

# Spectacular Sides

Story and photos by Tracy Beard

Compliment the main course with special ‘companions’

In my mind, the word “sides” conjures up images of sidekicks. I picture movie and comic book dynamic duos where the Lone Ranger rides through the Wild West with Tonto, Batman fights villains with Robin, and Sherlock Holmes solves impossible mysteries with his assistant Dr. Watson. Sidekicks champion main characters and add humor, drama and continuity to a storyline. Side dishes support the main entree by adding flavor, diversity and cohesiveness.

The holidays are here, and it’s time to ask yourself if your lamb should lie next to scalloped potatoes or fried broccoli. Will your family enjoy the turkey with sausage stuffing or something new like spicy sweet potato pancakes? Vegetarians, will your guests prefer roasted acorn squash with butter, brown sugar, amaretto and toasted walnuts, or might they prefer Tracy’s Not So Humble Carrots alongside your legendary lentil loaf?

My 2018 travels have taken me both near and far. Here are some of the incredible side dishes I have sampled.

### Preeminent Palate Pleaser

The Baumanière is one of the most serene and beautiful places I have visited. Nestled between the mountains in Les Baux de Provence, France, the property boasts an indulgent spa, stunning chateau, high-end shop, and two restaurants — L’Oustau and Cabro d’Or.

My friend Connie and I dined on the patio by the pool on a bright sunny day in July. We savored several courses during our lunch; and soon became quite full. However, when the dauphinois gratin arrived with the lamb, not one bite of the scrumptious potato dish remained.

L’Oustau de Baumanière is a two-star Michelin restaurant. Owner and Executive Chef Jean-André Chariol pairs his signature dish of milk-fed leg of lamb with an incredibly savory, rich

and creamy dauphinois gratin. Thinly sliced potatoes are layered in a small crock with milk or cream and baked until tender. The dish originates from the southeastern region of France, and many chefs and home cooks incorporate onions, garlic and cheese into their recipes.

### Best Breakfast/Brunch Blend

The Fleur-de-Lys Mansion in St. Louis, Missouri, affords luxury accommodations, easy access to city sights and decadent breakfasts for guests. Owners Gary and Jerilyn Sadler have made their 19th century home a haven for travelers. Jerilyn makes a killer breakfast. I thoroughly enjoyed her french toast, Banana Foster style, but the pièce de résistance was her candied bacon. She lays the bacon on a baking rack with a tray underneath, and then sprinkles each piece with a little bit of brown sugar and black pepper, then roasts it for 30 minutes until brown and crisp but still a bit chewy. This salty, sweet and spicy bite was the ideal complement to the French toast.

### Intensified Ingredient

Executive Chef Aaron Bedard at the Stephanie Inn in Cannon Beach, Oregon, serves up an incredible interpretation of polenta. At the restaurant at the Inn during one of their sojourn events, Chef Aaron revealed his polenta recipe. Fresh corn was shucked off the cob and dehydrated for two days. Next, Chef Aaron ground the corn into the same texture as the store-bought product, Bob’s Red Mill polenta.

For the dinner, he mixed half store-bought polenta with half of his homemade variety. He cooked the grain with five parts liquid (half water and half heavy cream) to one part mixed polenta. It cooked for one hour at a good boil and then simmered until done. To finish, Chef Aaron added fresh grilled corn removed from the cob and a touch of chèvre cheese. He seasoned the mix with salt and pepper and added a few splashes of reserved sherry vinegar to brighten the dish.

### Scrumptious Smokehouse Sides

Hop-N-Grape in Longview, Washington, features hickory-smoked pork, ribs, chicken and brisket, and also offers an assortment of delectable sides. My husband Steve and I stopped in to check out three of their most popular offerings: the tasty red potato salad with bacon; inventive and delicious collard green rolls (made by mixing smoked collard greens with smoked tomato and onion and placing them into eggroll wrappers, which were then deep fried). The rolls were served with Abram’s sauce, a mix of hoisin, soy and rooster sauce (similar to sriracha); and our favorite and the local number one ordered side, the pepperjack mac and cheese. The spiral pasta, cooked *al dente* and then tossed in a pepper jack cheese sauce, was creamy and luscious with just the right amount of spice.

Start planning your holiday meals. Whatever your favorite entrée, highlight it with some spectacular sides.



Tracy’s Not-So-Humble Carrots

### Tracy’s Not So Humble Carrots

- Serves 4
- 1 pound carrots
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 3/4 cups water
- Salt and pepper
- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 cup Canola or vegetable oil
- 2 Tablespoons chopped parsley

Peel all the carrots. Use a mandolin and thinly slice one half of one carrot. Heat the canola oil to 350 degrees and fry the carrot slices until they are crisp. Remove carrots from the oil and place onto a paper towel. Sprinkle with salt and set them aside.

Chop one cup of carrots. Place in a blender with 3/4 cups water. Puree. Place the puree in a saucepan and cook it down until thickened. Add salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.

Place balsamic vinegar in a small saucepan. Cook on medium, continually stirring until it is a thick and syrup consistency.

Toss remaining carrots in olive oil, sprinkle with salt and roast in the oven at 400 degrees for 20-25 minutes until fork tender.

Spread carrot puree onto a platter. Lay cooked carrots on top of the puree. Sprinkle carrots with balsamic syrup, carrot chips, and parsley.

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Dauphinois Gratin



Bananas Foster style French toast



Tracy Beard writes about luxury and adventure travel, outdoor activities, spas, fine dining, and traditional and trendy libations for regional, national and international magazines and about local “Out & About” topics for Columbia River Reader. Formerly of Longview, she now lives in Vancouver, Wash.

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### Spicy Sweet Potato Pancakes

My version, adapted from *Plenty* (a cookbook). Serves 4

2-<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> pounds peeled jewel yams or sweet potatoes, cut into chunks

2 tsp. soy sauce

<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> C. all-purpose flour

1 tsp. salt

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> tsp sugar

3 Tbl. sliced green onion

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> tsp. serrano or jalapeño chili  
(more if you like things spicy)

Butter for frying

Sauce:

3 Tbl. Greek yogurt

3 Tbl. sour cream

2 Tbl. olive oil

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> tsp. sugar

1 Tbl. lemon juice

1 Tbl. chopped cilantro

Salt and pepper to taste

Steam the sweet potato until soft. Let potatoes sit for one hour in a colander to dry.

Whisk the sauce ingredients together and set aside.

Mix the sweet potatoes with everything except the butter. It should be sticky.

Melt butter in a frying pan. Make flat cakes 2 inches in diameter and just under <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inch thick. Fry the cakes in the butter for about 6 minutes on each side until they are brown and crispy. Place on paper towels to drain and serve with the sauce.

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