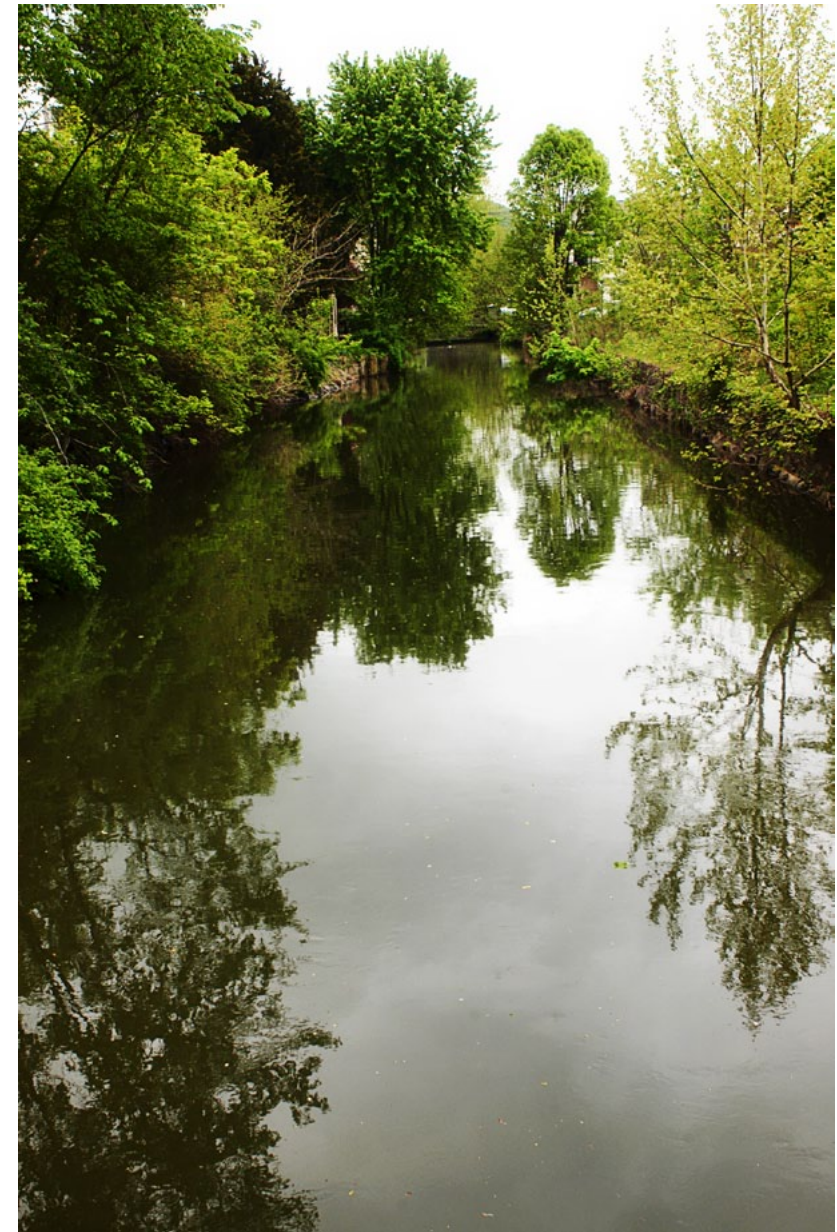
Our loft studio is in an old red brick warehouse. A beautiful lazy canal runs alongside the building. We have a simple galley kitchen. Two small apartment-size stoves sit snugly side by side against a white tiled wall. We have a dishwasher, but prefer to hand wash the dishes so we can look out of the tall window next to the sink and see the ducks swimming in the canal or watch the raindrops splashing into the water.

And every day we cook. Starting in the morning we tell each other what we made for dinner the night before. Midday, we stop our work, set the table simply with paper napkins, and have lunch. We cook seasonally because that's what makes sense. So it came naturally to write down what we cook. The recipes in our books are what we make for ourselves and our families all year long. If you cook your way through a few, you'll see that who we are comes right through in the pages: that we are crazy for tomatoes in summer, make braises and stews all fall, and turn oranges into marmalade in winter.

