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A TASTE OF LIFE IN NEW MEXICO

Still Hungry?

story by CULLEN CURTISS

Shocking, but true—some scholars suggest the forbidden fruit instrumental in Eve and Adam's split

from the Garden of Eden was not the apple, but rather the pomegranate! Seasonally germane for cooks looking to give their holiday dishes some zing, the pomegranate may indeed bear some biblical guilt when one considers the pivotal Hebrew word *peri* in the Old Testament translates into a variety of fleshy seed-bearing fruits aside from the apple. With many fruits potentially implicated, we'll grant the juicy infamy to the pomegranate, and move on.

Equally juicy is the pomegranate's recent fame. We extoll its health bennies as an antioxidant (helps prevent some diseases), an anti-inflammatory (reduces eye puffiness the morning after) and as a mega vitamin C purveyor (offers 40 percent of your recommended daily). As well, the gems tarten any savory dish with the perfect tickle, and they're seasonally pleasing to your holiday palette (and palate). While American culture heralds these qualities, ancient cultures exalt differently. In the Jewish tradition, the pomegranate symbolizes righteousness because it is believed to have as many arils (fleshy seeds) as commandments in the Torah—613! Housewarming gifts in Greece? Predominately pomegranates, which are symbolic of abundance, fertility and good luck. Memorialized in many paintings, including Sandro Botticelli's 1487 "Madonna of the Pomegranate," the fruit is also celebrated in Tehran at the annual Pomegranate Festival. And in some Hindu traditions, the seedy fruit symbolizes prosperity.

Yes, there are countless ways the leathery-skinned, akin-to-a-Christmas-ornament pomegranate is celebrated, but let's just rejoice that this real jewel of a fruit can be sourced far and wide, depending on the season, thanks to cultivation beyond its ancient origins—from the regions of modern-day Iran to northern India—and offer some culinary ways to enjoy a holiday evening with the bold rubies.

Caveat: The pomegranate demands deft handling, lest you desire to wear its beautiful stain. To unlock the precious arils with little mess, score the rind in half around the middle, pull apart the two sections, and using a spoon, gently whack the rind of each half to release the arils from the grip of the pith into a bowl of water.

Pomegranate Fontina Rice Balls

2 Tablespoons grapeseed oil
1 small onion, chopped (1 cup)
2 1/3 cups arborio rice
1 cup dry white wine
6 cups water, plus more if needed
3 small sprigs rosemary
1 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese
2 Tablespoons unsalted butter
Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper
1 cup diced fontina cheese (4 ounces)
1 cup pomegranate arils
4 cups fine plain breadcrumbs
4 large eggs, beaten with 1 Tablespoon water
About 8 cups safflower oil, for frying

Kick off your evening around the fire with these mouthwatering hors d'œuvres, the nexus of savory and tarty, sassy sweetness.

Makes about 50 balls

Heat grapeseed oil in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add onion, and cook until soft and translucent, about 7 minutes. Add rice, and toast, stirring often, for 2 minutes.

Remove from heat. Add wine. Place over medium-high heat, and cook, stirring constantly, until wine has reduced by half, about 3 minutes. Add 2 cups water and the rosemary. Cook, stirring constantly and adding 2 cups water at a time, plus more if

needed, waiting for each addition to be absorbed before adding the next, until rice is al dente, about 20 minutes more. Discard rosemary sprigs.

Add Parmesan and butter, and season with salt and pepper—mixture will loosely hold its shape. Transfer to a baking sheet, and refrigerate until cooled, about 2 hours or overnight.

Transfer rice to a bowl, and stir in fontina and pomegranate arils. Form into 1¾-inch balls, and transfer to a clean baking sheet. Place breadcrumbs on a plate. Roll each ball in breadcrumbs to coat, then roll in egg mixture, then again in breadcrumbs, returning to baking sheet as you work.

Heat 4 inches safflower oil in a medium pot until a deep-fry thermometer reaches 350 degrees. Working in batches, carefully drop rice balls into oil, and fry until golden, about 2½ minutes. Transfer to paper towel-lined plates to drain. Sprinkle with salt.

