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FOOD CHAT

Chat with California Cook columnist Russ Parsons

Transcript: The Times' Russ Parsons took readers' questions in a live chat Thursday, July 26, 2007.

Times Staff Writer

2007-07-26 13:02:38.0 Administrator2: Hello and welcome to the Food Chat with Russ Parsons! We'll begin in a moment; in the meantime, please feel free to submit your questions. You'll see them appear in the chat window once we get started.

2007-07-26 13:03:58.0 carey: Hi Russ! You did a great little blog on melons! A) Which is your favorite? And any you recommend for juices or agua fresca?

2007-07-26 13:04:58.0 carey: i meant the second question to be B) sorry!

2007-07-26 13:06:04.0 Russ Parsons: I don't really have any favorites. I think they're all good, when you get them at the right time. For netted melons, make sure the net is raised and the background color is golden. There should be a great perfume. Smooth-skinned melons like honeydew are tougher--the color should be rich and creamy and the surface will be a little rough, rather than hard. Given all of that, I think the Ha-Ogen is a terrific melon--i get from it what i get from Charentais and Cavaillon in Europe. But really, all of them are good. For agua frescas (aguas fresca?), Just puree the melon balls with a little bit of water or ice cubes, and a squirt of lime.

2007-07-26 13:07:23.0 Brin: I like your relationship with apples.



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The Envelope	2007-07-26 13:07:44.0 Russ Parsons: Brin, perhaps you ought to explain that a little.
Travel	folks might get the wrong idea!
Magazine	2007-07-26 13:08:09.0 tableau vivante: Is it anything like his relationship with figs?
Home & Garden	2007-07-26 13:08:22.0 tableau vivante: because I'd like to hear about it:)
Health	
Food	2007-07-26 13:08:36.0 Russ Parsons: oh my, now figs are a whole 'nother story! that's
Autos	one kinky fruit.
Books	2007-07-26 13:08:39.0 Brin: "An apple with a lot of promise"
Image	
Arts & Culture	2007-07-26 13:09:01.0 Brin: It's like you are talking about an old crush. Very nice.
Living Green	2007-07-26 13:09:40.0 Russ Parsons: Oh, that! well, i think a lot of the new apple
Video	varieties get run down because they're not the old varieties! sure Gravenstein is a
Photography	great apple, but I don't think I've ever had any apple better than a well-grown Pink
Obituaries	Lady. That's like solid champagne.
Crossword, Sudoku	2007-07-26 13:09:47.0 tanabutler: Hi, Russ. I was at Bocadillo in San Francisco
Your Scene	yesterday, and we had a bean salad. In with the haricot verts and the Roc d'or (golden
Blogs	beans) were these giant, white beans, sort of like halibuts. : D If I post a link to a
All Sections	photo, do you think you might identify it?

Buy, Sell & More

Jobs	2007-07-26 13:11:15.0 Russ Parsons: Who let Tana in here? For folks who don't
Cars	know, she is the author of the I (heart) Small Farms blog (linked on our blog page). I
Real Estate	sure hope these giant white beans weren't really like halibuts! those fish can go 300
Apartments	pounds? i've been cooking a Spanish bean called Judeon over the last couple of
Personals	weeks. That's giant, takes a long time to cook, but really a terrific texture and flavor.
Deals at Local Stores	2007-07-26 13:11:54.0 tanabutler: Los Angeles will let ANYONE in. Clearly.
Coupons	2007-07-26 13:12:14.0 Russ Parsons: oh, now that's just not nice. and pretty cheeky
Newspaper Ads	from someone from Santa Cruz.
	2007-07-26 13:12:34.0 tanabutler: http://img240.imageshack.us/img240/7042/
	beanskf6.jpg ---- those white beans are as big as the top of your thumb.

Place an Ad

In the Newspaper	2007-07-26 13:12:45.0 Brin: Is Judeon someone's last name? where does the name
Online	come from?
	2007-07-26 13:12:45.0 Brin: could you eat a Judeon bean raw?

Settings & Services

Sign In	2007-07-26 13:12:51.0 tanabutler: But flat. Like a halibut. : D
Register	2007-07-26 13:13:14.0 live live: looks like a fava to me
Personalized News	2007-07-26 13:13:50.0 Russ Parsons: Those look just like Judeons. No, you can't eat
	them raw, they're a dried bean. And honestly, I don't know where the name comes
	from. I was intrigued by them when I saw them at La Espanola, so I picked up a

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couple days (in the test kitchen, one of my many nicknames is "bean boy. "). Do you folks know about La Espanola?

2007-07-26 13:14:17.0 tanabutler: It definitely wasn't a fava. I know favas. Russ, I just Googled the Judeon and came up nearly blank.

2007-07-26 13:14:21.0 carey: yes la espanola is super!

2007-07-26 13:14:25.0 Brin: no. unpack la espanola please.

