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My Palate's Palette

KATHY HARRISON'S SEASONAL VEGETABLE DISHES
CAN BE BAKED IN A TART OR AS A TIAN

WE STARTED COLLECTING ART around 1975. A friend said he had a chance to buy two “museum quality” paintings. He could only take one; would I take the other? “Sure,” I replied, never having seen it, or for that matter, knowing anything about the artist, the size, or the price. All three came as a shock. My husband was in school, and we were living on meager savings and my limited income from substitute teaching. There was no turning back. We hung the picture. Each time I looked at it, I found more nuances, more subtleties.

I’m in awe of people who take pen, pencil, charcoal, paint—almost anything to paper—and turn out an image, be it abstract or realism. I’ve gone to exhibits of painters, basket makers, potters, woodsmiths, and jewelers. I’m blown away by their talent, but do not share this aptitude.

My canvas is a dinner plate. (I have many.)

When planning a menu, I look at this circle. I visualize it in thirds or quadrants. There’s usually some protein in my mind’s eye. Fish, lamb, beef, chicken. What is the size, color, texture? Is there a sauce? Next, a starch of some kind. How about glistening black rice next to a piece of creamy white fish, or even salmon? Stunning! Depending on the season, some brilliant green asparagus or deep green broccolini to round out the space. Is there enough color? Does it need some garnish? Parsley handles both beautifully.

Buying produce in season is a game changer. Those juicy blood oranges are available in winter; take advantage. Rhubarb and tender asparagus spears hit the shelves in early spring. I’m more than ready. Farmers markets in summer? Bring ‘em on!

I served poached fish, some potato dish, and roasted cauliflower at my first cooking class. I


think we made bread, too. White on white. Thinking back, it was tasty, but boring. Luckily, both my palate and palette have expanded. I’ve loved this journey. Come along for the ride. 



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KATHY HARRISON is a Barrington Hills resident who teaches the fine art of cooking. For more information, call 847-381-4828.

Red and Yellow Tomato Tart

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 large onions, thinly sliced
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2-pound dry jack or Gruyère cheese, grated
- 1-1/2 pounds plum tomatoes
- 1-1/2 pounds yellow tomatoes
- 1/4 cup pitted Nicoise olives
- Recipe for pâte brisée for an 11-inch tart (see below).

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Cook onions in a large, heavy skillet with the olive oil over medium heat, covered, until the onions are softened. Remove the cover and continue cooking the onions until the liquid evaporates and the onions are golden. Remove from heat and cool slightly.
2. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
3. Spread the onions over the partially baked dough and top with the grated cheese. Arrange the tomatoes in concentric circles over the cheese, and place olives at intervals among the tomatoes. Season the tart with salt and pepper.
4. Bake the tart in the middle of the oven for 1 hour or until the pastry is golden. Remove to a rack and cool. Tart may be served warm or at room temperature.



Vegetable Tian

Root Vegetable Tian

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 can chickpeas (15.5 oz), drained with liquid reserved
- 1 ½ teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- 3 medium sized red beets, peeled and cut crosswise 1/8 inch thick
- 2 small, sweet potatoes, peeled and cut crosswise 1/8 inch thick
- 3 parsnips, peeled and cut on the diagonal 1/8 inch thick
- 2 small red onions, sliced crosswise into 1/8-inch-thick rounds
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Combine the chickpeas and ¼ cup of the chickpea liquid, and ¼ teaspoon salt in a food processor. Process until mostly smooth. Spread the puree in the bottom of a 9-inch round baking dish. Starting at the outer edge, arrange groupings of 2-3 slices of each vegetable, overlapping slightly, in two concentric circles, using the puree to steady the slices. Fill the center with the remaining vegetable slices.
2. Stir together the cheese, thyme, and garlic in a small bowl. Brush the tops of the vegetables with olive oil. Top with ground pepper and the remaining teaspoon salt and scatter the thyme mixture overall.
3. Cover the top tightly with foil and place on a baking sheet. Roast in the oven for 35 minutes. Uncover the dish and continue roasting until the top is lightly browned and the vegetables are tender, about 30 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature. (Note: The tian can be assembled 1 day in advance and stored, covered, in the refrigerator. Bring to room temperature before baking.) Serves 8.

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Pâte Brisée (Tart Shell)

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1-1/2 sticks unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 8 Tablespoons ice water

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Place flour and salt in the bowl of a food processor. Add butter and pulse until mixture resembles coarse meal. With machine running, add ice water through the tube and process just until the dough begins to come together.
2. Remove dough from processor, form into a ball, then flatten to a disc. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour.
3. Roll dough on a lightly floured surface to fit an 11-12-inch tart pan with a removable bottom. Trim overhang to 3/4 inch. Fold overhang inward, and press against sides of the pan. Place a sheet of foil over the dough, and fill it with dried beans, rice, or pie weights.
4. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Bake pastry for 15 minutes. Carefully remove foil and weights, fill with tart filling, and continue baking for 1 hour.

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