



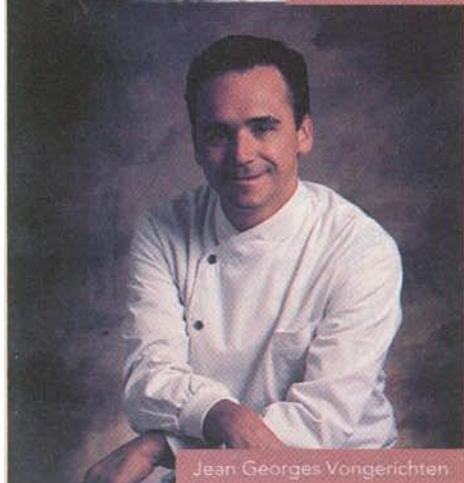
Marcus Samuelsson



Diane Forley



Thomas Keller



Jean Georges Vongerichten

Eating Out

New vegetarian tasting menus

One of the kinder reversals in dining is that the prospect of finding a great-tasting vegetarian meal at a top restaurant is no longer as elusive as it once was. Fifteen years ago, *New York Times* food writer Marion Burros wrote that things were beginning to look up for vegetarian diners. She talked of the vegetable platters, risottos and new pasta dishes being offered at several restaurants. But she also noted that vegetarians still received an icy reception at many of the finer restaurants. In the article, Andre Solter, former chef of Lutece in New York City stated, "I don't jump for joy when a vegetarian comes to my restaurant." Another chef claimed vegetarian diners were hard to please, and still another said she felt sorry for people who didn't eat meat.

Thankfully, the tables have turned. Now, vegetarians are not only accommodated but celebrated with a recent menu renovation called the vegetarian tasting. This new menu option is composed of four to seven small dishes that not only allow you to sample the chef's creations but, together, shape a varied and satisfying meal. Ironically, these menus are offered in restaurants that, not too long ago, treated vegetarians like second class diners.

Why all this sudden respect? Gray Kunz, of New York City's Lespinasse restaurant, sells 15 vegetarian tasting menus nightly. He says that over the last decade the growth of farmers markets in urban areas has made it easier and more appealing for chefs to work with seasonal vegetables. Thomas Keller, of the French Laundry in Napa Valley, believes chefs are just less arrogant than they used to be, "They were forgetting that they're a service industry." He sells at least 10 orders of his \$75 vegetable tasting menu nightly. "Meat is probably the most boring ingredient to work with," he says with some disdain, "but the possibilities are endless with vegetables."

The one thing vegetarian diners need to be aware of is that a chef's interpretation of vegetarianism may not be the same as yours. For instance, a vegetable soup may contain chicken broth or there could be anchovies in a particular pasta sauce. It's best not to assume a vegetable tasting menu is 100 percent vegetarian. In order to avoid unpleasant surprises, always ask what's in the dishes before you order.

Here's a sampling of tasting menus from some of America's most celebrated chefs.

By Alice Feiring

Photography by Carolyn Taylor

It's Catching On

Here's a list of some of the restaurants now offering vegetarian tasting menus:

Aquavit - Chef: Marcus Samuelsson
13 W. 54th St.
New York, NY
(212) 307-7311

Cascabel - Chef: Sam Hazen
218 Lafayette St.
New York, NY
(212) 431-7300

Chanterelles - Chef: Phillipe Chin
1213 Spruce St.
Philadelphia, PA
(215) 735-7551

Charlie Trotter's - Chef: Charlie Trotter
816 W. Armitage Ave.
Chicago, IL
(773) 248-6228

Fleur de lys - Chef: Hubert Keller
777 Sutter St.
San Francisco, CA
(415) 673-7779

French Laundry - Chef: Thomas Keller
Corner of Creek & Washington
Yountville, CA
(707) 944-2380

JoJo - Chef: Jean Georges Vongerichten
160 E. 64th St.
New York, NY
(212) 223-5656