2007-07-26 13:15:51.0 Russ Parsons: La Espanola is one of the real treasures in Southern California. It's in Harbor City, roughly Lomita and Vermont. It started as a Spanish foods importer and distributor, started making its own brands of sausages and hams that couldn't be imported and now has a small (very small) retail outlet. Lots of their stuff is sold at Spanish Table and La Tienda, but at pretty drastic markups. And on Saturday, Dona Juana, who started the business, comes in and makes paella.

2007-07-26 13:16:21.0 Eat Me: My wife and I have recently discovered that we really like sweet potatoes. Do you have any suggestios on how to prepare them? Also, what is the difference between a sweet potato and a yam?

2007-07-26 13:16:32.0 carey: the paella is excellent and so is the jamon

2007-07-26 13:16:48.0 Russ Parsons: carey--and so are the chorizos. really amazing.

2007-07-26 13:17:19.0 tanabutler: Whoa: <http://www.laespamolameats.com/> (Swooooooon. Clunk!)

2007-07-26 13:17:57.0 carey: yes all are good - the olive oil is worth the drive

2007-07-26 13:18:42.0 Russ Parsons: eat me: i like to roast sweet potatoes and then do other things with them. Put them on a cookie sheet (so the juices don't run) and bake at 400 degrees until they're tender. Great purees. Also, you can then peel and slice them and bake them with a little cream. That's terrific. Difference between sweet potatoes and yams? what we call yams are are really a different variety of sweet potato. A true yam is a very starchy African root vegetable. In this country, we call the paler, starchier varieties of sweet potato "yams". The moister, darker varieties we call "sweet potatoes."

2007-07-26 13:19:06.0 tableau vivante: Russ, I'm pretty partial to the black missions and brown turkeys...but my neighbor has a kadota and I'm trying to find a new way to preserve them. Jams are threatening to end my marriage. Any thoughts?

2007-07-26 13:19:25.0 Brin: Olio di Melli is also good.

2007-07-26 13:20:05.0 Russ Parsons: You might try making a pretty thick sugar syrup and briefly poaching the figs in that before canning them. i can think of some nice flavorings--a little lime zest would be nice, no?

2007-07-26 13:20:18.0 Russ Parsons: brin, what's olio di melli?

2007-07-26 13:20:29.0 Brin: it is green heaven

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Thomas Keller to open Bouchon in Beverly Hills



The restaurant from the Michelin 3-star chef is scheduled to open by fall 2009. Rory Herman, currently at Per Se in New York City, will take the toque.

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2007-07-26 13:20:42.0 Russ Parsons: I thought that was umbria ... no wait, ireland.

2007-07-26 13:20:57.0 tableau vivante: Lime zest would be lovely with kadotas. Thank you.

2007-07-26 13:20:59.0 Brin: olive oil made by the melli family

2007-07-26 13:21:03.0 tanabutler: Figs: the best fig I ever had was the Violette de Bordeaux fig...it tasted like chocolate. Almost bourbony, almost fermented. Insane.

2007-07-26 13:21:29.0 Russ Parsons: is it at la espanola? i'll have to try it. one of the things i miss most is really fresh oil, the kind that tastes like artichokes rather than almonds.

2007-07-26 13:21:54.0 Brin: Tana, have you ever grown figs? Any advice?

2007-07-26 13:22:21.0 tableau vivante: <http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/graphics/photos/aug02/k9934-2i.jpg> that one tana?

2007-07-26 13:22:38.0 Russ Parsons: my favorite fig is the panachee, which has vertical stripes of lime and yellow, and a pulp that's like eating raspberries. i spent one wonderful afternoon at the UC Davis Wolfskill horticulture center, eating some of the hundreds of fig varieties they grow there. it's a big wide world.

2007-07-26 13:22:43.0 tanabutler: ---- black thumb. "I dont' plant seeds, I bury them" is my motto. I tasted them at a farm I photographed.

2007-07-26 13:23:21.0 tanabutler: Yes, that is the Violette de Bordeaux. Another fabulous one was the Panache: <http://smallfarms.typepad.com/photos/uncategorized/22.jpg>

2007-07-26 13:23:22.0 Russ Parsons: there's a good fig nursery in malibu. i've been thinking about planting a panachee in my front yard. they're really terrific-looking trees. Very architectural.

2007-07-26 13:23:24.0 Brin: amazing, like a fig library

2007-07-26 13:23:27.0 tableau vivante: Russ, any local growers who sell the Panachee? I've actually been looking for it to no avail.

2007-07-26 13:24:11.0 Brin: where does one find good figs in sf?

2007-07-26 13:24:19.0 Russ Parsons: I haven't run across any. I found it a couple of years ago when I was up in Fresno doing a story on fresh figs. i do know that they are working on growing several varieties outside of the mainstream and the market for fresh figs is just booming.

2007-07-26 13:24:35.0 Russ Parsons: brin, have you tried monterey market or berkeley bowl?

2007-07-26 13:25:00.0 tanabutler: Rick and Kristie Knoll sell fabulous figs at the

Saturday market at Ferry Plaza.

2007-07-26 13:25:13.0 Brin: i will. thanks. i like to think about the booming fig market.