Canal House Cooking is home cooking by home cooks for home cooks. We use ingredients found in most markets. All the recipes are easy to prepare for the novice and experienced cook alike. We want to share them with you as fellow cooks along with our love of food and all its rituals. The everyday practice of simple cooking and the enjoyment of eating are two of the greatest pleasures in life.

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MELISSA HAMILTON cofounded the restaurant Hamilton's Grill Room in Lambertville, New Jersey, where she served as executive chef. She worked at *Martha Stewart Living*, *Cook's Illustrated*, and at *Saveur* as the food editor.



Trees leaf out in early spring along the Delaware & Raritan Canal that flows past Canal House



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Waiting for Spring

WE ARE DEAD IN THE MIDDLE OF WINTER. The air is full of snow all day but only an inch accumulates. It's cold when we arrive at the studio in the morning and we work with our hats on until the wood fire warms up the place. It is so quiet now with the French doors shut tight—no noise floats up from the street below. We hibernate, sitting at our desks wrapped in sweaters and scarves. As we write and cook, we listen over and over (as if teenagers) to a CD mix that a friend made for the studio. We warm ourselves with big bowls of watercress soup for breakfast.

We instigate teatime. Every afternoon at three-thirty the sun sinks behind the hill, and suddenly the room feels chilly again, so we shake flames out of the embers and throw another log on the fire. When the kettle whistles we brew cups of milky tea and serve ourselves buttered wheat crackers with fat Medjool dates. So what if we put on a couple pounds over the winter—who will notice under all these clothes. Sitting in the waning light, we talk about what we will plant in our spring gardens.

Even though it's cold, we build up our appetites, taking walks with children, dogs, and friends, crunching down the towpath through the snow. The canal has frozen and it looks like we could skate all the way up to Frenchtown, fifteen miles away. You can take the cold when you know there is a pot of something bubbling away on the stove at home.

The farmstand market on the edge of town has closed for the season, so there is no sliding in on the way home at the end of the day to grab something for dinner. We can't rely on vegetables we don't have this time of year! We are both eating out of our pantries—dried beans and lots of pasta. Now we're in tomato-wilderness time, so we pull out our summer stash from deep in the freezer. It's the ant and the grasshopper fable, and preserving last summer's bounty is paying off big time. We stir pesto into penne. Spread herb butters on fish or roasted chicken. And oven-roasted tomatoes, tomato sauce, and rich tomato paste find their way into everything.

A new indoor farmers' market has opened on the weekend in a vacant building just a few miles up the river. There are fresh eggs (thirteen varieties of heirloom chickens are still laying) and amazing cheesemakers—Jonathan and Nina White

of Bobolink Dairy & Bakeyard, with piles of medieval-looking loaves of levain and slabs of raw cow's milk cheeses that astound us with their gutsy, primitive styles and flavors. The line is longest at Metropolitan Seafood. The fishmongers arrive with coolers full of sparkling fresh fish—calamari, skate, grey sole, diver scallops from Nantucket, cod—all caught from cold winter waters and now packed in shaved ice. Fish is the new weekend flavor and takes the place of the Sunday Roast on our families' menus. We buy some for the studio too, and fold cod into potatoes and fry fish cakes for lunch.

When we fancy a ham for a friend's birthday dinner, it's time to check out a butcher that comes highly recommended. So we are off to Illg's Meats, seventeen miles away over hill and dale on country roads that used to wind through rich farmland, but now development encroaches on the fields. We see the sign for Illg's Meats, "The Best of the Wurst" and pull off the road and down a long lane. The market is in a low building in the middle of a classic farmyard with a big stone barn, and a large stone house with white ruffled curtains in every window. Inside, the shop is immaculate. The meat cases are full of sausages of every kind, beautifully displayed. To us this looks better than the jewelry case at Tiffany's. Hams are on sale so we buy a beauty—a twenty-pounder. When we get it back to the studio, it's too big for our roasting pan so we bake it long and slow in a big blue speckled enamelware lobster pot. It works out great, so easy to transport—handles and a lid. There's half a ham left over so we pass it back and forth between our neighbors and ourselves till the damn thing is gone.

