



Christmas

WITH THE

Chefs

by **Susan Nye**

photos by **Kevin Harkins**



Friends and families throughout the Valley are gathering to celebrate the holidays. We'll swap stories, jokes and presents and then gather around the table to share a hearty meal. Starting with Thanksgiving and through the New Year, our kitchens are filled with family, food and fun.

And so it's time to navigate that delicate balance of time-honored tradition and change. We'll drag out our favorite cookbooks, track down scraps of paper with recipes scribbled by Nana. Maybe you'll bake your family's favorite Christmas cookies, make your signature stuffing, but try a fabulous new soup or side dish. If you are looking to shake up your holiday menu this year, why not try a recipe from some of the region's finest chefs? They delight in making classics and, sometimes, adding a new twist.



PETER AGOSTINELLI

The Bedford Village Inn
Bedford, NH
www.bedfordvillageinn.com

Peter Agostinelli's career began in his grandfather's kitchen. Now in his 80s and still cooking, his grandfather might not be a professional chef, but he is a great cook. He taught Peter all about cooking with fresh, local ingredients, lessons Peter brings with him to the award-winning Bedford Village Inn.

The Inn is closed on Christmas, but Peter still cooks – and he wouldn't have it any other way. "Christmas is the best day of the year. I can stay in my slippers all day long and just cook." Throughout the day and well into the evening, family and friends stop in to exchange holiday greetings and gifts, visit and eat.

While Peter always shares a few contemporary dishes with his family, for the most part he goes back to his roots with traditional Italian fare at Christmas. He's been accused of having the soul of an Italian grandmother, claims which may be well-founded: Peter insists that no one leaves his house empty-handed.

From Chef Peter Agostinelli's kitchen

Roast Christmas Goose, Yorkshire Pudding, Mushroom Gravy and Red Currant Jam

Peter declined to reveal his grandmother's famous tomato gravy but was happy to share his wonderful recipe for roast goose with all the trimmings.

SERVES 8

Roast Goose

- 1 (11-13 lb) goose, fat removed from the cavity
- 1 Spanish onion, peeled and cut in half
- 1 stalk celery, cut in half
- 1 leek, cut in half
- 1 sprig thyme
- 1 sprig parsley
- 1 bay leaf

1. Preheat oven to 450°F
2. Rinse goose well; pat dry. Separate the skin from the flesh by running your hands under the skin. Season the goose inside and out with salt and pepper. Fill the cavity with the vegetables and herbs.
3. Place the goose on a rack in a large roasting pan. Roast for 30 minutes. Reduce heat to 350°F. Continue roasting, basting with pan juices every 20 minutes, until a meat thermometer inserted into thickest part of the thigh reads 180°F, about 1 hour 20 minutes.

Mushroom Gravy

- 4 oz butter
- 2 lbs mushrooms, cleaned and thinly sliced
- 1 qt chicken broth
- ½ cup flour

1. Remove 1 cup of drippings from the goose pan for the Yorkshire pudding.
2. Place roasting pan over low heat, stir in the flour. Slowly add chicken stock, scraping up the bits on the bottom of the pan. When the gravy has combined, strain through a fine mesh sieve and reserve.
3. In a separate saucepan melt the butter. Add mushrooms and sauté for 5 minutes. Add gravy and simmer for 30 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Yorkshire Pudding

- ⅞ cup flour
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ cup milk
- 2 eggs, beaten until fluffy
- ½ cup water
- 1 cup goose drippings

1. Combine flour, salt, milk, eggs and water in a mixing bowl and beat until the batter bubbles. Put in refrigerator for at least one hour.
2. Preheat oven to 400°F. Heat a muffin pan in the oven; add 2 tbsps of goose drippings to each muffin cup. Return the pan to the oven until drippings are hot.
3. Remove batter from refrigerator and beat until bubbly. Fill hot muffin cups ¾ full with batter. Bake for 20 minutes or until puffed and golden. Serve immediately.

Red Currant Jam

- 3 cups red currants
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 star anise

1. Combine 2 cups of the red currants with water, sugar and star anise in a sauce pan and simmer for about 15 minutes.
2. Remove the star anise, purée in a food processor and strain through fine mesh chinoise or sieve. Chill completely. Add the remaining red currants and stir to combine.



GUY STREITBURGER
JEN LUTZEN
 Pinkerton Tavern Derry, NH

When Chef Guy Streitburger and his wife Jen Lutzen opened the Pinkerton Tavern seven years ago, they wanted to create a friendly, neighborhood restaurant. The house was built in the late 1700s and, with its six fireplaces and cozy rooms, an evening at the Tavern feels a lot like coming home.

Guy encourages patrons to sit back and enjoy a long and leisurely meal. As a boy growing up on Long Island, his family thrived on lively, sometimes heated, conversations around the dinner table. That same kind of fervor is welcomed at the Tavern. Sports, politics and the day's news are all discussed with enthusiasm.

