

FOR YEARS EVERY THANKSGIVING, Maria Hines cooked turkeys and stuffing, cranberry sauce, and mashed potatoes at the Seattle restaurant Earth + Ocean, where she was the executive chef. The third Thursday of November was a workday. So she'd give thanks at her own table on the Sunday after the official holiday.

That all changed early last fall when she opened Tilth, her restaurant in Seattle's Wallingford neighborhood. Now she gives herself and her staff the day off on Thanksgiving. Here is her Northwest take on the holiday classics, culled from her restaurant's menu but cooked, at last, for friends and family.

INFO In honor of her years of Sunday Thanksgivings, Hines serves both Thanksgiving-inspired and regular menus on the Sunday after the holiday at Tilth (\$\$\$; closed Mon; 1411 N. 45th St., Seattle; 206/633-0801).

Mussels with sausage and thyme

Thyme adds a warm herbal note to the savory sausage and briny-sweet mussels.

PREP AND COOK TIME 25 minutes

MAKES 10 to 12 servings

NOTES If using sausage links, remove casings and crumble meat before adding it to the pan. You can cook the aromatics a day ahead (through step 2), cover and chill them, then reheat before adding mussels.

4 tbsp. butter, divided

½ lb. bulk pork sausage or links (see Notes)

1 tbsp. minced shallot

2 tsp. minced garlic

1 cup dry white wine

1 tbsp. lemon juice

3 lbs. mussels

2 tbsp. fresh thyme leaves

½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

1. In a large sauté pan or pot over medium-high heat, melt 1 tbsp. butter. Add sausage and cook, stirring to break into bits, until sausage is cooked through and starting to brown, 3 to 5 minutes.

2. Add shallot and garlic. Stir until fragrant, 1 minute. Add wine, increase heat to high, and cook until reduced by half, 3 minutes. Reduce heat to medium and stir in remaining butter and the lemon juice.

3. Add mussels, cover, and increase heat to high. Cook, stirring occasionally, until

mussels are open, about 4 minutes. Stir in thyme and pepper. Divide mussels among 12 plates, along with some of the sauce from bottom of pan. Serve immediately.

PER SERVING 144 CAL., 75% (108 CAL.) FROM FAT; 6.3 G PROTEIN; 12 G FAT (5.3 G SAT.); 2.1 G CARBO (0.1 G FIBER); 261 MG SODIUM; 32 MG CHOL.

Mushroom ragout

At Tilth, Hines smokes the mushrooms for her vegetarian ragout (stew). We like the earthy flavor of plain mushrooms just as much.

PREP AND COOK TIME 3 hours, including soaking time

MAKES 10 to 12 servings

NOTES You can make the recipe through step 2 a day ahead. Cover beans and chill in the cooking liquid. Before proceeding with step 3, drain beans, reserving liquid.

½ lb. dried cannellini or small lima beans

1 whole carrot

1 whole celery stalk

1 peeled halved onion, plus 1 chopped onion

4 whole garlic cloves, plus 3 chopped cloves

2 sprigs flat-leaf parsley, plus ½ cup chopped leaves

2 sprigs thyme

6 black peppercorns

3 tbsp. olive oil, divided

2½ lbs. wild mushrooms, trimmed, cleaned, and cut into large bite-size pieces

About 1 tsp. salt

3 tbsp. sherry vinegar

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Put cannellini beans in a medium pot, cover with water, and bring to a boil. Cover and turn off heat. Let sit 1 hour.

2. Drain beans, then return to pot and add carrot, celery, halved onion, whole garlic cloves, parsley sprigs, thyme, and peppercorns. Cover with water by 1 in. and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to maintain a steady simmer and cook until beans are tender, 1 to 1½ hours. Discard vegetables and herbs and let beans cool. Drain, reserving liquid, and set liquid and beans aside.

3. Put 1 tbsp. olive oil, mushrooms, and 1 tsp. salt in a large (not nonstick) frying pan over high heat. Cook, stirring, until mushrooms stop giving off liquid and start to brown. Transfer to a large bowl.

4. In same frying pan over medium-high heat, add remaining 2 tbsp. olive oil and chopped onion. Cook until onion is soft, 3 minutes. Add chopped garlic and cook,

stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add vinegar and cook, scraping up any brown bits, until pan is almost dry. Return mushrooms to pan along with reserved beans and ¼ cup reserved bean-cooking liquid. Cook, stirring, until well combined and hot. Stir in chopped parsley and salt and pepper to taste. Serve hot or warm.

PER SERVING 128 CAL., 26% (33 CAL.) FROM FAT; 6.6 G PROTEIN; 3.7 G FAT (0.5 G SAT.); 19 G CARBO (3.7 G FIBER); 200 MG SODIUM; 0 MG CHOL.

Sweet potatoes with meringue

By using meringue instead of marshmallows, Hines adds a sophisticated twist to this holiday favorite.