Then one day it is warm enough to leave the doors open. And we notice the sky is staying light later. We wait for the sure sign of spring, the day the canal is stocked with trout. Soon men will come on their lunch hour and stand on the bank casting their lines into the water, hoping for a catch. After school, boys barely in their teens come to fish, and we watch them posturing in the watery spring sunlight, smoking cigarettes and swearing at each other.

Here in the Northeast, even after spring arrives it will still be a long while before the markets will be bustling. But there will be asparagus, sorrel, spring onions, chives, rhubarb, and more. There will be plenty for us to cook!

Christopher & Melissa

working up an appetite



Melissa, Margo True, and Niloufer Icbaporia King in Niloufer's San Francisco kitchen

NILOUFER'S SUCKY PEAS

Niloufer Ichaporia King includes this recipe in her wonderful book *My Bombay Kitchen* (University of California Press, 2007). The idea is to pull the peas out of the pods with your teeth, just as you would eat an artichoke leaf. The charred bits of the pod and the salt sticks to your lips, flavoring the tender peas.

Pour a little extra-virgin olive oil into a large cast iron pan. Wipe the pan out with a paper towel, leaving the thinnest film of oil. Heat the pan over high heat. When it's very hot, add 1 pound organic English peas in their pods in a single layer, turning them with a spatula until they turn from bright green to a blistery blackened olive color. Work in batches. Transfer to a plate, sprinkle with Maldon or any other coarse, flaky salt and serve right away.—serves 2–6

MARTINI-SOAKED STUFFED OLIVES

Sometimes the best part about drinking a martini is eating the olive. Why not serve them up front and center instead of wading through all that alcohol just to get to the olive? We serve these as an hors d'oeuvre at cocktail hour.

Put 1 cup gin and ¼ cup dry vermouth into a quart container or bowl. Add 2 drained 5- to 8-ounce jars large green stuffed cocktail olives and gently stir. Cover and refrigerate the olives until they've had a chance to macerate and become well chilled, 1–2 hours. Serve the olives cold with the martini juices in a wide dish, and with toothpicks for spearing.

CRAB SALAD WITH CLUB CRACKERS

When we have the freshest lump crabmeat available to us, we do little more than dress it with a bit of mayonnaise and lemon juice. When we have a hankering for crab and can only find the pasteurized tubs of it, we dress it like this and serve it with a fresh box of Club crackers.

Put 1 small finely chopped onion, 1 finely diced inner rib of celery, 1 finely chopped scallion, 2 tablespoons capers, ½ cup mayonnaise, 1 small handful chopped fresh dill, and juice of 1 lemon into a medium bowl and mix well. Gently fold in 1 pound jumbo lump crabmeat. Add a little more lemon juice if you want and season with salt and pepper. Serve with Club crackers.—makes 2½ cups



HEARTS OF PALM AND BLOOD ORANGE SALAD

serves 4

Choose hearts of palm packed in glass—the canned ones always taste tinny. Red-fleshed blood oranges come into markets in January; however, navel or other “orange” oranges make fine substitutes.

2 blood oranges	3–4 tablespoons really good extra-virgin olive oil
½ teaspoon Dijon mustard	1 jar (14.8 ounces) hearts of palm, drained and halved lengthwise
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice	Small head frisée lettuce
Salt and pepper	

Working with one orange at a time, slice the ends off the fruit. Set the orange on one of the cut ends and slice off the rind and white pith, exposing the flesh. Working over a bowl to catch any juice, slice between each fruit segment, cutting it away from the membrane and let the segments and juice fall into the bowl. Squeeze any juice from the spent fruit into the bowl.

Stir the mustard and lemon juice together in a wide bowl. Add a bit of salt and some pepper, then stir in the blood orange juices from the first bowl. Whisk in the olive oil. Taste the vinaigrette and season to your liking. Add the hearts of palm to the bowl, gently turning them in the vinaigrette while keeping them intact.