La Grenouille - Chef: Daniel Orr
3 E. 52nd St.
New York, NY
(212) 752-1495

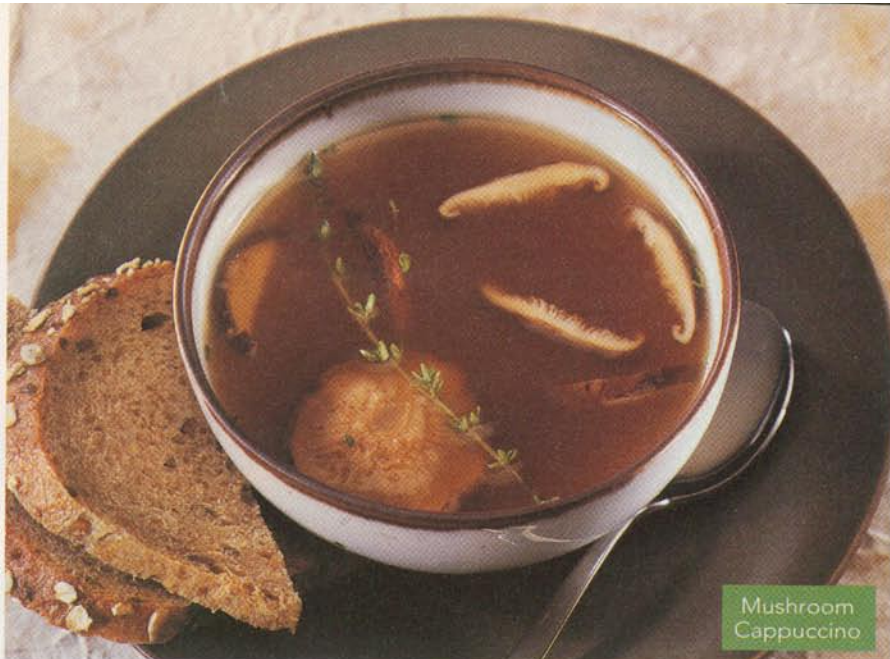
Lespinnasse - Chef: Gary Kunz
2 E. 55th St.
New York, NY
(212) 339-6719

Patina - Chef: Joachim Splichal
5955 Melrose Ave.
Los Angeles, CA
(213) 467-1108

Restaurant Daniel - Chef: Daniel Bouley
20 E. 76th St.
New York, NY
(212) 288-0033

Seeger's - Chef: Gunther Seeger
111 W. Paces Ferry Road
Atlanta, GA
(404) 846-9779

Verbena - Chef: Diane Forley
54 Irving Place
New York, NY
(212) 260-5454



Mushroom Cappuccino

Mushroom Cappuccino

4 SERVINGS

LACTO 

This frothy soup has a wonderfully rich flavor that you won't soon forget. It's great served with a dense multigrain bread. (Marcus Samuelsson, Aquavit)

- 2 cups mushroom vegetable stock
- 1 pinch porcini powder (see glossary, p. 111)
- 2 Tbs. white port wine
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 4 shiitake mushroom caps
(see glossary, p. 111)
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. soy sauce
- 2 tsp. butter
- Freshly ground white pepper
- Truffle oil (optional)
- Parmesan cheese shavings
for garnish (optional)
- Fresh sprigs thyme for garnish (optional)

PREHEAT OVEN to 350 degrees. In medium saucepan, combine stock, porcini powder, wine and thyme. Bring to a simmer and cook 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, put mushroom caps on baking sheet and roast in oven until golden brown, 5 to 7 minutes. Rub caps with olive oil; add garlic.

Remove broth from heat and add soy sauce, butter, pepper, and 2 to 3 drops of truffle oil and stir until well blended. Beat mixture with a hand blender until frothy.

To serve, place one mushroom cap in each of 4 serving bowls. Pour frothed stock mixture over mushroom cap and garnish with Parmesan cheese shavings and thyme.

PER SERVING: 107 CAL.; 1G PROT.; 9G TOTAL FAT (2G SAT. FAT); 5G CARB.; 5MG CHOL.; 522MG SOD.; 1G FIBER.

Goat Cheese Tartlets with Beet Juice

4 SERVINGS

LACTO

These unique tartlets are comprised of dainty bits of goat cheese and slivers of red and golden beets wrapped in flaky phyllo pastry. Served with a sauce made of reduced beet juice, they make a fabulous appetizer. (Marcus Samuelsson, Aquavit)

- 4 sheets thawed phyllo, layered
(see glossary, p. 111)
- 2 egg whites mixed with ½ cup water
- 2 Tbs. soft goat cheese
- 1 red beet, cooked, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 golden beet, cooked, peeled and thinly sliced
- 3 to 4 fresh spinach leaves, steamed
- 2 tsp. cooked green lentils
- Balsamic vinegar

Beet Sauce

- ½ cup red beet juice
- 1 tsp. balsamic vinegar
- ½ tsp. fresh lime juice

PREHEAT OVEN to 350 degrees. Cut layered sheets of phyllo into four squares. Separate dough into individual layers. Working quickly so sheets don't dry out, layer 4 squares, brushing each square with egg wash. Repeat with remaining sheets so you have four layered squares.