2007-07-26 13:25:32.0 tanabutler: For other figs in Southern California, you might try Barry Koral.

2007-07-26 13:25:39.0 tableau vivante: Russ, thanks for taking the time here...I've gotta get back to the grind. Be well!

2007-07-26 13:25:58.0 tanabutler: He grows ten kinds, I think. He sells at San Diego's Sunday Hillcrest market. Great guy.

2007-07-26 13:26:24.0 Russ Parsons: it's one of those funny things. california has always grown a ton of figs, but they were almost all dried--fig newtons. then when the "newton" family expanded to include apples and other things, there were a lot of figs left without homes. so they started selling them fresh and found that people really liked them.

2007-07-26 13:26:55.0 carey: speaking of sweet potatoes - any place other than ranch 99 or mitsuwa that carries okinawan sweet potatoes?

2007-07-26 13:27:24.0 Russ Parsons: I dont know those carey, can you describe them?

2007-07-26 13:28:08.0 carey: they are the "new" purple sweet potato. my family lives in hawaii and they are in everything

2007-07-26 13:28:28.0 carey: mostly, in asian centric recipes

2007-07-26 13:28:54.0 carey: but also great in desserts, pies, apstries

2007-07-26 13:28:57.0 Russ Parsons: Hmmm, I'll have to investigate. The obvious other place to try would be Marukai. I find they and Mitsuwa seem to carry much the same stuff.

2007-07-26 13:28:59.0 Brin: Thank you Russ. You've been really helpful. Take care.

2007-07-26 13:29:05.0 Jen: Do you use any mixes? I am not talking about something such as Hamburger Helper. For instance, my husband loves to make Peach Cobbler. he has bought a mix from Bristol farms called Lizzie's country cobbler. He get more compliments on his cobbler when he gives in and uses it instead of doing it all from scratch.

2007-07-26 13:30:02.0 Russ Parsons: I don't think I do. At least I can't think of any. how about the rest of you? c'mon fess up.

2007-07-26 13:30:31.0 tanabutler: My daughter does all the baking!

2007-07-26 13:31:07.0 Russ Parsons: i'm not by nature much of a baker. but i have found a great pie pastry recipe and i do like to make crumbles and cobblers and those kinds of things, too.

2007-07-26 13:31:27.0 carey: Russ here is an description of the okinawan sweet potato <http://starbulletin.com/2001/07/25/features/ingredient.html>

2007-07-26 13:31:33.0 carey: yes i use mixes periodically - like now when its hotter

2007-07-26 13:32:11.0 Russ Parsons: i'll have to keep an eye out for them.

2007-07-26 13:32:18.0 carey: the trader joe's mixes are good they have orange chocolate, matcha (green tea), vanilla and even meyer lemon! yum!

2007-07-26 13:32:42.0 Russ Parsons: i do use canned ingredients and things like that -- particularly as carey says, now that it's hotter. i find canned beans work well in salads.

2007-07-26 13:33:39.0 Russ Parsons: And i can't remember the last time i made mayonnaise from scratch. Why when you've got Best Foods? on the other hand, I've never found a packaged pesto that i like. And it takes so little time to make it yourself in a mortar and pestle.

2007-07-26 13:34:13.0 carey: well the sf chronicle did do a nice piece on la restaurants yesterday so...anyway what apples are in season or should i saw pre-season here now

2007-07-26 13:34:36.0 carey: yes, a little "help" is always good when its hot. canned beans, prepared salad dressing, etc. are good. i just add my few fresh ingredients depending. like in the vanilla cake mix i might add fresh fruits

2007-07-26 13:34:51.0 Russ Parsons: Yes I saw that. Michael Bauer, the restaurant critic, is an old, dear friend of mine. I went with him on a dinner or two.

2007-07-26 13:35:13.0 carey: haha my earlier posts are getting posted now - oops

2007-07-26 13:35:37.0 Russ Parsons: as for apples, we're just starting to get some of the fujis. i think most of these are from warmer growing areas. i do find that a cooler climate--or at least cold nights--helps the flavor. it really gets that acidity to pop.

2007-07-26 13:35:42.0 tanabutler: Russ, what kind of mortar/pestle do you use? I am looking for a good one.

2007-07-26 13:36:03.0 carey: i thought the article was glowing for a sf writer :)

2007-07-26 13:36:24.0 Russ Parsons: i've got a great one--a thai granite one that is about \$20 at most any SE Asian market. I've got a good friend who has one of those Provencal marble ones and I think the granite works better.

2007-07-26 13:36:57.0 Russ Parsons: oh, i don't know carey. i don't think there's really much sense of competition. i certainly have a lot of san francisco restaurants that i like, too!

2007-07-26 13:37:02.0 gogm: Russ, I bought and have been delighted with the Misono UX-10 knife based on your Dec. 2004 article you wrote on Japanese knives.

Do you still use your whetstone or have you switched to another brand that would be worth looking into. Plus, do you sharpen your knives or can you recommend someone that uses wet stones instead of a grinding wheel to sharpen them? I fear ruining my knives.

