

Menu

Celebrate with a cocktail and hors d'oeuvre specially developed for this year's Awards by 2019 National Book Award Longlist and Michelin-starred chef and restaurateur Iliana Regan (*Burn the Place: A Memoir*).

The Page Turner Punch (can be made with or without alcohol - gin or vodka)

Ingredients

5oz cold steeped Earl Grey (if decaf or herbal is preferred substitute lavender tea for Earl Grey)
2oz grapefruit juice
1.5oz gin or vodka (optional)
1 lemon twist
1oz vanilla bean and earl grey simple syrup

Instructions

To cold steep: add 2 tea bags in 16oz of water and leave overnight in refrigerator. Steep at least 12 hours but no more than 24 hours.

Grapefruit juice can be fresh (preferably) or store bought.

To make Earl Grey simple syrup use one cup of water to one cup of sugar and add to a sauce pot. Heat on stove until sugar is dissolved. Once sugar is dissolved and mixture is warm pour over 1 tea bag and 2 vanilla beans split in half. Steep for one hour, remove tea bag (though leaving in vanilla beans would be nice).

Combine all ingredients and serve.

Book Bites

This recipe is a sort of variation on what my mom used to do with the wild mushrooms my dad and I would hunt and bring home. (A note on foraging: Ingesting improperly identified mushrooms can have serious health consequences. You should never eat any wild food unless you are certain you have positively identified it.)

For the next couple weeks, hen of the woods mushrooms, also known as sheep's head are widely available wherever there are old oak forests. These mushrooms like old and decaying oaks. However, if you can't find these in the wild or near you, grocery stores often have cultivated varieties of these labeled either hen of the woods, maitake, or *Grifola frondosa* (scientific name). If those are not available, oyster mushrooms or shiitake mushrooms will work nicely.

8-12oz is plenty for a nice snack for four people though I could probably eat a pound alone.

If you have them from the wild: clean them up of any leaf litter, twigs, or small bugs. Separate the petals into one to two bite portions. If they are from the store, they will likely be free of any such small wild invertebrates or vertebrates, leaves, twigs, and so on. Separate the same way in one to two bite portions.

Dredge the mushrooms in corn starch, shaking off the excess and line neatly on a tray.

Mix 4 egg yolks and ½ cup of heavy whipping cream in a bowl and dip the corn starch covered mushrooms in the egg yolk and cream mixture.

Then place them in a bowl of 2 cups all-purpose flour, salt and pepper to taste, a little garlic powder, paprika, or whatever spices you love. Do this in two batches to not overcrowd the bowl.



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Book Bites cont.

Lay out again on a tray. In the meantime, heat a healthy knob of butter in a non-stick skillet or well-seasoned cast iron pan. Once the butter is frothy, place in however many your pan can hold with at least a half inch between each mushroom so you can get to them with a spoon, fork, or spatula to turn them. When they are browned on one side, flip them over with a utensil and brown the other side. If your pan becomes too warm, turn down the heat a touch and add another pat of butter. If there are crevices in the mushroom with raw flour in them, tilt the pan so that the butter runs to one side and use a spoon to ladle the butter over those areas to cook the flour.

After they are golden, brown, and crispy, remove them from the pan and place on a tray with paper towel and continue with the second batch. You may have to drain the butter from the pan of the first batch if you see the butter has gotten too brown or the milk solids from the butter have begun to blacken and start with a wiped-out pan and fresh knob of butter.

Prior to all this you might want to make ready a sauce to dip the mushrooms in. You can do something clever with condiments you currently have in your fridge like mayonnaise, harissa, mustard, ketchup, teriyaki and concoct a quick little sauce or purchase something from the store. If you're from the Midwest, you know Ranch dressing is pretty good on most things.

What I do that's a little more complicated but worth it, especially if you have some nice homemade pickles.

"Remoulade"

3 egg yolks

1T harissa or hot sauce

1T yellow grain mustard, Dijon or otherwise

1T apple cider vinegar or another vinegar you love. I use a vinegar I make from milkweed flowers in the summer

1T water

1 pint of canola or flavorless oil

And a half cup of finely chopped homemade pickles, caperberries are nice too.

For this you will use a blender. Add the egg yolks, water, harissa or hot sauce, mustard and vinegar to the blender. Add in a couple-three finger pinches of salt and turn on the lowest setting. After a few seconds and the mixture is spinning, very slowly add in the canola oil in a steady stream through the top. You will continue to slowly add the oil until the mixture becomes thickened to almost a mayonnaise-like consistency. Use a spatula to scrape out the blender and turn out the dip out into a bowl. Fold in the chopped pickles and that's it. You'll have yourself something like a remoulade. This will be more than what you might consume with the amount of mushrooms but it stays nice in the refrigerator for several weeks and will make a nice sauce for fresh fish, sandwiches, steak, vegetables, chicken, anything really.

When I was young, we ate the mushrooms just as they were, right from the pan, no sauce. Have a good time with this, especially if you can get out into the woods and find some. Check near the bases of the old oaks. They will look like a sheep's head as one of their many names implies. Also, chicken of the woods which grows further up on trees is also nice with this same preparation.