PREP AND COOK TIME 1¾ hours

MAKES 10 to 12 servings

NOTES You can make this recipe through step 1 up to a day in advance, covering and chilling the cooked sweet potatoes. Before proceeding with step 2, bring potatoes to room temperature, then reheat in a 375° oven until hot, about 15 minutes.

4 lbs. orange sweet potatoes (often labeled "yams")

½ tsp. butter for pan

¾ tsp. salt

½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

1 tsp. minced fresh thyme

4 egg whites

¼ tsp. cream of tartar

½ cup sugar

½ tsp. vanilla extract

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Peel sweet potatoes and cut into ¾-in. slices. Butter an 8- by 8-in. pan and arrange slices in layers, sprinkling with salt, pepper, and thyme as you go. Cover with aluminum foil and bake potatoes until they are tender when pierced with a fork, 45 to 90 minutes.

2. Over high heat, bring 1 cup water to a boil in a medium pot. Reduce heat to maintain a simmer. Put egg whites and cream of tartar in a rimmed metal bowl just big enough to fit into pot over water. Set bowl over pot and whisk egg whites constantly until hot but not cooking, 3 to 5 minutes. Take off heat and beat until firm peaks form. Sprinkle in sugar and vanilla and beat into stiff, shiny peaks. Spread over cooked sweet potatoes. Put under a broiler until nicely browned and serve hot.

PER SERVING 155 CAL., 3% (4.5 CAL.) FROM FAT; 3 G PROTEIN; 0.5 G FAT (0.2 G SAT.); 35 G CARBO (3.3 G FIBER); 180 MG SODIUM; 0.4 MG CHOL.

Apple bacon cornbread stuffing

This colorful stuffing gets a slight sweetness from apples and a savory depth from onion and bacon.

PREP AND COOK TIME 2½ hours

MAKES 16 servings

NOTES You can make the recipe through step 5 a day ahead: Cover cornbread cubes and store at room temperature. Cover and chill apple mixture. The entire dish can be assembled up to 6 hours before baking and chilled, covered.

Cooking oil spray

½ cup butter

8 eggs, divided

2½ cups low-fat milk

2 cups yellow cornmeal

1½ cups flour

¼ cup granulated sugar

¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar

4 tsp. baking powder

2 tsp. salt, divided

1 lb. thick-cut bacon, chopped

4 stalks celery, thinly sliced

1 onion, chopped

4 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, and cut into ½- to 1-in. pieces

3 cups hard apple cider

¼ cup heavy whipping cream

1 tbsp. minced fresh thyme leaves

¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Spray a 10- by 15-in. rimmed baking sheet or two 9- by 13-in. baking pans with cooking oil spray and set aside. Melt butter and set aside.

2. In a medium bowl, whisk 4 eggs with milk and set aside. In a large bowl, mix cornmeal, flour, granulated sugar, brown sugar, baking powder, and 1 tsp. salt. Add milk mixture to cornmeal mixture and mix just enough to combine thoroughly. Stir in melted butter. Pour batter into prepared pan(s) and bake until golden brown, about 30 minutes. Let cool until cool enough to handle, about 30 minutes. Keep oven on.

3. Cut cornbread into ½-in. pieces and spread on 2 large, rimmed baking sheets. Bake until golden brown, stirring once or twice, about 45 minutes. Let cool to room temperature; transfer to a very large bowl.

4. Meanwhile, in a large frying pan over medium-high heat, cook bacon until brown and crisp. Using a slotted spoon, transfer bacon to a plate or baking sheet

lined with paper towels. Transfer rendered fat to a small bowl and set aside.

5. Put 1 tbsp. reserved bacon fat back in the same frying pan over medium-high heat. Add celery, onion, and remaining 1 tsp. salt. Cook until soft, about 5 minutes. Transfer onion and celery to a medium bowl along with bacon. Return pan to medium-high heat and add 1 more tbsp. reserved bacon fat. Add apples and cook, stirring occasionally, until well browned and soft but not falling apart, about 7 minutes. Transfer apples to bowl with onions, celery, and bacon.

6. Return pan to medium-high heat and add cider. Use a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned bits on the bottom of the pan. Add cream and cook until liquid is reduced by half, about 10 minutes. Meanwhile, whisk remaining 4 eggs in a medium bowl. Add ¼ cup cider-cream mixture to eggs, whisking constantly. Add another ½ cup cider cream, still whisking. Whisk in remaining cider cream.

7. Pour egg mixture over reserved cornbread cubes and toss gently but thoroughly. Add reserved onion-bacon mixture, thyme, and pepper. Toss gently to combine well. Transfer mixture to a 9- by 13-in. baking pan, cover with aluminum foil, and bake until hot, about 45 minutes. Serve hot or warm.