2007-07-26 13:38:11.0 Russ Parsons: Hiya gogm. Yes, I still use that knife all the time. Sharpening is a problem, though. It only needs it a couple of times a year (I steel the knife between uses). I'm afraid the only thing to do is learn how to use one of those wet stones. I'm still in the process, but even for a beginner, it keeps the knife really sharp.

2007-07-26 13:38:25.0 tanabutler: Don't take this the wrong way, but how big is your mortar/pestle? : D

2007-07-26 13:38:55.0 Russ Parsons: It will hold a couple of cups of finished sauce. and that's all i'm gonna say about that.

2007-07-26 13:38:59.0 carey: no not any more. just as a former san franciscan, there was laways a bit of a la doesn't cut it, but not any more !

2007-07-26 13:39:02.0 Jen: Aside from knives, what is your most used kitchen appliance?

2007-07-26 13:39:03.0 Jen: BTW, on one of your Good Food broadcasts you recommended a Portuguese paring knife from Lee Valledy in Canada. I bought it and I love it.

2007-07-26 13:40:11.0 Russ Parsons: Jen, I think it depends on the time of year. honestly, these last couple of weeks, i've been using the mortar and pestle more than anything else. there's something about fresh herb sauces during the summer. And does a grill count? because i've been cooking out back a lot, too. other than that, i'd say either the cuisinart or a blender ... i tend to go back and forth.

2007-07-26 13:40:14.0 carey: thanks russ gotta go - love your food knowledge and advice!

2007-07-26 13:40:22.0 Dan: what do you think is the next "unexplored" cuisine in dining?

2007-07-26 13:41:50.0 Russ Parsons: Boy, that's a tough one. People are at all different levels when it comes to what is "explored." i have friends who rarely eat japanese, outside of commercial sushi places. and there are so many different aspects of that cuisine. and i do think its hard to find good indian in southern california--particularly if you restrict yourself to the west side. i go to artesia all the time (i live in long beach) and there's great stuff there. i'd personally like to see more regional Mexican restaurants open, too.

2007-07-26 13:42:17.0 tanabutler: It's driving me crazy that I lost a bunch of e-mails, one from a Southern California farmer who grows (I am not making this up) 200+ kinds of figs. Russ, do you know who it might be?

2007-07-26 13:42:33.0 Russ Parsons: NO, I sure don't.

2007-07-26 13:42:42.0 Dan: we went into craft last weekend and were "startled" by the prices! can you comment on reviewers taking - or not taking - that into consideration when reviewing the restaurant? (the times did not mention the high tabs at all...gold mentioned that you would be hard pressed to get out for less than \$100 pp...i think much more than that) Is quality and press directly related to price in LA?

2007-07-26 13:44:44.0 Russ Parsons: I'm not sure what goes into a restaurant's decision on pricing. And, to tell the truth, I don't eat out that much. We have a wonderful restaurant critic, S. Irene Virbila, who does that for me. I trust her implicitly and if she raves about a place, then I'll go. I don't mind spending a lot of money for a meal, but it had better be really terrific. I'd rather spend \$300 a person at the French Laundry once a year than eat a lot of \$75 per person meals that left me thinking "enh?". nothing like dropping a month's rent and walking out saying "well, the second course was ok."

2007-07-26 13:45:07.0 live live: is there a food wiki that anyone knows of that tells about varieties

2007-07-26 13:46:23.0 Russ Parsons: there is a lot of varietal advice in my book "how to pick a peach", but I don't know of a single website that does it.

2007-07-26 13:46:29.0 tanabutler: Oh my goodness, I just found the fig farmer's website. He'd left a comment on my blog. <http://figs4fun.com/> (Russ, you're going to pop.)

2007-07-26 13:46:40.0 live live: i love the book

2007-07-26 13:47:13.0 Russ Parsons: that's a panachee at the bottom right. i'll have to check that guy out.

2007-07-26 13:47:28.0 Jen: Any body ever heard of Padang Makaan? Several years ago they opened a restaurant in NYC specializing in it.

2007-07-26 13:48:00.0 Russ Parsons: what cuisine is that? sounds singaporean or maybe filipino?

2007-07-26 13:49:15.0 Jen: Indonesian but from the island of Sumatra. there are Padang Makaan restaurants in Singapore. The phillippines seem to have alot of Taiwanese eating places.

2007-07-26 13:50:11.0 Russ Parsons: what kind of dish is that? i know there's a little indonesian place just north of the 91, between the 710 and 605. don't remember the street for sure ... Bellflower?

2007-07-26 13:50:25.0 Jen: Before the war, the NY Times did a feature on Iraqui cuisine.

2007-07-26 13:51:51.0 live live: but i want to eat more variety in my greens and vegetables. it is so hard to get more than a couple of kinds of avos out here on the east cost. i even have avocado of the month club and last month they sent hass

2007-07-26 13:53:16.0 Russ Parsons: well, a hass is a good avocado, but you're right, there are more. I really do believe that if you try to eat seasonally, you'll inevitably wind up eating a greater variety of foods--you won't have the same old favorites to fall back on. Makes life more interesting.