Arrange the frisée and hearts of palm in a wide serving bowl or dish. Place the orange segments on top of the hearts of palm. Pour the vinaigrette over the salad and drizzle a little more olive oil over all.

CHOPPED RAW ASPARAGUS AND PEA SALAD

serves 4

This is the perfect use for those spindly thin asparagus!

¼ cup grated pecorino romano	1 cup shucked peas, blanched
¼ cup really good extra-virgin olive oil	4 scallions, finely chopped
Pepper	4–8 large butterhead lettuce leaves
2 bunches pencil-thin fresh asparagus, trimmed and sliced crosswise	8 pieces cooked bacon, finely chopped
	1 handful fresh mint leaves, chopped

Put the cheese into a big bowl, add ¼ cup hot water, and stir until the cheese melts. Whisk in the olive oil and season with pepper. Add the asparagus, peas,

continued



BEEF SOUP CANAL HOUSE STYLE

serves 4–6

When our IT advisor and dear friend Echo Hopkins had a very unfortunate accident that fractured her jaw, we knew what the girl needed—the healing power of our puréed vegetable soups. We made batches of our four favorite flavors to coax her into taking a little liquid nourishment. It is the simplest recipe in the world. For something fancier you can dress it up just before serving with a dollop of sour cream, chopped chives, or crumbled bacon, or anything else you have a yen for. This story has a happy ending—Echo recovered her beautiful smile. We think it was the soup! — CH

4 beets (2 pounds)

4 tablespoons butter

1 large yellow onion, chopped

Salt and pepper

1 large russet potato, peeled
and chopped

Rind from ¼ preserved lemon
(or more if you like)

4 cups chicken stock

Preheat the oven to 375°. Wrap each beet in aluminum foil and bake until tender, 1–2 hours. Unwrap the beets and when they are cool enough to handle, peel off their skins. Coarsely chop the beets and set aside.

Melt the butter in a large heavy pot over medium heat. Add the onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft but not browned, about 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Add the potatoes, beets, preserved lemon, and 3 cups of the chicken stock. Cover and cook until all the vegetables are very soft, about 1 hour.

Allow the soup to cool slightly. Working in small batches, purée the soup in a blender or food processor until very smooth. (We have had the hot soup blow the lid off a blender! But cooling the soup and working in small batches will avoid this problem.) Add more stock if the soup is too thick. Season with salt and pepper and serve hot or cold, garnished or plain.

CARROT SOUP: Substitute 2 pounds peeled carrots for the roasted beets and add a big piece of fresh ginger. Remove and discard the ginger before puréeing.

POTATO LEEK: Substitute 4 trimmed, washed, chopped leeks for the roasted beets, and use 2 large russet potatoes instead of one.

BUTTERNUT SQUASH: Substitute 1–2 pounds peeled, seeded butternut squash for the roasted beets. Sweeten the soup with a few tablespoons maple syrup.

Christopher making soup for Echo





STEWY ROASTED ROOT VEGETABLES

serves 4

Roasted root vegetables have such deep, earthy flavors that you can make this delicious stew and never miss the meat!

4 tablespoons olive oil

1 large yellow onion, sliced

2 cloves garlic, sliced

4–6 large shallots, peeled

Salt and pepper

1 small butternut squash, peeled,
seeded, and cut into pieces

4 carrots, peeled and cut into pieces

4 parsnips, peeled and cut into pieces

2 cups white wine

3 small bay leaves

Preheat the oven to 350°. Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil with the onions, garlic, and shallots in a large skillet over medium heat. Season with salt and pepper. Cook until just soft and lightly browned, about 15 minutes. Arrange the squash, carrots, and parsnips in a large baking pan. Scatter the onions, garlic, and shallots and any pan juices around the vegetables in the baking pan. Season with salt and pepper. Add the wine and tuck in the bay leaves. Add a drizzle of olive oil and roast until vegetables are tender, about 1 hour. Serve with chopped fresh parsley, if you like.