Guy and Jen believe in giving back to their community and they lend a very personal helping hand at Christmas. They consult with a few Tavern regulars and identify five or six families in need. On Christmas Day, the Tavern is alive with excited children playing hide and seek. There is a present for every child under the tree, and a festive holiday lunch for all. It is a great day for the families, and a great day for Guy and Jen.

From Guy Streitburger's kitchen

Santa's White Chocolate Christmas Chili

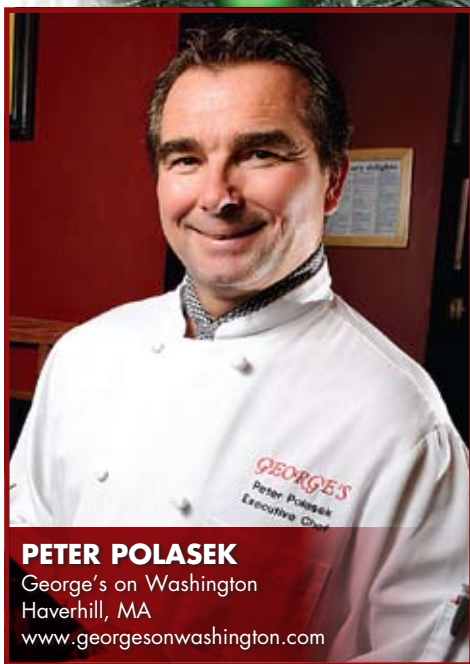
Guy's mother always served chili on Christmas Eve. Guy keeps up the tradition by serving this special chili at the Pinkerton Tavern throughout the holidays.

SERVES 10 ELVES

1 lb ground elk
 1 lb ground ostrich
 1 lb ground buffalo
 2 cups beef broth
 ¾ cups olive oil
 1 lb diced sweet onion
 1 lb diced green pepper
 2 tbsp minced garlic
 2 cups tomato sauce
 2 cups chopped tomato
 ¾ cup tomato paste
 3 oz chili powder
 4 tsp cumin
 2 tsp oregano
 1 lb pinto beans
 1 lb great Northern beans
 3 lb kidney beans
 4 oz white chocolate Godiva liqueur
 2 oz Kahlua
 Salt and pepper to taste
 Shaved white chocolate

1. Put olive oil in a large stock pot over medium heat. Add elk, ostrich and buffalo. Cook until meat is browned, about 15 minutes.
2. Add onions, peppers and garlic. Simmer for five minutes. Add tomato sauce, chopped tomatoes and tomato paste; simmer for five minutes.
3. Drain all beans and add to the pot. Add all seasonings. Stir all ingredients and simmer for 20 minutes. Add the Kahlua and White Chocolate Godiva liqueur. Simmer on low heat for 30 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve in a bread bowl, garnish with shaved white chocolate.





PETER POLASEK

George's on Washington
Haverhill, MA
www.georgesonwashington.com

Born in a small town in the Czech Republic, Peter Polasek is the epitome of the American dream. He fled the communists after studying culinary arts, hotel and restaurant management in Prague and arrived in Chicago with \$21 in his pocket. After lots of hard work at restaurants across the country, Peter and his wife Lisa opened George's in 2004. There, the Polaseks have created a restaurant that is as friendly and comfortable as it is delicious.

Peter and Lisa love their work, but Christmas is for family. With their two sons, Matthew and Patrick, the Polaseks celebrate Christmas Eve in Czech tradition: Peter and Lisa trim the tree and arrange the presents, and the boys are banned from the room until after dinner. The family feasts on Czech dishes. They start with thinly sliced ham with horseradish cream, then continue with fresh pan-fried carp and cold potato salad. After dinner the tree is finally unveiled to the boys, and the family opens their presents.



From Chef Peter Polasek's kitchen

Traditional Czech Potato Salad

This potato salad is best the next day, after all the flavors have had time to combine.

SERVES 6-8

- 5 Yukon gold potatoes, boiled
- ½ white onion, finely chopped
- 2 carrots, cooked and diced
- 1 cup frozen peas, cooked
- ½ cup parsley, finely chopped
- ½ cup pickles, finely chopped
- 1 fresh apple, peeled, cored and grated
- 1 cup celery, finely chopped
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp sugar
- 2 tbsps of pickle brine
- Salt and pepper to taste

1. Peel and cut the boiled potatoes into small cubes. Add the onion, carrots, peas, parsley, pickles, apple and celery; toss to combine.
2. In a bowl, mix the mayonnaise, mustard, sugar, pickle brine, salt and pepper. Combine the mayonnaise with the vegetables and gently toss.



