

LINK BY LINK

For years I've been passing by the local Polish butcher shop in my neighborhood. Through the window I could see long links of sausages dangling above the counter waiting for a chance to enhance a soup or stew. I could hear the Polish-speaking customers ordering oddly named meats as the men behind the counter wrapped up links and slices.

One day I finally got up the nerve to go inside where I was welcomed with a small smile and a stare. The sausages were lined up one after the other – some thick, some thin, some light, and some dark.

"I'd like a link of *kielbasa*, please," I ordered, not knowing which sausage I'd get.

"Which one?" asked the owner.

It turns out that *kielbasa* is the generic name for all Polish sausages, which I didn't know at that moment.

"I'd like a smoky one."

"They're all smoky," he said impatiently.

Clearly, in his mind, I'm an idiot. I pointed to a few that looked good and then paid as quickly as I could, fleeing the store mortified.

When I got home and tasted them, they were so much better than the traditional half-circle tasteless *kielbasa* you find in the supermarket. They were lean and smoky, each with a unique and delicious flavor profile well worth the humiliation I had just experienced.

Determined to find out more about Polish sausages, I started my research. *Wiejska* is Polish for rural or country, so *Kielbasa Wiejska* is known as "Farmer's Sausage," the most

traditional of all sausages. It's a lightly smoked, garlicky sausage that can be eaten raw.

Kabanos sausages are long, thin sticks that have the flavor of allspice and smoke.

One that I love to use in cassoulet is *Kielbasa Myśliwska*, otherwise known as "Hunters Sausage." It's about an inch thick and is usually a short link that's very dark and smoky.

I could keep going, but you get the idea. *Kiełbasa Starowiejska*, *Jałowcowa*, and *Żywiecka* are a few more varieties, but they're way too hard for me to pronounce.

A few weeks later, I decide to go back to the butcher shop. This time I throw around a couple of names and the stern look from the owner seems to soften. For those that I can't pronounce, I resort to pointing. All in all, I leave the store with 4 pounds of a variety of sausages and a loaf of *Chleb Ziemniaczany*, (Polish Potato bread). Now I just need some mustard, a few bottles of *Zywiec* Beer, and a bunch of friends for a taste test. Wanna come?

SIMPLE SALAD

I never think of myself as a great salad maker. Somehow I never get the oil and vinegar ratio quite right. This recipe, inspired by Patricia Wells' Cheesemaker Salad, uses cream instead of oil, which gives it a lighter and richer flavor. I serve it with mixed greens, but you can substitute spinach or your favorite salad greens.

INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons white wine vinegar

1 shallot, peeled and sliced

3 tablespoons heavy cream

salt and pepper to taste

fresh mixed greens

12 cherry tomatoes, cut in half

$\frac{1}{2}$ cucumber sliced

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup feta cheese, crumbled (optional)

PREPARATION

Combine vinegar and shallot in small bowl. Let marinate for two hours.

Place greens, cucumbers, and tomatoes into a big salad bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Pour vinegar and shallots on top and gently toss. Drizzle heavy cream and gently toss.

Garnish with feta cheese. (optional)

DAN'S HULI HULI CHICKEN

Although a Hawaiian Huli-Huli Chicken is often marinated with brown sugar, ginger and soy, I like Dan's twist using molasses, orange juice, and chipotles. To me, the test of a good Huli-Huli Chicken is that you can't stop eating it. And there are never any leftovers with Dan's version. *Huli* means turn, and although you can certainly make this dish without a rotisserie, it's well worth the extra effort to use one if you have one. If not, you can cut the chicken into pieces and cook over a charcoal or gas grill.

INGREDIENTS

FOR MARINADE

1/4 cup orange juice

4 teaspoons sugar

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon ground pepper

1 tablespoon molasses

3 chipotle pepper plus 1 teaspoon adobo sauce

INGREDIENTS

FOR CHICKEN

1 whole chicken

1 whole orange

1 Ziplock Gallon Bag

Mesquite wood chips for smoker – *(They use kiawe wood in Hawaii and if you can find it, use it. It's slightly sweeter)*

PREPARATION

Mix all of the marinade ingredients together in a bowl. Clean chicken, pat dry. Pour marinade into a ziplock bag. Place chicken in a bag and rub marinade around chicken. Let sit in the refrigerator for at least six hours before, but it's best to let it marinate overnight or even for 48 hours. Turn the bird every few hours.

Remove the chicken from the bag and discard the remaining marinade and bag. Stuff one orange into the cavity. Truss the bird making sure the wings and drumsticks don't dangle. Center the bird on the spit running the skewer through the orange.

Soak your wood chips for at least 30 minutes. Preheat the grill to 350°. Place the chips in the smoker box and set the skewer in place. Be sure to replenish wood chips once they stop smoking. Rotate over indirect heat until juices run clear. You want the internal temperature to be about 165° for white meat, 175° for dark meat, about 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

Use oven mitts to remove the spit from the grill. Allow to rest for 10 minutes, then slide the bird onto a cutting board. Remove the string and orange. Using poultry shears, cut the legs and wings off, then slice the breast. Serve on a platter.

TAKE THE LEAP

One day while visiting Queenstown, New Zealand, I could swear I saw pterodactyls flying over the skylight in my shower. Granted, without my glasses I'm fairly blind, but there was something huge hovering overhead watching me soap up. As it turned out, I was in the flight path of landing paragliders. As they swooped down from the mountains, they gently landed across the street in a local soccer field, simply taking a step or two before coming to a complete stop.