Put 1 cup French lentils into a small baking dish with a lid. Add 1 bottle white wine and a drizzle of olive oil, cover, and bake at 350° until tender, about 1 hour. Season with salt and pepper. The stew and lentils will be ready at the same time.

CARROTS & BUTTER

Sometimes poor old carrots can languish in the bottom of the vegetable drawer, forgotten. Perhaps there is a perception that they take a long time to cook, but not so. Melissa likes to peel small, thin carrots then leave them whole, while I love little carrot coins. Cut them into any shape that you like. But no matter how you slice them, if you cook them this way your carrots will be bathed in a buttery glaze. — CH

Cut 4–8 peeled carrots into coins or any shape you like. Put them into a pot, add about 1 cup of water, stock, or wine, season with salt, and add a few tablespoons good butter. Gently simmer the vegetables until the water evaporates, the carrots are tender, and have absorbed the butter. Season with salt and pepper and some chopped fresh mint, if you like.—serves 4



BIG POT COOKING



BRAISED LAMB SHANKS

serves 6

Lamb shanks need a long, gentle braise to make them utterly tender—to the point where the meat barely clings to the bone. So don't shortchange yourself of the pleasure you'll have eating this dish. Give the shanks the time they need. You'll have plenty of delicious braising liquid to serve with these shanks. Cooked white beans like gigante or baby limas, polenta, or mashed potatoes are wonderful accompaniments.

3 tablespoons olive oil

6 lamb shanks

Salt and pepper

1 small head garlic, cloves peeled

9 small yellow onions, halved
lengthwise

1 cup red wine

1 cup crushed tomatoes

2 bay leaves

6–8 cups chicken stock

2 lemons, quartered

Preheat the oven to 325°. Heat the olive oil in a large, deep enameled cast iron pot over medium-high heat. Season the lamb shanks with salt and pepper. Working in batches, brown the shanks all over, about 10 minutes, transferring them to a platter as browned. Lightly brown the garlic then transfer to the platter with the shanks. Add the onions to the pot cut side down and cook without turning them until nicely browned, 3–5 minutes. Transfer them to the platter as well.

Pour off any fat and wipe out the black bits in the pot with a damp paper towel. Return the pot to medium-high heat. Add the wine and bring to a boil. Stir in the tomatoes. Return the shanks, garlic, onions, and any accumulated juices to the pot. Season with salt and pepper. Add the bay leaves and stock, then add the lemons. Cover the pot and transfer it to the oven. Braise the shanks until they are tender, about 2½ hours.

Uncover the pot and continue cooking the shanks in the oven until they are so tender the meat nearly falls off the bone and the braising juices have reduced a bit, about 1 hour.

Serve the shanks, garlic, onions, and lemon with cooked white beans, polenta, or mashed potatoes, if you like.



easter lunch



PASTA PRIMAVERA

serves 8

A few years back, pasta primavera used to turn up on every salad bar, no matter the season. Seems to us pasta primavera should be made in the spring (thus the name) with just the first young vegetables. If you look up the recipe on the Internet—tempting and convenient but not always with the best results—you'll find versions made with carrots, cherry tomatoes, bell peppers, *herbes de Provence* and rotelli. We prefer little favas, peas, and asparagus, all tangled up in a few strands of spaghetti.

Salt

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 cup diced smoked ham

1 cup fava beans, blanched and peeled

1 cup shucked fresh or frozen

English peas

1½ cups chopped thin asparagus

Pepper

1 pound spaghetti

1 tablespoon tomato paste

Really good extra-virgin olive oil

Finely chopped fresh mint leaves

Grated pecorino romano

Fill a large pot with water, add a few pinches of salt, and bring the water to a boil over medium heat.

Meanwhile heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the ham, and cook, stirring often, until the ham is lightly browned. Add the favas, peas, and asparagus, season with salt and pepper, then add a splash of water. Cook, stirring often, until the vegetables are just cooked, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat, cover, and set aside.

Add the pasta to the boiling water and cook until just tender, about 10 minutes. Drain, return it to the pot, add the tomato paste, drizzle with some really good extra-virgin olive oil, and season with salt and pepper.