Recipe adapted from marthastewart.com (originally printed in Martha Stewart Living, December 2009).

Pomosa

Toast to your bright future with this ruby alt-mimosa—bubbly at its prettiest and its very best.

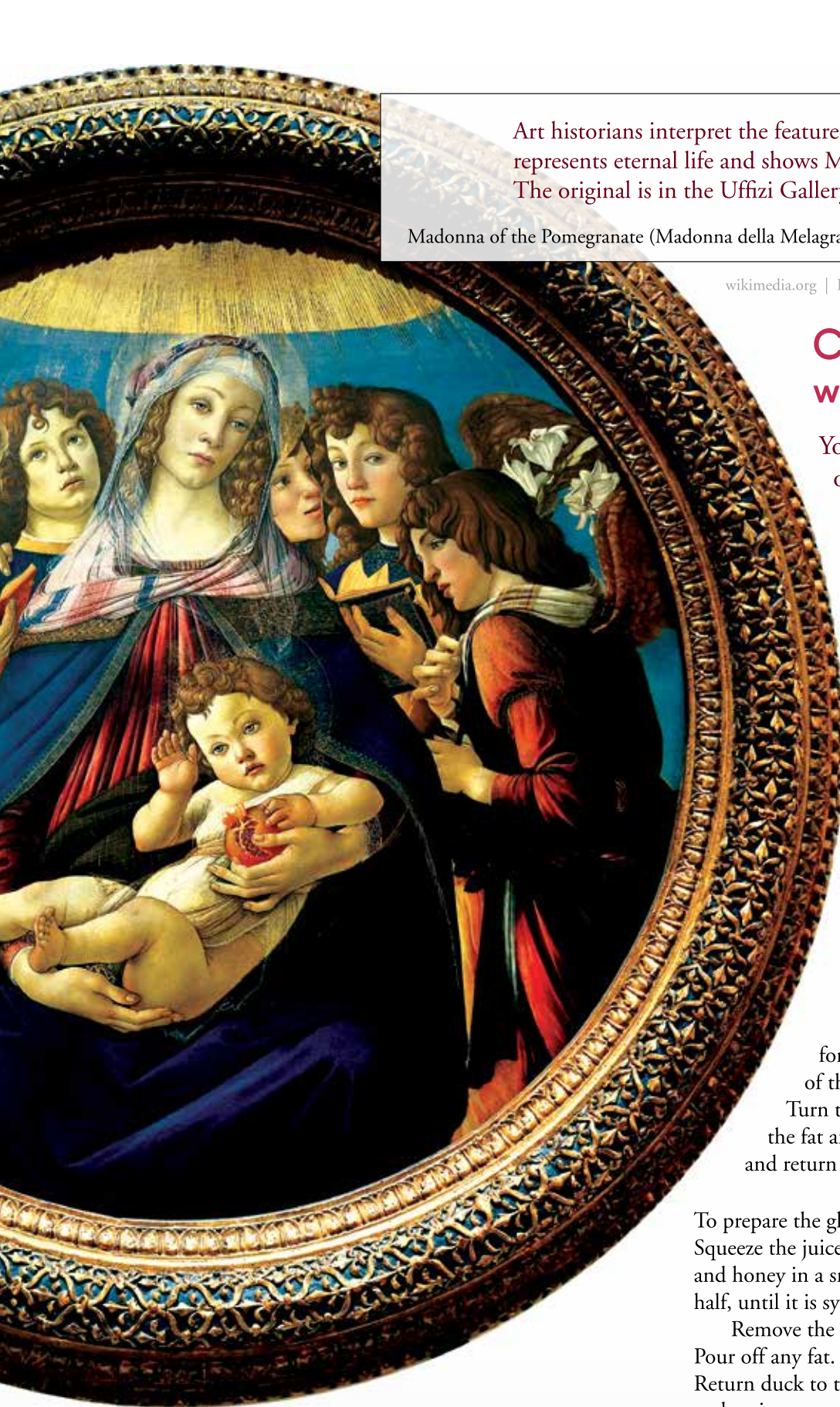
Pour pomegranate juice into a chilled Champagne flute or wineglass. Fill the glass with chilled sparkling wine. Garnish with pomegranate arils.