KEVIN CARNEY

Cassis Bistro Français
Andover, MA
www.cassis-bistro.com

Cassis Bistro Français looks a lot like the kind of cozy little restaurant you might find tucked away on a Parisian side street. Chef Kevin Carney and his wife Sallyanne have owned the restaurant for two years. Everything at Cassis is made from scratch, from the sauces to the desserts. Carney focuses on classic French dishes, but likes to add a little twist.

His love of food and cooking began when he was just a child. Kevin can thank his mother and Quebecoise grandmother for his first introduction to traditional French cooking. When he reflects on his busy, often hectic life at Cassis, he notes, "I have fun every day."

Kevin learned one of his favorite holiday dishes from his grandmother. Known in France as Porc Rillet or Terrine de Porc, Coton was one of his grandmother's specialties.

From Chef Kevin Carney's kitchen

My Grandmother's Coton

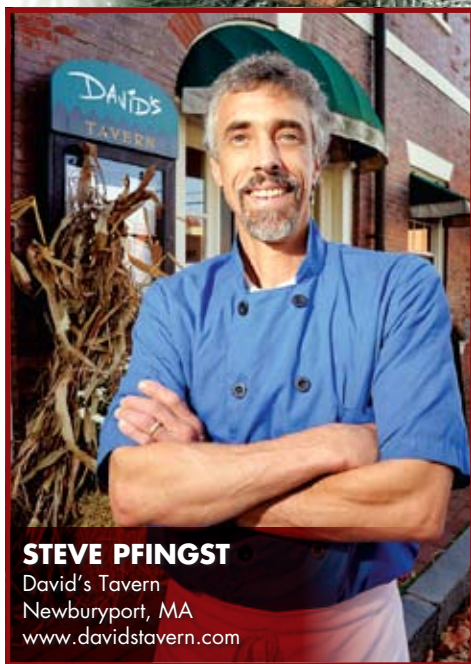
This sublime spread is the perfect start to your holiday meal or a great addition to your next cocktail party.

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

1 lb ground pork butt
1 small onion, diced
1 clove garlic, minced
Salt and pepper to taste
Cinnamon and clove to taste

1. Place pork and onion in a pan; cover with water by one-half inch. Simmer for 1 hour, stirring frequently. Slowly add seasonings in small amounts to taste.
2. Skim excess fat from the top and let cool. Serve the spread on crackers.





STEVE PFINGST
David's Tavern
Newburyport, MA
www.davidstavern.com

Chef Steve Pfingst started out in the restaurant business when he was a teenager, and has been at it for 25 years. He has been the Chef and co-owner of David's Tavern in the historic Garrison Inn for the past eight years.

Christmas has always been a family time for Steve. The Christmas dinner table teems with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. With an English grandmother, the meal always includes a roast turkey and traditional Christmas pudding.

For the uninitiated, Christmas pudding is a steamed dessert loaded with dried fruit and nuts. The best part of any Christmas pudding is the dramatic presentation: it is topped with a sprig of holly, sprinkled liberally with brandy and set alight.

Steve, his wife Karen and their children, JD and Madeline, now spend Christmas with Karen's family. Steve still ends up in the kitchen, which is just fine by him. As Steve says, "The kitchen is the best room in the house; everyone ends up [there.]"

From Chef Steve Pfingst's kitchen

Traditional Christmas pudding

Steve admits that Christmas Pudding may be an acquired taste, but urges readers to give it a try.

SERVES 8-10

- 12 oz brown sugar
- 12 oz finely chopped suet
- 8 oz white raisins
- 8 oz black raisins
- 8 oz currants
- 12 oz large prunes, pitted and halved
- 4 oz mixed candied peel
- 6 oz flour
- 6 oz bread crumbs
- 4 oz grated almonds
- 1 grated lemon rind
- 4 eggs
- ½ tsp nutmeg
- ½ tsp salt
- 2³/₈ cups whole milk
- 6-8 oz dark rum

1. Mix all dry ingredients. Toss the suet with a little flour and add to dry ingredients.
2. Beat eggs well, stir in milk; add to dry ingredients. Add rum and mix well. Pudding should be a heavy consistency and hard to stir; if it is too loose, add flour.
3. Leave out overnight at room temperature, covered with a cloth.
4. In the morning, stir once. Thoroughly grease 2 Pyrex bowls and split pudding between them. Put a double layer of wax paper over the top of each bowl and cover with cheesecloth. Tightly tie with butcher's twine.
5. Bring 4 inches of water to a boil in a large heavy pot. Place pudding bowls in the pot and simmer, partially covered, for 5 hours; add more water when necessary.
6. Remove cheesecloth and wax paper. Tip upside down onto a plate and cover with brandy. Insert a holly sprig and carefully ignite the pudding with a match. Serve with hard sauce.

Hard sauce

- 1 stick softened butter
- 1 tbsp confectionary sugar
- 2 oz brandy

Whip together and store in the refrigerator.