"I wonder where they're coming from?" I asked my husband, Dan, as we sipped our coffee, watching glider after glider come down.

"It's hard to tell. It seems like they're circling down. They must have started on top of one of these mountains," he surmised.

We didn't think much more about it as we went out to play tourist. Eventually, like everyone else, we made our way to Coronet Peak to check out the views. As we got closer and

closer, it was clear that the top of the peak was the launch pad for the paragliders. One after the other, tandem riders would take a few running steps and jump off the side of the mountain. Like birds, the wings would fill with air and they would glide over the abyss.

"We should do that," I said to Dan.

"Are you crazy?"

"It's like flying. I've always wanted to fly like a bird."

"Since when?"

"Since I was a little girl. Didn't you want to fly?"

"Yeah, but I'm not six-years-old any more."

"Good point," I reluctantly admitted.

It kept gnawing at me. This could be one of those experiences of a lifetime. I should do it. I knew I'd regret it if I didn't. On the other hand I could die. You see the dilemma?

"I think I'm gonna do it," I say.

"Really? You're sure?"

"No, but let's check it out. There's the sign-up kiosk."

It didn't take long for the agent's sales pitch to sell me. Dan – not so much.

"You go, I'll take pictures of you," Dan said, pretending not to be horrified at my choice.

Within minutes I was being harnessed while an amiable guy named Guy worked very quickly to spread out the wings, leaving me little time to chicken out. He exuded confidence, a very important trait at a time like that.

"So, what instructions do I need to know? What do I need to do

and not do?" I asked shakily.

"It's pretty simple. When I say run, run," he answered matter-of-factly.

I expected some type of safety chat, some emergency string pull lesson – something. But, that was it. Once he completed checking the lines, checking me, and checking his gear, he strapped himself to me from the back. He was easily a foot taller than me, so I nestled in rather comfortably against him.

"OK, on the count of three, start running towards the edge."

I gulped, trying to swallow my anxiety, and looked straight ahead over a cliff that had a one-thousand foot drop.

"One, two, three!"

And with that, I took three steps. The wings immediately filled with air and the ground dropped out from beneath us as we soared out over the canyon. I half-expected some jarring moment, but it was seamless and gentle. We literally had a bird's eye view of the entire mountain range, lake and city. It was magnificent. Thankfully I have no fear of heights because this would have been a really bad time for that to emerge.

The experience of flying was so exhilarating that all I could feel was pure joy. I think Guy noticed how much I was loving it and asked me if I wanted to go a tad faster. Up until then, we had been lightly soaring about, as he slowly dipped a wing to turn us one way or the other.

"Sure, why not?" I exclaimed.

Within seconds, he turned one of the wings a bit more sharply, plunging us into a free-fall that made me feel like I was on the Cyclone at Coney Island. As my stomach rose in my throat, I kept it together, trying to enjoy the thrill of the ride.

After a few minutes, I did ask him to dial it back a bit, bringing us to a happy medium.

I had lost all sense of time by that point. We had circled down from the mountain and now we were over the lake just as the sun was beginning its sunset. Our reflection in the water looked exactly like a seagull passing by. He pulled one of the wings to the left, and we headed back over land. The houses were starting to get a bit too close for comfort. Before I knew it, that same field across from our hotel came into view. He circled overhead as I lifted my feet, trying not to touch the leaves of the approaching treetops. Within seconds we were over the field. Just as we were about to land, he dropped the wings. We took two steps forward and we were down – as simple as that.

Handing Guy a generous tip for not killing me, I thanked him profusely. As he gathered his gear, I made my way back across the street to my hotel, and waited for Dan to get back to tell him about my adventure.

QUATTRO COLORE FARFALLE IN VODKA SAUCE

One of the downsides of my passion for fancy food markets is coming home with a bag of unusual ingredients that I end up sticking in the back of my pantry only to throw out five years later when I get the urge to purge.

But I did manage to salvage a bag of four-color farfalle before its expiration date and I thought it might go well with a vodka sauce. I added some spicy turkey sausage and mushrooms to give the dish a bit more depth. Buon appetito!

INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons olive oil
1 pound ground hot turkey sausage
1 Vidalia onion, diced
1 cup mushrooms, sliced
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 28 oz. can crushed tomatoes
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vodka
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon dried oregano
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon crushed red peppers
salt and pepper, to taste
1 lb tri-color farfalle (or any pasta)
4 quarts of water, salted
3 tablespoons heavy cream
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup parmesan cheese, grated

PREPARATION

Heat two tablespoons of olive oil in pan. Brown the turkey sausage, breaking it up into small pieces. Remove and set aside.

Add one tablespoon of olive oil and the onion. Sauté over medium heat for three minutes. Add mushrooms and sauté another minute. Add garlic, sauté one minute. Add back cooked ground sausage. Add crushed tomatoes and vodka. Season with dried oregano, crushed dried red peppers, salt and pepper. Stir and bring to light boil, then simmer for 30 minutes. (This can be

made in the morning, or day before. Just reheat when ready to eat.)

Bring salted water to a boil. Add in pasta and cook as per instructions. Drain well.

When ready to serve, add 3 tablespoons of heavy cream to the sauce. Stir until incorporated and heat through for one minute.

Serve pasta in bowls. Add sauce on top of pasta. Sprinkle pasta with parmesan cheese. Garnish with sprig of basil.