2 ounces pomegranate juice
Champagne or sparkling wine
Several pomegranate arils

Recipe adapted from the Joy of Cooking website, thejoykitchen.com.



We chose our recipes to sate all manner of diets, even the vegetarian. Visit facebook.com/LocalFlavorMagazine for an entrée dish with some lovely heat: Pomegranate Aril and Quinoa Stuffed Poblano Chiles



Art historians interpret the featured pomegranate in a range of ways. Our favorite is that it represents eternal life and shows Mary's dedication to providing her child with nourishment. The original is in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy.

Madonna of the Pomegranate (Madonna della Melagrana) 1487 Sandro Botticelli

wikimedia.org | Livioandronico2013

Crisp Roasted Duck with Orange, Ginger and Pomegranate Glaze

Your family and guests will be incredulous that only a handful of ingredients need be harmoniously married to concoct this tangy, sophisticated and festive entrée.

Rinse the duck thoroughly and pat dry with paper towels. Remove the giblets and neck, and reserve for another use. Trim excess fat from the bird. Using a small sharp knife at an angle, score a crosshatch pattern on the fatty skin of the duck, taking care not to cut into the meat. This will allow the fat to render into the bottom of the roasting pan. Use the very tip of the knife to poke any hard-to-reach areas. Season the duck all over with salt and pepper. Tie the legs together.

Place the duck on a rack in a roasting pan, breast side up, and either place it uncovered in the refrigerator overnight or preheat the oven to 350 degrees, and when you are ready to roast the duck, bring it to room temperature (30 minutes or so).

Place the oven rack in the lower third of the oven and roast duck for 45 minutes. Carefully pour off any fat into a bowl and prick the skin of the duck several times all over with a fork so fat can continue to drain off. Turn the breast side down and cook another 45 minutes. Once again, pour off the fat and prick the skin several times with a fork. Turn the duck breast side up and return to the oven for 60 minutes.

1 five-pound duck
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper
2 juicy oranges
1 small shallot, peeled and cut in half
1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger root
1 cup pomegranate juice
1/4 cup honey

To prepare the glaze:

Squeeze the juice from the oranges. Place the orange juice, shallot, ginger, pomegranate and honey in a small saucepan. Place the pan over medium heat and reduce the glaze by half, until it is syrupy and coats the back of a spoon. Discard the shallot.

Remove the duck from the oven. Increase the oven temperature to 400 degrees. Pour off any fat. Prick the skin once again, and baste the bird thoroughly with the glaze. Return duck to the oven, and roast an additional 10 minutes, until the bird is deep amber and an instant-read thermometer registers 165 degrees. Let sit for 15 minutes before carving. Slice into serving pieces and serve with additional glaze on the side.

Adapted from a recipe by chef and holistic healer Jen Hoy at thespruce.com, jenhoy.com.

Pomegranate Sorbet Parfait

3 cups pomegranate juice
1/2 cup fresh lime juice
1/2 cup sugar
1 cup labneh (Lebanese strained yogurt) or plain whole-fat Greek yogurt
1/4 cup pistachios, coarsely chopped
3 Tablespoons black sesame seeds
3/4 cup mild honey (such as clover)

Cleanse your palate with this clever sorbet, which delivers just the right sweet and sour notes. If you don't yet own an ice-cream maker, consider this your excuse (the recipe calls for one...and after all, 'tis the season for gifts...and ice).

The sorbet can be made two weeks ahead. Keep frozen.

Combine pomegranate and lime juices, sugar and 1/2 cup water in a large bowl or measuring glass and stir to dissolve sugar. Process in an ice-cream maker according to manufacturer's directions. Transfer sorbet to an airtight container, cover and freeze until firm, at least 2 hours. When ready to serve, scoop some sorbet into coupes, short glasses or small bowls, and top with a spoonful of labneh or yogurt, then some pistachios and black sesame seeds; drizzle with honey. Repeat layers once more to create a parfait.

Adapted from a recipe by Alison Roman found at bonappetit.com.