PER SERVING 353 CAL., 41% (144 CAL.) FROM FAT; 9.9 G PROTEIN; 16 G FAT (7.3 G SAT.); 43 G CARBO (2.2 G FIBER); 675 MG SODIUM; 136 MG CHOL.

Juniper-and-herb roast turkey

Presalting the turkey adds flavor and helps it stay moist during roasting; so does covering the breast and drumsticks with bacon.

PREP AND COOK TIME At least 3 hours, plus brining time

MAKES 10 to 12 servings

1 free-range organic turkey (12 to 14 lbs.)

3 tbsp. salt

1 tsp. each juniper berries, brown mustard seeds, and black peppercorns

½ cup butter

⅓ cup minced fresh thyme leaves

¼ cup minced fresh sage leaves

2-in. rosemary sprig, leaves removed and minced

8 slices thick-cut bacon

1 cup dry white wine

Pine nut gravy (recipe follows)

1. Rinse turkey and pat dry with paper

towels. Sprinkle all over with salt, working some under the skin on breast and thighs. Put in a roasting pan, cover with foil or plastic wrap, and chill for at least 24 hours and up to 3 days.

2. Preheat oven to 400°. Unwrap turkey, discard any juices that have collected in pan, and pat turkey dry. Set aside. In a spice mill or clean coffee grinder, finely grind juniper berries, mustard seeds, and peppercorns. Rub spices all over turkey and set aside. In a small bowl, mix butter, thyme, sage, and rosemary until well combined. Massage mixture all over turkey and place bird in a large stovetop-safe roasting pan. Lay bacon slices over breast and drumsticks. Pour wine and ½ cup water into bottom of pan.

3. Roast turkey 1 hour, turning pan 180° halfway through. Reduce heat to 350° and roast, turning pan every 30 minutes, until a thermometer inserted straight down through the thickest part of breast to bone registers 155°, 1 to 1½ hours.

4. Transfer turkey to a carving board, loosely cover with foil, and let rest 30 minutes to 1 hour. Pour pan drippings into a glass measuring cup for pine nut gravy (recipe follows), reserving pan to make gravy. Carve turkey and serve with gravy.

PER SERVING 466 CAL., 33% (153 CAL.) FROM FAT; 73 G PROTEIN; 17 G FAT (6.2 G SAT.); 0.3 G CARBO (0.1 G FIBER); 893 MG SODIUM; 198 MG CHOL.

Pine nut gravy

This nutty gravy is great with both the roast turkey and cornbread stuffing. Or try it with mashed potatoes (see "Three Ways with Mashed Potatoes," page 131).

PREP AND COOK TIME 25 minutes, plus 1 hour to simmer stock

NOTES Keep warm by covering and resting over a pan of barely simmering water for up to 2 hours. Whisk well before serving.

MAKES About 4½ cups

1 turkey neck

1 small onion, halved and peeled

2 bay leaves

½ cup pine nuts

Roasting pan and measuring cup of drippings from juniper-and-herb roast turkey (recipe precedes)

Up to ¼ cup butter if needed

¾ cup flour

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. In a medium saucepan over high heat, bring 6 cups water, turkey neck, onion, and bay leaves to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and cook, undisturbed, 1 hour. Take stock off heat and strain. Discard solids and set stock aside.

2. With a mortar and pestle, grind pine nuts to a rough paste; or in a food processor, pulse to a rough paste, being careful not to purée. Set paste aside.

3. Pour fat off pan drippings into a bowl and set aside (reserve juices left in measuring cup). Set roasting pan on top of stove so it spans two burners; turn them to medium low. Add ½ cup reserved fat (if you don't have enough, add butter to make ½ cup). Whisk in flour. Cook, whisking, until flour is deeply browned and has a nutty aroma, about 3 minutes.

4. Still whisking, pour in reserved pan juices and reserved stock. Use a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned bits from bottom of pan, then stir in reserved pine nut paste and whisk until gravy is smooth. Raise heat to high and bring to a boil.

5. Boil until gravy is thick enough to coat the back of a metal spoon, 3 to 4 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Pour into a gravy boat through a fine mesh strainer, if you like, and serve immediately.

PER TBSP. 39 CAL., 82% (32 CAL.) FROM FAT; 0.6 G PROTEIN; 3.5 G FAT (1.3 G SAT.); 1.2 G CARBO (0.1 G FIBER); 117 MG SODIUM; 4.6 MG CHOL.

Hazelnut herb salad

Tarragon, chives, and parsley temper the richness of the hazelnuts.

PREP AND COOK TIME 35 minutes

MAKES 10 to 12 servings

NOTES You can make the dressing up to 2 days ahead and chill it, covered, until ready to serve. The hazelnuts can be roasted and chopped up to 2 days ahead, covered, and kept at room temperature.

