

CHEFS AT HOME

Unfried Green Tomatoes



A top Southern chef offers a twist on one of the region's classic foods in a salad and a casserole

THE CHEF: SCOTT PEACOCK, chef at the Watershed Restaurant in Decatur, Ga., and winner of the James Beard Foundation's "Best Chef Southeast"

award this year. Mr. Peacock was the chef to two Georgia governors and at Atlanta's Horseradish Grill before writing "The Gift of Southern Cooking" with his late mentor Edna Lewis, a Southern culinary icon. Housed in a converted gas station, the Watershed is known for Mr. Peacock's refined take on Southern classics.

KNOWN FOR: Watershed patrons rally every Tuesday evening for Mr. Peacock's fried chicken, which is fried in part lard, part sweet butter. Well-made lard is "much better for you than margarine," he contends.

THE MEAL: Mr. Peacock likes to showcase seasonal ingredients multiple times in a menu. Here, a sweet-sour green tomato and watermelon salad is a starter, and a casserole of scalloped green tomatoes is a side dish.

"Both would be great with simple grilled chicken or even with a braised pork shoulder," he says. Green tomatoes, which are unripe red tomatoes, are widely available in late summer, when tomato season peaks. If you can't find green tomatoes, substitute four green tomatillos for each green tomato.

KITCHEN TIP: Instead of draining fried chicken on brown paper bags or paper towels, Mr. Peacock opts for a cooling rack that allows the excess fat to drip off the chicken and air to circulate around each piece, enhancing its crunchiness. —*Raquel Pelzel*



Dylan Cross (photographer); Sunny Nam (food stylist); Dana Devine O'Malley (prop stylist)

Watermelon and Green Tomato Salad

Yield: 4 servings
Active preparation time: 35 minutes

- ½ Vidalia onion, thinly sliced (if you can't find a Vidalia, you can use a white onion)
- 2 tablespoons red-wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons orange juice (preferably fresh)
- 2 teaspoons honey
- ½ jalapeño, seeded, veined and finely minced
- 1 small garlic clove, halved
- 1 teaspoon salt

- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black peppercorns
- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 3-pound seedless watermelon, rind removed, cut into 1½-inch chunks (about 6 cups)
- 1 medium green tomato, halved and thinly sliced
- ¼ cup fresh whole mint leaves
- 4 cups arugula, tough ends removed

■ Soak the onions in a large bowl of ice water for 20 minutes. Drain, blot with a paper towel, and set aside.

■ While the onions soak, whisk the red-wine vinegar, orange juice, honey, jalapeños, garlic halves, salt and pepper in a medium bowl. Set aside for 10 minutes, then remove and discard the garlic and slowly whisk in the olive oil. Taste for seasoning and adjust if necessary.

■ Place the watermelon, green tomatoes, onions and fresh mint leaves in a large bowl. Season with a little salt and pepper, add the arugula and the dressing and gently toss to coat. Taste for seasoning and serve immediately.

SHOPPING LIST

- From the market:**
- 1 orange (or orange juice)
 - 1 small jalapeño
 - 3 garlic cloves
 - 3-pound seedless watermelon
 - 5 green tomatoes (or 20 tomatillos)
 - ½ Vidalia onion
 - 1 small yellow onion
 - ¼ cup fresh mint
 - 4 cups arugula

- White sandwich bread
- From the pantry:**
- Red-wine vinegar
 - Honey
 - Salt
 - Black pepper
 - Sugar
 - Dried thyme
 - Dried whole or ground nutmeg
 - Unsalted butter



Scalloped Green Tomatoes



Yield: 4 to 6 servings
Active preparation time: 10 minutes
Cooking time: 50 minutes

- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, plus 1 tablespoon at room temperature
- 3 slices white sandwich bread, crusts removed, cut into ½-inch cubes
- 4 large green tomatoes, halved, seeded, and cut into ½-inch pieces
- 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped

- 2 garlic cloves, finely minced
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black peppercorns
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg (preferably freshly grated)

■ Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Grease a 9-by-9-inch baking dish with the softened butter, place a piece of parchment paper in the bottom of the baking dish and set aside.

■ Place the bread cubes in a bowl and toss with 3 tablespoons of

melted butter. Transfer to a baking sheet and toast in the oven until golden brown, about 10 to 12 minutes, stirring halfway through cooking.

■ Toss the tomatoes, onions, garlic, thyme, sugar, salt, pepper and nutmeg together in a large bowl. Stir in the toasted bread cubes and the remaining butter. Turn the mixture into the prepared baking dish and cover tightly with aluminum foil. Bake for 40 minutes, remove the foil and bake until slightly golden on top, about 10 minutes longer. Serve hot or warm.