2007-07-26 13:53:24.0 Jen: It is called Toko Rame.

2007-07-26 13:53:42.0 Russ Parsons: What's called Toko Rame?

2007-07-26 13:54:29.0 Jen: The Indonesian restaurant on Bellflower Bl. It is pretty authentic for Javanese cuisine.

2007-07-26 13:55:47.0 Russ Parsons: Oh, OK. I don't know anything about the cuisine, but I have liked what i have eaten there. Sometimes that's the most fun for me ... being in the business you get used to taking familiar dishes apart. I love to take visiting foodies to Young Susan for a Korean feast--not only are the ingredients unfamiliar, so are many of the techniques. Makes for a fascinating experience (if you're a food geek).

2007-07-26 13:55:56.0 Dan: last question & thanks...this is fascinating: can you recommend some great "tasting experiences?" we get great learning experiences and food at the bev hills cheese shop, but would like more in that vein that are not a la 'wine dinners' with reps just droning on and on...

2007-07-26 13:57:54.0 Russ Parsons: I had a really nice dinner at Providence a couple of weeks ago, with really interesting wine pairings put together by the sommelier, whose name i'm blanking on. Also, Peter Birmingham at Il Grano is terrific. Give them a price range and a menu and they'll keep you going.

2007-07-26 13:58:55.0 Russ Parsons: i believe the sommelier is Drew Langley

2007-07-26 13:59:03.0 Administrator2: Any fresh ideas for eggplant this summer?

2007-07-26 14:00:21.0 Russ Parsons: this may sound funny, but if you've never steamed eggplant, you're in for a treat. Most of the time I fry it or grill it, but I steamed a bunch a couple of years ago (I was trying to find the differences in flavor among the different varieties ... turns out there isn't much). but anyway, what i found was, steamed eggplant is really delicious. Just dress it with some garlic, olive oil, sherry vinegar and some basil or maybe some rosemary. makes a great salad.

2007-07-26 14:00:53.0 3ingredients: I have been grilling eggplant on my gas grill and the topping it with a "salsa" of olive oil, red wine vinegar, fresh garlic and fresh parsley.....comes out quite nice..you don't need a lot of the topping as it is very flavorfull

2007-07-26 14:01:42.0 tanabutler: Ratatouille with eggplant, anyone? : D It's all the rage around here.

2007-07-26 14:01:45.0 tanabutler: Russ, thanks for the "visit." Let me know how it goes with the fig/banana/exotic fruit guy. Maybe I can get down that way for a visit with

you sometime. Thanks again for the boosts.

2007-07-26 14:01:59.0 Russ Parsons: That is classic! and there's nothing better than that. of course there are things that are as good. one thing you might try is layering the eggplant as it comes off the grill, with a sprinkling of herbs between the layers. The heat from the eggplant releases the oil in the herbs. really nice.

2007-07-26 14:02:14.0 3ingredients: i use the same "salsa" on grilled potatoes (sliced thin) and it has been a nice treat.

2007-07-26 14:02:36.0 foodarts56: made caponata the other night ...mmm on crusty bread

2007-07-26 14:02:39.0 Russ Parsons: speaking of ratatouille: try making it cooking each vegetable individually, then bringing them together right at the end. the flavors and textures are much brighter that way.

2007-07-26 14:03:12.0 Russ Parsons: yeah, cold caponata. some salame. a glass of cold white wine (or maybe evenbetter--rose!)

2007-07-26 14:03:24.0 3ingredients: Russ.....do you have any idea where I can purchase guanciale in Los Angeles. I have tried italian stores and butcher shops and have come up empty. Please let me know as I cannot live without it.

2007-07-26 14:03:29.0 Dan: suggestion to the admin: we cannot see our question typed out in its entirety...so you press talk with a little fear that you have typed something foolish!

2007-07-26 14:04:31.0 Russ Parsons: i don't know of any place that sells guanciale. that's strange because it seems like it's pretty easy to make. you might try the South African sausage place just south of Beverly Hills (Olympic?). They have a wide range and make some really good stuff.

2007-07-26 14:04:37.0 Administrator2: Hi Dan, sorry to hear that! On my screen (and Russ'), we can scroll back and see the beginning of our typed responses, even though it doesn't all appear in the window at once. Is that not working for you?

2007-07-26 14:04:42.0 foodarts56: There is a great little french bakery in Santa Fe, NM that serves warm ratatouille in a crepe. Great light summer fare

2007-07-26 14:05:02.0 Russ Parsons: That wouldn't be teh one at the bottom of the La Fonda Hotel, would it?

2007-07-26 14:05:07.0 tanabutler: You might be able to get mail-order guanciale from Severino's Community Butcher. The cleanest, pastured pork you'll ever eat, probably. (Full disclosure: Justin Severino is my friend and client. Russ has had his meats.) Severinos.com

2007-07-26 14:05:48.0 foodarts56: yes it is. They have a great spinach crepe as well

2007-07-26 14:05:50.0 Russ Parsons: i think you can also order it from Niman Ranch.

