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PICKS *of* the WEEK



Purple Viking potatoes

With a variegated deep purple and light pink skin, these potatoes are beautiful. Once sliced, they reveal a white flesh. They can simply be steamed, roasted, baked or grilled. Since they are some of the creamiest potatoes around when cooked, they are excellent for mashing, according to grower Jacob Grant of Roots Organic Farm in Los Olivos. Taking the advice of Mr. Grant, I decided to mash them with some fresh herbs, the Fix of the Week on page A7, to serve alongside roasted chicken. Available at the Tuesday Santa Barbara, Wednesday Solvang, Friday Montecito and Saturday Santa Barbara farmers markets. Certified organic, price is \$2.50 per pound.



White nectarines

Candy-sweet, these delicious tree-ripened nectarines are available from a number of growers at the Tuesday Santa Barbara, Wednesday Solvang, Saturday Santa Barbara and Sunday Camino Real farmers markets. Enjoy on the go, add to lunchboxes or incorporate into a fruit salad. They are an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of dietary fiber, vitamin A, niacin and potassium. About \$3 per pound.

STEVE MALONE / NEWS-PRESS FILE



Fresh mint

With temperatures threatening to increase, you may want to stock up on fresh mint, which is a necessity for a refreshing mojito to enjoy on a warm afternoon. It can also be added to chilled water with citrus rounds or iced tea. When cooking, incorporate it into spring rolls or stir-fries. Certified organic, fresh mint can be purchased from Earthtrine Farm of Ojai and Her Family Farm of Fresno at the Tuesday and Saturday Santa Barbara farmers markets. \$1.50 per bunch.

Sam Edelman is general manager of the Santa Barbara Certified Farmers Market Association; photos by Rafael Maldonado

Petite and prolific

Chef making name for herself with stylish food blog, Le Petit Eats

By **MARILYN MCMAHON**
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

Denisse Salinas is the owner of Le Petit Chef, a private chef and boutique catering company. “The name is a play on my pint-sized stature,” said Ms. Salinas, who is 5 feet 2 inches tall. “I’m little, but I pack a punch in the kitchen.” Does she ever! Not only does Ms. Salinas, 34, prepare everyday meals for private clients and cater small cocktail soirees and dinner parties, she also offers a weekly meal delivery service in addition to creating unique recipes and photographing them for her food blog, Le Petit Eats. “I started my blog as a way to document and share some of my

favorite recipes, and the process has been incredibly rewarding,” said Ms. Salinas on a sunny afternoon in her cozy home on the lower Riviera. “It has allowed me to connect with other food lovers beyond the reach of my local clients. “I have completely fallen in love with the entire process of recipe development, food photography and styling. I am constantly challenged and learning new things every day.” Her recipes, which can be found online at www.lepetiteats.com, include breakfast items, appetizers, entrees, desserts, beverages, gluten-free, vegan and vegetarian. Among them are a Pickled Beet Carpaccio with Horseradish Cashew Cream, Drunken Scallop Tiradito, Linguine with Smoked Pomodoro Sauce and Banana

Boston Cream Pie Cupcakes. “Instead of using meat or fish for the carpaccio, I use thinly sliced pickled beets with crushed pistachios and the horseradish sauce. It can be eaten as an appetizer, salad or entree, depending on the size,” said Ms. Salinas. “The Drunken Scallop Tiradito speaks to my Peruvian heritage. My father was born and raised in Peru. I use a Peruvian liquor in the marinade. The dish is similar to ceviche.” For the pasta recipe, she makes the pomodoro sauce with smoked tomatoes to add “an extra layer of complexity.” According to the recipe for the tomatoes in her blog, “Scatter wood chips in a medium cast-iron skillet and heat over high until chips begin to smoke, about 5 minutes. Cut a 24-inch sheet of heavy-duty aluminum foil and

Please see **PETITE** on **A7**



NIK BLASKOVICH / NEWS-PRESS

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Smoked Pomodoro Pasta

½ cup wood chips
8 roma tomatoes, halved and seeded
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 cloves garlic, smashed
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 sprig fresh basil, plus more for garnish (optional)
½ teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon butter
1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
8 ounces linguine or other pasta
Shaved Parmesan, for garnish (optional)

