

Chef Michelle Bernstein Shares An Untraditional Approach To Jewish New Year Celebrations



BILL HOGAN/CHICAGO TRIBUNE/MCT)
Chef Michelle Bernstein shares an untraditional approach to Jewish new year celebrations. Here, a whole roasted fish as the main course: yellowtail snapper with toasted garlic, sour oranges and chilies.



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Chef Michelle Bernstein shares an untraditional approach to Jewish new year celebrations. Here, a honey mango upside-down cake.

BY BILL DALEY
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Rosh Hashana's rich, slow-cooked foods and honeyed golden fruits reflect the changing seasons and offer the promise of a sweet new year. What if, however, the view outside the window isn't of maples and oaks but palms and banyan trees? And the colors aren't the rusty yellows and oranges of soon-to-fall leaves but the vivid turquoise of a sun-dappled bay or the hot pinks of an art deco hotel?

And, yes, that braised beef brisket of family tradition is surely delicious, but does anyone really want to eat that when the temperature is still surfing 90?

Chef Michelle Bernstein is not above cooking brisket for Rosh Hashana, which begins at sundown Sept. 16, but she's just as likely to toss it on the grill and sauce it with chimichurri.

"With the Caribbean and Latin influences down here, the food has to change. It's a little lighter and a little brighter in color," said the celebrity restaurateur behind Michy's and Crumb on Parchment, both in Miami.

Of Argentine and Jewish descent, Bernstein was born and raised in Miami. She is mindful of her family's traditions and helpfully distributes copies of her mom's brisket recipe to those who ask. It calls for two envelopes of Lipton's onion soup mix and a splash of whatever wine, white or red, that happens to be open.

Ask her for a Rosh Hashana menu that reflects today's South Florida vibe and she'll offer a whole roasted fish as the main course: yellowtail snapper with toasted garlic, sour oranges and chilies. And, for a starter, fried squash blossoms filled with burrata cheese and topped with a gazpacho vinaigrette.

"There's always something a little fried on the table. It's the Jewish way," she explained.

Also on the table: A salad, perhaps made of beets and Brussels sprouts, which takes Bernstein back to her South American background. The dessert? A mango upside-down cake, which smells of spice and honey when baked. That's appropriate for

Rosh Hashana, she said.

"It's all about the sweetness, the honey, the celebration," Bernstein said.

WHOLE ROAST FISH WITH TOASTED GARLIC, ORANGE AND CHILIES

Prep: 16 minutes
Marinate: 20 minutes
Cook: 30 minutes
Servings: 6-8

Note: Michelle Bernstein uses whole yellowtail snapper for this recipe; substitute striped bass, branzino, "anything fresh with scales," she said. (We used striped bass.) You may use fish fillets instead, just shorten the cooking time accordingly. Bernstein pairs this fish with sauteed Swiss chard and Israeli couscous accented with ground cinnamon, chopped fresh parsley and mint.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 5 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- Juice of 2 oranges
- Juice of 2 limes
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 serrano pepper, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup cilantro, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 2 whole yellowtail snappers (1 1/2 pounds each), gutted, scales removed, cleaned
- 2 fennel bulbs, sliced into 1/4-inch thick strips
- 1. Heat the olive oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the garlic; keep the pan moving, swirling it over the heat, until the garlic turns golden brown. Remove from the heat, carefully add orange and lime juices, cumin, serrano pepper, cilantro, 1/4 teaspoon salt and black pepper to taste. Taste for seasoning. Allow to cool to room temperature.
- 2. Place the fish in a large bowl; pour in the garlic-oil-citrus

juice mixture. Slather the mixture all over the fish. Marinate at least 20 minutes, or up to 2 hours in the refrigerator.

3. Heat the oven to 375 degrees. Arrange the fennel strips in a single layer in a roasting pan; season with salt and pepper to taste. Position the fish over the fennel; drizzle the marinade over the fish and fennel. Cover the pan with foil; bake, 15 minutes. Remove the foil; raise the heat to 400 degrees. Bake until the fish is cooked through, 12-18 minutes.

Nutrition information:

Per serving: 316 calories, 16 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 60 mg cholesterol, 8 g carbohydrates, 35 g protein, 177 mg sodium, 2 g fiber.

HONEY MANGO UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE

Prep: 20 minutes
Cook: 30-40 minutes
Servings: 8-10
Miami chef Michelle Bernstein developed this recipe specifically for our Rosh Hashana story. She considers it a cross between a sponge cake and a honey cake, with a fluffier texture. Substitute other fruits if mangoes aren't available; firm fruits like apples or pear may need a little pre-cooking to soften them.

Topping:

- 1/2 stick (1/4 cup) butter
- 1/4 cup each: brown sugar, honey
- 2 ripe but somewhat firm mangoes, peeled, sliced into thick slices
- Cake: 1/2 cup each: canola oil,

brown sugar, honey
3 eggs
1 1/2 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon each: baking soda, kosher salt, allspice
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
2/3 cup sour cream
1 teaspoon orange zest
1 teaspoon vanilla
1. Spray the sides and bottom of a 9-inch cake pan with non-stick cooking spray. Cut a circle of parchment paper that fits into the bottom of the pan. Lay the parchment circle into the greased pan; spray the paper with nonstick cooking spray.
2. For the topping, melt the butter in a small saucepan over medium heat; add the sugar, stirring. Once the sugar and butter have melted together, stir in the honey. While it's warm, pour into prepared pan. Top the caramel with mango, slightly overlapping the slices.
3. Heat oven to 350 degrees. For the cake, combine the oil, sugar and honey in a large bowl. Add the eggs; mix until combined. Sift all dry ingredients together in a second bowl. Combine the sour cream, orange zest and vanilla together in a third bowl. Add the dry ingredients to the egg mixture one-third at a time, alternating with one-third of sour cream mixture.
4. Pour batter into the prepared pan. Bake until cake is golden brown and a wooden skewer comes out clean when inserted into the center, 25-35 min-

utes. Allow the cake to cool in the pan on a wire rack until just warm to the touch. Unmold the cake onto a serving platter while it's still warm.

Nutrition information:

Per serving (for 10 servings): 446 calories, 20 g fat, 6 g saturated fat, 79 mg cholesterol, 63 g carbohydrates, 5 g protein, 303 mg sodium, 2 g fiber.

SWISS CHARD

Prep: 10 minutes
Cook: 10 minutes
Servings: 4

Ingredients:

- 1 pound Swiss chard, stemmed, stems saved for another use, leaves cut into 1/2-inch slices
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/4 cup vegetable broth
- 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground pepper
- Heat the olive oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the chard; cook, 2-3 minutes. Add the broth; cook, 4 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Nutrition information:

Per serving: 83 calories, 7 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 4 g carbohydrates, 2 g protein, 416 mg sodium, 2 g fiber.

COUCOUS:

Prep: 5 minutes
Cook: 20 minutes
Servings: 6-8

Ingredients:

- 4 tablespoons butter
- 3 cups Israeli couscous
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground pepper
- 1/4 cup each, finely chopped: Italian parsley, mint
- Heat the butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the couscous and cinnamon; cook, stirring, 4-6 minutes. Add the broth, season with salt and pepper to taste; cook until the broth is absorbed. Stir in the herbs.

Nutrition information:

Per serving: 311 calories, 6 g fat, 4 g saturated fat, 15 mg cholesterol, 53 g carbohydrates, 9 g protein, 384 mg sodium, 4 g fiber.

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