2007-07-26 14:06:46.0 Russ Parsons: That pasta place was started by michel Richard! It was the first place I ate something that really turned my head around about food (that was back in 1974 or '75). Funny thing is, years later Michel and I became great friends, though we didn't know we had that connection.

2007-07-26 14:07:16.0 tanabutler: (I don't see guanciale at the Niman Ranch website. Maybe it's an occasional thing.)

2007-07-26 14:07:52.0 foodarts56: They make killer brioche but you need to get there at the crack of dawn ot enjoy it

2007-07-26 14:08:07.0 3ingredients: i just joined and i saw that there was some talk of figs....being that they just came into season i wanted to share a quick, easy and delicious recipe. Halve a bunch of figs and lightly toss them in just a bit of olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Put the figs (skin side down) on a baking sheet and then place a small piece of manchengo cheese on top of the figs.....cook in the oven on 300 for just about 10 minutes (enough to slightly melt cheese and warm figs)....then take them about wrap them with a thin slice of procioutto.....it's a real winner and goes over great with guests....

2007-07-26 14:08:33.0 Russ Parsons: guanciale is listed under "smoked and cured meats" in the pork section.

2007-07-26 14:08:35.0 3ingredients: thanks for the tips on guanciale...i am immediately going to check this out.

2007-07-26 14:09:13.0 Russ Parsons: that does sound good. i like figs and prosciutto better than melons and prosciutto. to me, the flavors seem to mesh better.

2007-07-26 14:09:28.0 Russ Parsons: http://www.nimanranch.com/control/product/~category_id=40003/~product_id=352400-91-01

2007-07-26 14:09:31.0 3ingredients: if all goes well i will me making authentic carbonara by next week!

2007-07-26 14:09:59.0 Russ Parsons: There you go! and also, shave it very thin and put it on hot bruschetta. It's like pork butter (mmmm, pork; mmmm butter).

2007-07-26 14:10:01.0 3ingredients: also.....figs are sooo seasonal you have to use them as much as you can during their time....you can always use canteloupe in California.

2007-07-26 14:10:08.0 tanabutler: I see it now, but it doesn't show from a search on the Niman site. Good for them!

2007-07-26 14:10:41.0 foodarts56: My neighbors figs will come in soon (I'm in NM) but my favorite way with them is to toss them whole in the bottom of a roasting pan with a chicken, whole shallots and lots of fresh herbs and olive oil. They are stupendous roasted in the drippings

2007-07-26 14:11:14.0 Russ Parsons: well, that's not exactly true 3ingredients (but remember, you're talking to the season nazi here). melons are just starting to get good

now and they'll be terrific through the end of September, then they'll tail off. Fresh figs are only regarded as seasonal because there isn't enough demand for them yet for growers to figure out how to sell them year-round!

2007-07-26 14:11:51.0 3ingredients: having a neighbor with a fig tree is better than having a neighbor with a pool....i just go back from Croatia and they seem to have the most fig trees per square foot in the world....many more than even Italy.

2007-07-26 14:12:33.0 Russ Parsons: What was the food like in Croatia? the closest I've been is Friuli, a stone's throw from Slovenia. Very interesting food. that old Austro-Hungarian empire had some really good eating.

2007-07-26 14:13:47.0 foodarts56: Even better than a neighbor with fig tree is a neighbor with lots of fruit trees..funny thing is that she does not eat very much fruit!

2007-07-26 14:14:07.0 Russ Parsons: but i'll bet the neighborhood birds do!

2007-07-26 14:14:17.0 tanabutler: Heh, Russ, Justin sells lard at the farmers markets, and has it labeled "pork butter." Sells like hotcakes.

2007-07-26 14:14:53.0 Russ Parsons: Mario Batali's dad sells Lardo (kind of salt-cured lard) at his place and they call it "white prosciutto"

2007-07-26 14:14:59.0 3ingredients: The standouts were the fresh anchovies, fried smelts, grilled monkfish and and of their eggplant dishes....they of course have many influences in their food and it was quite nice.....also the bread was excellent.....the food was more expensive than I thought...lodging cheap, food expensive...

2007-07-26 14:15:53.0 Russ Parsons: mmmm fresh anchovies. there used to be a lady at the Torrance Farmers Market who sold them. But i haven't seen them in a while. guess I'll have to drop by one fo the bait stores.

2007-07-26 14:16:00.0 Aloha59: I have to say how much I miss the Farmer's Markets in L.A. I live in Hawaii now and we just don't have the variety!

2007-07-26 14:17:07.0 Russ Parsons: At the risk of sounding like a complete chauvinist (well, i AM the California Cook), there aren't many places that have the variety we do. We're blessed with a really terrific climate--or range of climates. Everything from citrus to pears. And I understand there are some folks workign on growing tropical fruits as well.

2007-07-26 14:17:20.0 3ingredients: they are heavenly.....we ate them like candy on this trip.....a bit of lemon juice and parsley.....speaking of Batali's dad...anytime you get up to Seattle he has a terrific and unique sandwich shop near the baseball stadium.....worth a visit but call in advance because he is closed on Sunday if not Sat. as well.