In center of each square, place ½ tablespoon goat cheese, 2 slices red beets, 2 slices golden beets, 1 spinach leaf and ½ teaspoon lentils. Lightly drizzle with balsamic vinegar.

Fold corners of dough over filling and secure with toothpick. Transfer to baking

sheet. Bake until crispy, about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, make sauce. In small saucepan, combine juices and vinegar. Cook over medium high heat until reduced and thickened, 3 to 4 minutes. Serve beet sauce with goat cheese tartlets.

PER TARTLET WITH 1 TBS. SAUCE: 132 CAL.; 7G PROT.; 4G TOTAL FAT (2G SAT. FAT); 17G CARB.; 6MG CHOL.; 216MG SOD.; 1G FIBER.

Beet Tartar

4 SERVINGS

OVO-LACTO

In this simple yet exquisite recipe, the intensely sweet flavor of roasted beets is accented with tangy capers and cornichon pickles. The salad is wonderful on its own or as a component of an antipasti platter or salad. (Jean Georges Vongerichten, Jo Jo)

4 medium beets
1 shallot, finely chopped
2 Tbs. capers (see glossary, p. 111)
2 Tbs. chopped cornichon pickles
(see glossary, p. 111)
1½ Tbs. mayonnaise
½ Tbs. Dijon mustard
2 Tbs. chiffonade parsley
Salt to taste
Hot red pepper sauce to taste
Sherry vinegar to taste

PREHEAT OVEN to 350 degrees. Quarter beets with skin on and spread in baking pan. Roast until tender, about 1 hour. Remove from oven and let cool.

Peel and discard beet skins. Coarsely chop beets in food processor. Transfer to medium bowl, add remaining ingredients and toss gently to mix. Serve salad at room temperature.

PER SERVING: 109 CAL.; 2G PROT.; 6G TOTAL FAT (1G SAT. FAT); 13G CARB.; 5MG CHOL.; 390MG SOD.; 4G FIBER.

Morel Mushrooms with Corn Grits and Okra

4 SERVINGS

VEGAN

There is nothing like the first morels of the season. Here, they are stuffed with yellow corn grits and cooked with okra. The mushroom juices are flavored with thyme and a drizzle of olive oil. (Charlie Trotter, Charlie Trotter's)

8 morel mushrooms (see glossary, p. 111)
5 sprigs fresh thyme

3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 cup water
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 cup hot cooked yellow corn grits
8 whole okra, blanched

PREHEAT OVEN to 350 degrees. Place morel mushrooms in ovenproof pan with 1 sprig of thyme, 1 tablespoon olive oil, water, salt and pepper. Cover and bake until tender, 30 to 40 minutes.

Remove mushrooms and pour morel juices into a small saucepan. Simmer over medium heat until reduced by one-third, 3 to 4 minutes. Slice morels in half lengthwise and fill 12 halves with hot cooked grits. In medium pan, warm okra in a few teaspoons of water, then slice ¼ inch thick.

To assemble: Place small amount of okra in center of each plate. Place 3 stuffed morels on top of okra along with 1 plain morel half. Place 1 sprig fresh thyme on each plate and spoon reduced morel juices over mushrooms. Drizzle remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil around plate.

PER SERVING: 92 CAL.; 3G PROT.; 4G TOTAL FAT (1G SAT. FAT); 13G CARB.; 0 CHOL.; 139MG SOD.; 2G FIBER.

Risotto ala Dakar

4 APPETIZER SERVINGS

VEGAN

Creamy risotto flavored with currants, toasted spices, toasted almonds and pumpkin seeds makes this dish a delight for the taste buds. (Sam Hazen, Cascabel)

2 Tbs. butter or 1 Tbs. butter and 1 Tbs. olive oil
¼ cup minced onion
1 cup Arborio rice (see glossary, p. 111)
¼ cup dry white wine
3 cups water
½ cup currants
¼ cup toasted slivered almonds
¼ cup pumpkin seeds
2 Tbs. dakar spice mixture (see Note)

IN HEAVY medium-size saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring often, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add rice and stir with wooden spoon to coat well. Add wine and stir until absorbed, about 2 minutes.