Add the ham and vegetables and all their pan juices to the pasta and gently toss everything together. Divide between 8 individual warm bowls and sprinkle with fresh mint and pecorino romano.



ARTICHOKES ROMAN STYLE

serves 5–10

Roman artichokes are prized for their tenderness. While California arties are delicious, you have to peel off the outer leaves get to the pale green inner ones that are tender enough to eat. Most self-respecting Romans might turn up their beautiful Roman noses at our thistly orbs. But this is what we find in the market, so we prepare them as they do in the Eternal City, with olive oil and wine and fresh mint—and they are transformed.

I large bunch mint, trimmed of stems and minced (about 1 cup)	5 large artichokes
2 cloves garlic, minced	I lemon, halved
I cup olive oil, plus a splash	I bottle dry white wine
	Salt and pepper

Mix together the mint and garlic in a mixing bowl and add a splash of olive oil.

Pull off and discard all the tough outer leaves of the artichokes (snapping off the leaves just before the bottom to leave behind the meat at the bottom of the leaf) until you get to the tender pale green inner leaves. Slice off about 2-inches from the top. Peel, then cut stems to 1 inch. Use a sharp paring knife to trim away and smooth the stems and bottoms. As you trim, rub the flesh with the cut lemon to prevent the artichoke from turning brown.

Spread the leaves apart and use a melon baller or small sharp spoon to scoop out and discard the hairy choke. Pack inside the artichoke and between the leaves with the mint and garlic.

Arrange the artichokes stems up in a large heavy nonreactive pot (not aluminum or cast iron). Pour the oil over the artichokes then pour in the wine. Season with salt and pepper. Cover and cook over medium heat until the artichokes are very tender when pierced with a knife.

Transfer the artichokes to a platter, set aside, and allow to cool. Increase the heat to medium-high and reduce the wine and oil by half. Meanwhile, when cool enough to handle, cut the artichokes in half lengthwise or leave them whole if you prefer. Spoon the sauce over them and serve.



something sweet

A BIG MERINGUE WITH “EXOTIC” FRUITS

serves 8–12

Easter dessert. You want to serve something as pretty and showy as an Easter bonnet. The holiday usually comes too early in the spring for any of the delicious local fruits, so we like to serve this big meringue piled high with billowy whipped cream, decorated with sweet, tart “exotic” fruits or fresh strawberries if they are in season in your neck of the woods.

4 large egg whites, at room temperature	1½ cups heavy cream
Pinch of cream of tartar	Exotic fruits: 1 ripe pineapple, peeled, cored, and cut into chunks;
1 cup superfine sugar	2–3 bananas, peeled and sliced;
1 teaspoon white vinegar	4 kiwi, peeled, quartered, and sliced; pulp of 2 passion fruits
½ teaspoon vanilla extract	

Preheat the oven to 275°. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper and set aside.

Put the egg whites and cream of tartar into a large mixing bowl. Beat the whites on medium speed until they are very foamy, then increase the speed to medium-high and beat until they hold medium-stiff peaks. Continue beating on medium-high speed and gradually add the sugar, beating in 1 tablespoon at a time. Increase the speed to high and beat the whites until they are thick, stiff, and glossy. The total beating time depends on the freshness of the egg whites and the power of your electric mixer and we’ve found it can take about 5 minutes and sometimes up to 10 minutes. Fold the vinegar and vanilla into the whites.

Pile the meringue into the center of the parchment paper and gently smooth it out to form a thick 9-inch circle. Put the meringue into the oven and bake for 1 hour.

Turn off the oven and leave the meringue inside to dry out and cool completely, 2–3 hours. The longer the meringue dries out the chewier and crunchier it becomes so leaving it in the turned-off oven as long as overnight is fine, too.

The meringue will have cracks around the center and sides. Peel off the parchment paper and put the meringue on a cake plate.

Just before serving, whip the cream in a mixing bowl until big soft peaks form, then pile it on top of the meringue. Arrange the fruit on top of the whipped cream and spoon the passion fruit pulp over the fruit.



For more information, email us at