

A twist on Thanksgiving classics

By Jackie Burrell
Bay Area News Group

Posted: 11/09/2011 12:01:00 PM PST

Updated: 11/15/2011 06:00:44 PM PST

Everyone loves Thanksgiving -- the turkey, the cranberries and all those pies. But even the most ardent lover of marshmallow-topped candied yams likes to tweak the classics every now and then. The trick, Bay Area chefs say, lies in satisfying the traditionalists at your dinner table, while giving those favorite autumn flavors a little twist.

"I'm more of a traditionalist when it comes to holidays," says renowned chef Bradley Ogden, co-founder of the Lark Creek restaurants in Walnut Creek, Larkspur, San Jose and beyond. "Take something that's already great and improve it, add a little touch here and a little there. Be creative."

You can't do Thanksgiving without a pumpkin pie, Ogden says, but why go traditional? Why not instead make it an ethereal triple-layer pumpkin extravaganza that pleases both the custard contingent and the chiffon sector? He offers a recipe for one he describes as simultaneously "classic and nouvelle," with layers of dense pumpkin filling and cloudlike pumpkin chiffon nestled in a sour-cream pie crust he says comes out perfect every time.

"You can't mess it up," he says.

The recipe, featured here and in Ogden's new cookbook, "Holiday Dinners With Bradley Ogden" (Running Press, 280 pages, \$30), may look daunting, but that's because it's divided into so many fail-safe, easy-to-follow steps. Make the tender pastry dough in the food processor on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving -- or do it now and pop it in the freezer.

The night before the big feast, bake the crust, add the custard and chiffon layers, and put it in the refrigerator. Just before serving, add the whipped cream flourishes, then settle back and watch your guests swoon.

Ogden's not the only one to tweak the feast, of course. Former Google chef Charlie Ayers, who helms Palo Alto's award-winning Calafia, revels in dishes that add a dash of the unexpected. He may describe his family's Thanksgiving feast as very traditional, but it includes a roasted five-spice duck, as well as a well-brined turkey. His cranberry relish includes roasted pears and balsamic vinegar, and his mashed yams are laced with pickled ginger.

"Oh yeah, the gingered yams are very popular at home," he says. "And we do a blue cheese mashed potato. We fold in reduced cream and at the very end, a little crumbled blue cheese, some bacon and a little bit of chives. There's no butter at all. It's very delicious."

It's a bit of a theme, actually. Because Ethan Howard, the pastry chef for Sausalito's Cavallo Point and a veteran of Thomas Keller's French Laundry and Hubert Keller's Fleur de Lys kitchens, says nearly the same thing: Oh yeah, totally traditional. Well, except for ...

True, Howard does the traditional roast turkey, and there are candied yams and greens beans with, of course, crunchy fried onions. But the San Jose native makes his stuffing with handcrafted bread -- dark pumpernickel, cornbread or even marble rye -- and his desserts are off-the-charts extravagant.

"We have to stay traditional for the older generation that wants the cranberry jelly," he says. "But the pies? You draw them in with familiarity -- pumpkin at Thanksgiving -- but yeah, let's try a little difference."



FREE
Home Security System!

\$850 Value!
Call Today, Protect Tomorrow!

1-888-472-8414

* With \$99 Customer Installation charge and purchase of alarm monitoring services.

ADT AUTHORIZED DEALER Protect Your Home

The Mercury News

MercuryNews.com

So Howard does pumpkin pie, but he also makes pumpkin-chocolate cheesecake, and tops his extravagantly decadent pumpkin bread pudding with marshmallow ice cream and apple-cranberry compote.

"Marshmallow ice cream is just kind of a twist," Howard says. "People really get a kick out of it."

As for the calorie count, don't think about it, he says.

"That's what January's for."

DONATE YOUR CAR!



**100% Tax
Deductible**

**Free Pick-Up
Anywhere**

**We're Available
7 Days a Week**

Donating is Fast & Easy!

Call Today **877-821-5493**

The Breast Cancer Research Foundation is a classified 501 (c)(3) charity.

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™