2007-07-26 14:17:34.0 foodarts56: Actually a racoon showed up at her porch one day with his hands matted with fig flesh and a slightly alcoholic smell about him. Poor tyke got sloshed and sat on her porch a long, long time

2007-07-26 14:17:47.0 Russ Parsons: I think that's salumi, and it is great.

2007-07-26 14:18:19.0 3ingredients: that is the name.....a must visit for folks in the seattle area visiting.

2007-07-26 14:18:27.0 Russ Parsons: that's funny! i've got a tangelo tree and the possums love that. You find th fruit in the morning, with a neat little hole taken out of the top and the inside completely hollowed out. Very neat those racoons.

2007-07-26 14:18:50.0 Russ Parsons: You can also get Armandino Batali's salumi at Cube, on La Brea (as well as Paul Bertoli's).

2007-07-26 14:18:55.0 Aloha59: Well we certainly have enough mangoes and papay, and a huge variety of weird Asian things, but I really miss the vegetables there. Price of paradise I guess!

2007-07-26 14:19:13.0 Russ Parsons: Yeah, but you get more kinds of spam than we do.

2007-07-26 14:19:31.0 foodarts56: The racoon has a very well rounded palate. he eats fish from my pond

2007-07-26 14:20:12.0 Russ Parsons: we had that happen, too! woke up in the middle of the night to a sloshing noise and there were two racoons making a buffet table out of our pond. I tried to scare them away and they stood up and hissed at me. scared me away instead.

2007-07-26 14:20:14.0 Aloha59: Are you kidding? There may be 5-6 varieties but my mother-in-law won't touch ANYTHING but the ORIGINAL. Ugh. Can't escape it.

2007-07-26 14:20:40.0 tanabutler: Russ, if you want more kinds of spam, try publishing your e-mail address on a public site. : D

2007-07-26 14:20:51.0 Aloha59: And she has high blood pressure to boot! :)

2007-07-26 14:20:53.0 Russ Parsons: i have to confess, there's an hawaiian barbecue place close to me and every once in a while, i get a spam musubi and some macaroni salad for lunch!

2007-07-26 14:21:09.0 foodarts56: spam, paper thin, fried can be a happy thing

2007-07-26 14:21:12.0 Aloha59: Oh Russ, you are a LOCAL at heart!

2007-07-26 14:21:20.0 Russ Parsons: tana, my address is published in the LA Times every week. you wouldn't believe what i can get enlarged or improved.

2007-07-26 14:21:42.0 3ingredients: well as far as seasons go i have been getting some great peaches as of late and i am finding zucchini flowers easier to get this time of year vs. the winter.....what a treat they are as well.

2007-07-26 14:22:22.0 Russ Parsons: zucchini flowers are one of my favorite things about summer. I make a light batter with flour and water, beat in an egg, and then fry

them. the batter should be very light, so you can almost see through it after they're cooked.

2007-07-26 14:22:40.0 tanabutler: Russ, Barry Koral grows lots of tropical fruits (he's near Encinitas), as does the fig guy/Encanto Nursery. A hundred kinds of bananas!

2007-07-26 14:22:42.0 tanabutler: Admin, I was trying to scroll up to see who it was that asked me if I had any tips about growing figs. I can't go back that far, but wanted to share a link: <http://www.doityourself.com/stry/fabulousfigs>

2007-07-26 14:22:48.0 Aloha59: Personally, I avoid the plate lunches. We just got a Salas Creations franchise up the street here in downtown Honolulu and you should see the lines!

2007-07-26 14:23:00.0 Aloha59: My sister lives in North Hollywood and has been making me jealous talking about her peach tree and blackberry bushes.

2007-07-26 14:23:04.0 foodarts56: Russ, let me know if you want those almonds..I can send em out

2007-07-26 14:23:11.0 tanabutler: I need the recipe for the zucchini batter, please. We have SIX plants, and they're practically throwing themselves over the fence at us. I've vowed to learn to do the blossoms.

2007-07-26 14:23:18.0 Aloha59: I meant SALAD Creations. Can't see my typing here!

2007-07-26 14:24:15.0 Russ Parsons: not much of a recipe. Put some flour in the bottom of a bowl. whisk in water until it's about the thickness of whipping cream (unwhipped). Beat in an egg. There you go. just make sure the oil is good and hot.

2007-07-26 14:24:30.0 3ingredients: tana.....they are tough to make because you have to heat oil dangerously hot and quick fry them or they just absorb all of the oil.... be carefull...it's almost like making a tempura dish which can be tough at home as well

2007-07-26 14:25:18.0 tanabutler: What kind of oil and what kind of pan? (I'll be careful. I'll do it at my chef friend's house.)

2007-07-26 14:25:23.0 Russ Parsons: I do a lot of frying and have never had a problem. but do make sure the pan handle is turned to the inside of the stove so nobody bumps it accidentally.