Scatter wood chips in a medium cast-iron skillet and heat over high until chips begin to smoke, about 5 minutes. Cut a 24-inch sheet of heavy-duty aluminum foil and fold in half three times to make a thick square (or rectangle). Carefully place over chips and set

tomato halves, cut sides up, on top; remove skillet from heat. Cover with foil and top with another medium skillet. Let tomatoes sit until barely softened and smoky, 5–8 minutes. Transfer tomatoes to a plate and let cool slightly. Transfer tomatoes to a blender or food processor and puree to a chunky consistency. Heat olive oil in a medium skillet over moderate heat. Add tomatoes, garlic, tomato paste, basil and salt; simmer for 15–20 minutes or until sauce is slightly thickened. Meanwhile, boil pasta according to instructions and drain. Add butter and balsamic vinegar to sauce during the last few minutes of cooking. Toss pasta with sauce and garnish with Parmesan and basil, if desired.

Yield: 4 servings
Source: Denisse Salinas, owner of Le Petit Chef in Santa Barbara



COURTESY PHOTOS

Linguine with Smoked Pomodoro Sauce



Banana Boston Cream Pie Cupcakes

Tercero champions underdog varieties

Like most iconoclasts, vintner Larry Schaffer at Tercero, sees and does things a little differently. He not so much rejected the conventional wisdom of producing chardonnay and pinot noir in Santa Barbara County as he embraced the call of Rhone varieties (such as syrah, grenache and mourvedre). “Rhone varieties, to me, offer more ‘variety’ than other groups of varieties. They play well together and therefore work harmoniously in blends. That said, there are world-class examples of stand-alone Rhone varieties from our area as well. To me, there is no better place in California for balanced Rhone reds and whites

than Santa Barbara County.” While they are among my favorite Santa Barbara County wines as well, sometimes they are a tough sell to the wine-drinking public. “They are still considered underdog varieties and I enjoy that and enjoy being a part of the movement to educate consumers as to what they can offer,” said Mr. Schaffer. “I serve as president of the Santa Barbara County chapter of the Rhone Rangers and also serve on the national board of this organization, one whose aim is



SCHAEFER ON WINE
Dennis Schaefer

to promote and educate these varieties.” Mr. Schaffer was also one of the first in the county to totally eschew corks as the traditional wine bottle closure. “There is nothing more aggravating as a winemaker than to work carefully and tirelessly to craft a wine over a period of months or years only to find a bottle adversely affected by the closure. No closure is perfect, but I’ve found that with screw caps, I do not worry about issues such as TCA (“corked” wines) nor do I worry about random oxidation, two things that too

often happen with natural corks,” he said. Some thoughts from my recent Tercero tasting: • **Tercero Gewurztraminer, The Outlier, Santa Barbara County 2014 (\$25):** Spicy nose (as expected) of Asian pear, lychee, red grapefruit, rose petal and a hint of ginger. Explosive mouth entry with a rainbow of flavors, but even more impressive is the well-rounded, textural mouthfeel that reaches every last taste bud receptor. Stone fruit, pear, grapefruit, lychee, apricot, peach skin and cantaloupe land their flavor blasts all over the palate. Distinctly varietal with a great flavor edge but not too brittle as so many gewurztraminers are. User-

friendly and a pleasure to drink. • **Tercero, The Climb, Santa Barbara County 2010 (\$35):** Inspired by the Shafer Vineyards “Relentless” bottling, The Climb is two-thirds syrah and one-third petite sirah. Blackberry, blueberry, macerated plum, framboise, cassis and a hint of sage on the nose. The mouth entry is big, boisterous and rich, but then it relaxes and expresses a certain elegance on midpalate, like it wears a tuxedo rather than blue jeans. Very blueberry with blackberry and damson plum fruit plus lead pencil and chalk in the mouth along with a subtle and beautiful hint of reduced vanilla/caramel and baked pie crust. And

Please see **UNDERDOG** on **A7**