

Spring fresh salads

Welcome the season
with bright flavors

BY MOLLY WATSON

Towering over a gigantic bowl of pale green butter lettuce, chef Malachi Harland gently hand-tosses the leaves with a bright citrus-and-shallot dressing. “I really can’t emphasize enough the importance of fresh lettuce, what a difference that makes,” he says. “That’s part of what I love about being in Fresno. The farmers are right here. My chickens come from down the road. The eggs arrive in our kitchen still warm.”

The son of noted Fresno chef Roy Harland, Malachi took his first restaurant job at age 12. Now, almost 20 years later, after stints in New York and San Francisco (where the *San Francisco Chronicle* dubbed him a “Rising Star Chef” in 2003), he has returned to his hometown as executive chef at the acclaimed Chef’s Table. Here, his seasonal modern American cuisine celebrates the bounty of the valley.

We asked Malachi to create two salads for early spring. He combined soft butter lettuce with sliced radishes, avocados, and delicately poached shrimp, then tossed them all in a citrus-infused vinaigrette. A second salad of chopped cucumbers is dressed in yogurt, honey, rice vinegar,

and mint. Served together, they prove that salads can be hearty enough to make a meal.

INFO: The Chef’s Table (\$\$\$; dinner Tue–Sat; Fig Garden Village, 731 W. San Jose Ave., Fresno, CA; 559/227-3200)

Poached Shrimp and Butter Lettuce Salad with Lemon-Orange Vinaigrette

PREP AND COOK TIME: 40 minutes

MAKES: 4 servings

NOTES: Cooked shrimp can be used in place of poaching your own. You can also substitute 1 pound of poached sliced chicken breast for the shrimp.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP: Prepare the dressing up to 3 days in advance.

- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1 pound shelled, deveined shrimp (12 to 15 per lb.)
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon peel
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon minced shallot
- About 1/4 teaspoon salt
- About 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 3/4 cup orange-infused olive oil or 3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil plus 1/2 teaspoon finely grated orange peel
- 12 cups bite-size pieces crisped butter lettuce leaves (about 2 heads)
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced radishes (about 4)
- 1 avocado, thinly sliced
- Bread crumbs (recipe follows)

1. In a large frying pan over medium-high heat, bring white wine and 1 cup water to a simmer. Add shrimp; reduce heat to keep liquid barely simmering until shrimp is cooked through, about 6 minutes. Drain and cut shrimp in half lengthwise.

2. In a small bowl, combine lemon peel, juice, shallot, 1/4 teaspoon salt, and 1/8 teaspoon pepper; let stand at least 15 minutes. Whisk in olive oil.

3. In a large serving bowl, mix let-

tuce, radishes, avocado, and shrimp with enough lemon-orange vinaigrette to coat. Save extra vinaigrette for another use. Divide mixture among four plates. Top with bread crumbs, if using.

Per serving: 409 cal., 68% (279 cal.) from fat; 26 g protein; 31 g fat (4.4 g sat.); 10 g carbo (3 g fiber); 260 mg sodium; 173 mg chol.

Bread crumbs. To doll up a simple salad, add toasted bread crumbs for extra crunch and richness.

In a food processor, whirl 1 slice **egg bread** to fine crumbs. In a small frying pan over medium-high heat, melt 1 tablespoon **butter**. Add bread crumbs and stir until golden brown, about 2 minutes. Stir in **salt** and **pepper** to taste. A teaspoon or two of minced **fresh herbs** are also a nice addition. Spread crumbs on paper towels to cool.

Marinated Cucumber Salad

Malachi Harland suggests serving this alongside the poached shrimp and butter lettuce salad; you can also serve it on its own or with grilled chicken or fish.

PREP TIME: 15 minutes

MAKES: 4 servings

- 1 cucumber, seeded and finely chopped
- 1/2 cup plain yogurt
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh mint
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Fresh mint sprigs

In a medium bowl, combine cucumber, yogurt, rice vinegar, honey, mint, cayenne, and salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with additional mint sprigs.

Per serving: 62 cal., 7% (4.5 cal.) from fat; 2 g protein; 0.5 g fat (0.3 g sat.); 13 g carbo (0.9 g fiber); 22 mg sodium; 1.7 mg chol.