1 cup hazelnuts

About ¾ tsp. salt, divided

1 bunch chives

Leaves from 5 sprigs tarragon

Leaves from 3 sprigs flat-leaf parsley

¼ cup each hazelnut oil and olive oil

1 egg yolk

¼ tsp. dry mustard

1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice

About ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

3 heads butter or Bibb lettuce

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Put hazelnuts on a baking sheet and bake 10 minutes. Wrap nuts in a clean kitchen towel and rub vigorously to remove as much skin as possible. Roughly chop nuts and set aside.

2. Fill a medium saucepan with water and bring to a boil. Add ½ tsp. salt, chives, tarragon, and parsley. Cook 30 seconds; drain. Rinse herbs with very cold water and use your hands to squeeze out as much water from them as possible. Chop herbs and put in a blender.

3. Add oils and whirl until herbs are puréed, 2 to 3 minutes.

4. In a small bowl, whisk egg yolk and mustard together. Add a drop of the herb-oil mixture and whisk until fully incorporated. Repeat with the remaining herb-oil mixture, adding only ½ tsp. at a time to create a thick, mayonnaise-like dressing. Whisk in remaining ¼ tsp. salt, the lemon juice, and pepper. Add more salt and pepper to taste if you like.

5. Tear lettuce leaves into bite-size pieces and put in a large bowl. Toss gently but thoroughly with dressing. Garnish with reserved hazelnuts and serve immediately.

PER SERVING 152 CAL., 95% (144 CAL.) FROM FAT; 2.1 G PROTEIN; 16 G FAT (1.5 G SAT.); 2.6 G CARBO (1.2 G FIBER); 197 MG SODIUM; 18 MG CHOL.

Black Mission fig tart

The clever use of familiar combinations marks Hines's cooking. If your guests can't figure out where they've tasted something like this rich, deep, spicy tart before, just utter two simple words: "Fig Newtons."

PREP AND COOK TIME 4½ hours

MAKES 10 to 12 servings

NOTES You can prepare the figs through step 1 a day ahead; cover and chill figs and liquid until ready to use. You can make the dough (step 2) up to 3 days ahead and keep it wrapped and chilled.

1 lb. dried black Mission figs

Two 750-ml. bottles light- or medium-bodied dry red wine (such as Pinot Noir)

1 cup, plus 3 tbsp. sugar, divided

¾ tsp. salt, divided

5 black peppercorns

1 cinnamon stick

3 whole allspice

2 whole cloves

1 tsp. vanilla extract

1½ cups flour, plus more for rolling

¾ cup very cold butter cut into small pieces, plus more for foil

8 oz. crème fraîche

1. Trim stems off figs. Cut figs into ½-in.-thick slices and put in a large bowl. Bring 6 cups of water to a boil and pour over figs. Let sit 10 minutes. Drain and put figs in a large pot over medium-high heat with wine, 1 cup sugar, and ½ tsp. salt. Bring to a boil. Meanwhile, tie up peppercorns, cinnamon, allspice, and cloves in a 6- by 6-in. piece of cheesecloth and add to pot. Lower heat to maintain a simmer and cook until figs are soft and liquid is reduced to about ¾ cup, about 2 hours. Remove spices and discard. Stir in vanilla. Let figs and liquid cool to room temperature.

2. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, stir together flour, remaining 3 tbsp. sugar, and remaining ¼ tsp. salt. Drop in butter and work it into the flour mixture with your fingertips, a pastry blender, or a fork until it resembles coarse cornmeal with some pea-size chunks. Quickly stir in 2 tbsp. very cold water until dough starts to hold together (it will still be quite crumbly). Gently knead dough 2 or 3 times in bowl, then turn onto a large piece of plastic wrap, shape into a 6-in. disk, cover with wrap, and chill for at least 1 hour and up to 3 days.

3. Preheat oven to 350°. Place a 10-in. tart pan with a removable rim on a large baking sheet. Butter a large piece of foil. Unwrap dough and put on a floured surface. Roll dough into a 13-in. circle, turning 90° between each pass of the rolling pin to keep it from sticking. Transfer to the tart pan, allowing the dough to fall into place (if you push or stretch it, it will shrink back when baked). Trim edges ½ in. past rim of pan and fold down to double the thickness of the tart edge. Set foil, buttered side down, gently onto dough and top evenly with pie weights, dried beans, or rice. Bake 30 minutes. Remove weights and foil and bake until golden brown, about 15 minutes. Let cool.

4. Arrange cooled figs in cooled crust and pour fig-cooking liquid over them. Let sit at least 1 hour (at room temperature) and up to overnight (in refrigerator). Serve at room temperature, with crème fraîche.

PER SERVING 418 CAL., 41% (373 CAL.) FROM FAT; 4 G PROTEIN; 19 G FAT (12 G SAT.); 60 G CARBO (4.2 G FIBER); 286 MG SODIUM; 48 MG CHOL.