Add ½ cup water at a time, stirring and making sure most of the liquid is absorbed before adding more. Check for doneness by biting into a grain of rice—it should be firm but tender. Stir in currants, nuts, seeds

and spice mixture and cook, stirring, 1 to 2 minutes more. Serve right away.

PER SERVING: 376 CAL.; 9G PROT.; 9G TOTAL FAT (1G SAT. FAT); 63G CARB.; 0 CHOL.; 10MG SOD.; 4G FIBER.

NOTE: To make dakar: Preheat oven to 200 degrees. In small bowl, combine ½ tablespoon ground cumin, 2 tablespoons ground coriander, 2 tablespoons sumac, 2 tablespoons dill weed, 1 tablespoon whole wheat flour. Spread mixture on baking sheet and toast for 20 minutes. Transfer to spice grinder or small food processor and process until finely ground.

Three-Bean Salad

6 SERVINGS

VEGAN 

The three beans used here include the tiniest French green beans (called haricot verts) which are as slender as matchsticks, large broad Italian romano beans, and yellow wax beans. Combined with fresh snap peas and yellow squash, this delicious salad displays the bounty of the summer garden. (Thomas Keller, The French Laundry)

1 cup haricot verts, trimmed and cut into 1-inch lengths or left whole
1 cup yellow wax beans, trimmed and cut into 1-inch lengths
1 cup romano beans, trimmed and cut into ½-inch pieces
1 cup sugar snap peas, trimmed and cut into ½-inch pieces
2 medium yellow summer squash, cut into 1-inch pieces

Vinaigrette

¼ cup white truffle oil
2 Tbs. sherry vinegar
2 tsp. minced shallots
¼ cup minced white truffle (optional)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

IN LARGE POT, bring 3 quarts salted water to boil. Blanch beans in boiling water just until crisp-tender, about 3 minutes. Using slotted spoon, transfer beans to bowl of ice water. Repeat with peas and squash.

Vinaigrette: In small bowl, mix all ingredients until well blended.

In medium bowl, combine all blanched vegetables; pour in vinaigrette and toss to coat. Serve right away.

PER SERVING: 235 CAL.; 10G PROT.; 10G TOTAL FAT (1G SAT. FAT); 28G CARB.; 0 CHOL.; 44MG SOD.; 8G FIBER.



Arugula Salad
with Braised
Artichoke Hearts

Arugula Salad With Braised Artichoke Hearts

6 SERVINGS

VEGAN

Tender artichoke hearts, peppery arugula greens, grapeseed oil and toasted pumpkin seed oil give this salad a unique, robust flavor. (Diane Forley, Verbena)

Braised Artichoke Hearts

- 4 globe artichokes, halved lengthwise
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- 2 heads garlic, halved
- 1½ cups white wine
- ½ cup champagne vinegar
- 1 bouquet garni (see glossary, p. 111)
- 1 qt. vegetable stock
- 2 cups water

- ½ cup grapeseed oil
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ lb. arugula (see glossary, p. 111)
- ¼ lb. frisée lettuce (see glossary, p. 111)
- ¼ lb. ricotta salata cheese or Romano cheese, shaved
- ¼ cup toasted pumpkin seeds
- ¼ cup pumpkin seed oil for garnish, (optional) (see glossary, p. 111)

IN LARGE SAUCEPAN, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Place cut sides of garlic heads down to heat in oil for 5 minutes. Add white wine and vinegar to pan and reduce to half. Add bouquet garni, stock and water to pan and bring to a boil over high heat. Add artichokes and set aside to cool. Measure out and strain 2 cups of braising liquid into medium saucepan. Reduce braising liquid by three-

quarters, about ½ cup. Transfer reduction to small bowl and slowly drizzle in olive and grapeseed oils. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

To assemble, remove leaves from artichokes and scoop out inner chokes. Cut artichoke hearts into eighths. In large bowl, mix greens and artichoke pieces. Toss salad with enough artichoke vinaigrette to lightly coat. Divide salad among individual serving plates. Arrange cheese over top of each and scatter with pumpkin seeds. Drizzle vinaigrette and pumpkin seed oil around edges of plates for presentation if desired.

PER SERVING: 263 CAL.; 9G PROT.; 9G TOTAL FAT (2G SAT. FAT); 36G CARB.; 20MG CHOL.; 298MG SOD.; 1G FIBER. 🥕

Alice Feiring is a freelance food writer based in New York City.