

Gut Check

Red Meat: Duane Keller

Posted by [Warren Rojas](#) / Tuesday, May 24th, 2011

Need a hand in the kitchen? [Duane Keller](#) is happy to oblige:



(Image: [Jason Hornick](#))

Since we've known him, the journeyman chef has lent his carefully honed talents to: D.C.'s white table cloth scene, a corporate stunner in National Harbor, an exurban golf club and a fledgling Irish pub. These days, you'll find him behind the burners at [Boxwoods](#) in Fairfax, [George Mason University's](#) bid for a slice of the fine-dining pie.

WR: Salt. Pepper. What other spices/herbs could you not live without?

DK: Virginia watercress, fresh tarragon, chives, fresh dill, sea salt, fresh basil, whole nutmeg, ginger, fennel seed, curry powder, garam masala, crushed red pepper flakes, lavender, smoked Spanish paprika, fresh bay leaves, habanero powder, vanilla beans, wasabi, fresh rosemary and garlic.

WR: What's the very first dish you ever mastered?

DK: At an early age, via pontoon plane, we would fly into our cabin on Canoe Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada. No roads led to this lake and the pickerel were a challenge to pull in. To prepare the meal it took everything from luring, catching, cleaning, seasoning, starting the fire and understanding the heat of the fire and cast iron pan. Not an easy task for a 10 year old.

WR: How long did it take?

DK: By my second summer on the lake I understood the concept but it took me three summers to master cooking the pickerel.

WR: Do you still make it today?

DK: Anytime I can get back home to Saskatoon you'll find me on Canoe Lake ... even ice fishing in the winter.

WR: What seasonal ingredient(s) get your creative juices flowing?

DK: It's a great time here in Virginia for local sorrel, arugula, morels, shad roe, Chesapeake rockfish, spinach and squash.

WR: My latest cookbook obsession is ...

DK: [A Day at El Bulli](#) – Ferran Adria

WR: What's the most challenging dish you've ever attempted? Would you make it again?

DK: 5-foot-high Croquembouche, under a time constraint. Absolutely. A fun holiday feature for many to enjoy.

WR: If I could spend the day working alongside any local chef, I'd love to collaborate with ...

DK: Patrick O'Connell – [Inn of Little Washington](#)

WR: What's the easiest/quickest—but still wholly satisfying—meal you make for yourself?

DK: My wife, Jen, is a fabulous cook so I usually leave the home cooking for her. When she's out of town I will whip up....

Spring or Summer—gets better the deeper into summer—I'm enjoying **BLT's and a scoop of fresh local crab salad** on it:

1 tablespoon mayonnaise
1/2 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
4 ounces "Choptank River" crabmeat (leftover from a Sunday on the deck)
Salt, pepper and Old Bay (to taste)
Millers Potato bread, lightly toasted
Romaine lettuce hearts
Heirloom tomatoes, sliced thick and seasoned with sea salt
Applewood-smoked bacon (preferably Neuskes), cooked crisp

Preparation

In a small bowl, mix together mayonnaise, lemon juice, salt, pepper and Old Bay until combined.

Gently fold in crab meat.

Top toasted potato bread with lettuce, crab salad, bacon and tomato slices.

Fall or Winter: **Bolognese with Pappardelle** (I make a batch and then portion up for many enjoyments):

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1/4 pound ground pancetta, cut small dice or ground
1 pound ground sirloin
1 pound ground pork
1 onion, cut into small dice
1 carrot, cut into small dice
2 celery stalks, cut into small dice
2 garlic cloves, minced or grated
Salt and ground black pepper
1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
2 bay leaves
1 tablespoon thyme leaves, removed from stem and chopped
1/4 cup tomato paste
2 cups Pearmund Cellars Meritage or other good red wine
3 cups beef stock
1/2 teaspoon (a pinch or two) crushed red pepper flakes
1/2 cup heavy cream
1 pound pappardelle pasta
1 1/2 cups grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

Preparation

Heat sauce pan over medium heat.

Add olive oil and meats and brown well. Add vegetables and garlic and cook until soft.

Deglaze pan with Meritage or other good red. Add remaining ingredients, reserving the Parmigiano-Reggiano, and simmer for an hour.

Sprinkle with Parmigiano-Reggiano when done.

Pair up with pasta, fresh Italian bread and a glass of good red.

WR: In the next six months you won't want to miss ...

DK: Boxwood's Sustainable Summer and Fall Menus 2011

WR: It's quitting time. I'm pouring myself ...

DK: A Leffe Blonde

Chef, we are totally adding your CBLT to our summer snacking toolbox.

Come back next Tuesday for another helping of Red Meat.

-Warren