2007-07-26 14:25:26.0 foodarts56: Zucchini flowers, mexican style. Saute blossoms with a minced serrano chile and some onion. Fold into a corn tortilla, add a sliver of a good mexican melting cheese and make a quesadilla

2007-07-26 14:25:51.0 Russ Parsons: i use a combination of olive and canola. if you're feeling extravagant, use all olive (the Santini from TJ is perfect).

2007-07-26 14:26:52.0 Russ Parsons: That sounds great foodarts. I just had one something like that at a great little Mexican restaurant in Culver City called Sabor a Mexico. They do DF-style quesadillas, raw masa dough that's folded over like a turnover and then deep-fried.

2007-07-26 14:26:56.0 Aloha59: It was nice being able to chat with you Russ after reading you for so long. Gotta get back to work but I'll check in again! Aloha!

2007-07-26 14:26:57.0 foodarts56: Corn season is coming soon and as we have had rain I'm hoping to get huzontcles (sp) aka corn smut for equally good quesadillas

2007-07-26 14:27:36.0 Russ Parsons: huitlacoche. and i have to admit, that's one ingredient I don't get. It's not bad, by any means, but it's a far cry from a truffle.

2007-07-26 14:27:46.0 Mike: Russ: Have you tried any local albacore this season? If so, how was it?

2007-07-26 14:28:16.0 Russ Parsons: I haven't had any. I almost picked some up this week. At Marukai they had whole loins.

2007-07-26 14:28:23.0 foodarts56: great chatting with you all...off to pick eggplant and almonds

2007-07-26 14:28:26.0 3ingredients: so russ.....i have recently started using pizza screens to make my pizzas at home....i was quite skeptical at 1st but they make the best crust you can get....huge recomendation for pizza screens vs. stones or pans.

2007-07-26 14:28:59.0 Russ Parsons: I'll have to give those a try. I'm still using a set of quarry stones i bought something like 25 years ago.

2007-07-26 14:29:52.0 3ingredients: i bought a bunch at Surfa's (for short \$\$)....give them a whirl and let me know how it goes.

2007-07-26 14:30:30.0 Russ Parsons: I'll give those a try. Hey guys, I've got to run pretty quick (still have next week's cover story in edit). Got time for just a couple more questions.

2007-07-26 14:31:24.0 tanabutler: Thanks for everything, Russ. I'll be in touch with some info about a Croatian lady farmer you might want to talk with. Cheers!

2007-07-26 14:32:01.0 su-kim: has anyone been to Osteria Mozza yet and is it worth the hype?

2007-07-26 14:32:45.0 3ingredients: been to Mozza twice.....appetizers are great but the pizza crust.....we'll you should decide for yourself but it sure is different..good luck getting a reservation.

2007-07-26 14:33:09.0 Mike: I just went 2 days ago. Definitely worth the hype if you appreciate thinner crust pizzas and high quality ingredients.

2007-07-26 14:33:17.0 3ingredients: perhaps you meant the osteria and not the pizzeria...sory

2007-07-26 14:33:26.0 Russ Parsons: I haven't been, but everyone i know who has been has loved it. i can't wait (well, i will, until i can get a reservation!). you're talking about the osteria, not the pizzeria. i've been to the pizzeria and i thought it was terrific.

2007-07-26 14:33:29.0 Administrator2: Russ, what's your favorite pizza? In the whole WORLD?

2007-07-26 14:34:12.0 Russ Parsons: My favorite pizza? probably late night in Italy. They have these little "Tavola Calda" places on the street with wood-fired pizza ovens.

2007-07-26 14:34:22.0 Mike: My mistake as well. I have not been to the Osteria yet.

2007-07-26 14:34:30.0 Administrator2: yum!

2007-07-26 14:34:54.0 tanabutler: I'll second your "yum" and raise you two.

2007-07-26 14:35:14.0 Administrator2: tana: yum yum yum YUM!

2007-07-26 14:35:16.0 Russ Parsons: in this country, honestly the best pizza i've had is in phoenix, of all places. Chris Bianco at Pizzeria Bianco is a genius.

2007-07-26 14:36:12.0 3ingredients: bianco is legendary

2007-07-26 14:36:15.0 tanabutler: I went to A16 before Nate Appleman took over the kitchen and had some unremarkable pizza. It's supposed to be all the rage in SF. He's made me promise to come back so he can rectify the experience.

2007-07-26 14:36:28.0 Russ Parsons: Well guys, another week gone! Check back in next week, same time, same channel!

2007-07-26 14:36:32.0 Mike: Talk about a line. We got to Pizzeria Bianco on a Sat. 40 minutes before it opened. The line was 50 people long.

2007-07-26 14:36:46.0 tanabutler: Ciao, Russ!

2007-07-26 14:37:25.0 Administrator2: To get your Russ Parsons Chat fix in the meantime, check back at <http://www.latimes.com/features/food> in about an hour and we'll have the transcript posted.

2007-07-26 14:37:36.0 3ingredients: pizzeta 211 in san francisco...check it out.

2007-07-26 14:37:44.0 tanabutler: Thanks!

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