

# PASSION & PALATE

RECIPES FOR A GENEROUS TABLE



JOHN HOWIE

The pages that follow are from *Passion & Palate: Recipes for a Generous Table*. We share them with the hopes that this book encourages you to challenge your culinary skills, brings joy to your home and that through this inspirational story you find whatever you are passionate about and you act on that inspiration.

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JOHN HOWIE

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANGIE NORWOOD BROWNE

FOOD STYLIST: PATTY WITTMANN

SHINSHINCHEZ LLC

PASSION & PALATE: RECIPES FOR A GENEROUS TABLE  
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## PREFACE

**I HAVE FOND MEMORIES** of my early childhood, many of which revolve around food. The incredible summer corn feeds shared with neighbors and family in my birth state of Illinois. The amazing salmon BBQs after fishing at Westport, Washington. The sweet baby clams and juicy oysters we would harvest and shuck during our visits to Hood Canal. My mom's chocolate mayonnaise cake, which I demanded for every birthday. My grandma's black-eyed peas, smoky BBQ, and tomato and cucumber sandwiches back in Charlotte, North Carolina. My stepfather's rich smoked salmon and fresh cooked Dungeness crab. Food has always had my attention.

My mother, although never a gourmet cook, was a great cook, as evidenced by some of her recipes that grace the book. I believe that between them, she and my grandmother Grace Howie built the foundation of my passion and my palate for great food. From simple fresh foods to amazing ethnic dishes, the development of my palate came in large part from the great home cooking of the ladies in my life during my early years.

As for my passion, I believe there are many factors that drive people to become who they are. Some are good and some difficult, but that is what life is all about and what it brings to each of us. We can choose to accept it and grow from it or let it crush us. I chose the former. I believe that my path of determination and drive was set long before I was even born. You see, it's in my DNA.

Although my father's life was short, he still had a tremendous influence on my life. Like my father, I have never been one to let my free time go by freely.

Although my childhood was not exactly normal and support systems at times were lacking, I will always love my mother and must give her credit for my eventual success. She had a difficult life, from being shipped to a children's home where she was abused to the early death of the love of her life (my father). She always loved and cared for her children. I'm sure that in large part, my ambition and drive can be attributed to my mom. She was a strong woman, and when life threw her curve balls, she always took a big swing. She worked hard to raise three children the best she could — not perfect but the effort was always there. She influenced my palate with her great cooking, and my passion with her drive to take care of her children. She will always be loved.

People always ask me how I have the energy to run more than one restaurant, coach my kid's sports teams, and participate in so many charitable events. Where do I find the time? To these questions I must answer that I love staying busy — it's my nature.

I've been thinking about writing this cookbook for the past seven years. There are several reasons why I wanted to publish this book. From having a vehicle that provides our guests' favorite recipes for them, to giving my guests, friends and family some insight into what molds me to be who I am. And the obvious — it's great promotion for the restaurants, and we might make a little money.

The cookbook recipe-testing process has been an eye-opening experience for all of us. Many of our recipe testers can't believe the steps and the levels it takes to produce some of their restaurant favorites. Some of these recipe testers were intimidated at first, but throughout the

process came to understand that the complexity of the recipes is what brings the complexity to the final dish. The most common comments were "Now I know why we like your restaurant so much!" and "It seemed like so much to do, but in the end it was worth it!" Not to say that all of the recipes in the book are complicated. I have my share of simple tasty recipes, too. Throughout the process, I found much of the feedback incredibly helpful, so much so that I even went back and made changes to the recipes to better them for the home cook.

But I didn't want this cookbook to be just another recipe book. I wanted it to be as much about my journey and the people who have taken that journey with me as it was about the food. To gain greater insight into that journey, my publishers and cowriters interviewed my family, my friends, my partners and our guests.

What we have now is more than a recipe book — it's a chronicle of a journey to achieve a vision that is so much more than the successful restaurant business.

I have been blessed. God has poured out his blessings on me, and my family, although my life has not always been easy. If we didn't go through the difficult times, we would never appreciate the good times. But many people have not been so lucky, and the majority of their lives have been one challenge after another. These are the people I want to help, the ones to whom I want to provide resources and positive motivation, so they will be encouraged to go out and do the same someday.

Along the way, I hope that I have set an example for others. At the printing of this book we have over 350 employees in our company, the majority of whom have participated in or given their money to one or more of our charitable events. I find our people who are committed to helping others a source of great pride. I'm grateful and blessed to have such an amazing group to work with.

When I opened Seastar Restaurant & Raw Bar on March 11, 2002, it was my goal to be a positive influence in the community, to "Never Say NO!" to any charitable organization. A lofty goal to say the least, but one that up until now we have worked hard to achieve.

I have never been hungry. Okay, that's not true; if I had never been hungry, I would likely never have eaten my way to this incredibly cuddly physique. A better way to put it is: I have never been without the ability to satisfy my hunger. I can't even imagine how awful that would be — especially for a parent watching a child suffer from hunger. That is why I have always been involved with organizations working to eliminate hunger.

I must admit I have a soft spot in my heart for children — to see a child suffer in any way torments me. This subject hits very close to home. My younger son, JoJo, was diagnosed with a mild form of muscular dystrophy at an early age. Luckily he has found that a strong exercise program is a great way to combat his illness, and it has kept it in check most of his life. In this I am also blessed.

I have high hopes for my book. I hope that this book encourages you to challenge your culinary skills. That you find a recipe or several that become family favorites and bring joy to your home. I hope that it will fire you up for whatever you're passionate about, that you find my story inspiring and it calls you to act on that inspiration.



## MAHI MAHI CEVICHE WITH PINEAPPLE AND SWEET ONION

SERVES 4

- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 4 tablespoons fresh orange juice
- 2 tablespoons pineapple juice
- 1 teaspoon turbinado sugar (raw sugar)
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 1½ cups (12 ounces) fresh mahi mahi pieces, blood line removed  
(½- to ¾-inch pieces)
- 4 coconut shells (or martini glasses)
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened shaved coconut, toasted
- 4 fresh cilantro sprigs

### PINEAPPLE RELISH

- 6 tablespoons sliced sweet white onion (¼-by-1-inch pieces)
- ¾ cup diced fresh pineapple (⅛-inch pieces)
- ¼ cup tangelo, tangerine or satsuma pieces, membrane removed  
(¼-inch pieces)
- 1½ teaspoons very finely minced seeded fresh red jalapeño
- 2 teaspoons fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon coarsely chopped fresh cilantro
- ½ teaspoon crushed toasted coriander
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- 2 teaspoons olive oil

Note: Other varieties of white fish can be used for this dish, including ono, halibut, marlin and Gulf snapper. The fish must marinate — “cook” — for at least 5 hours in order for the acids in the lime and lemon juice to perform the cooking action.

In a bowl, combine the juices, sugar, salt and pepper, stirring to blend. Add the mahi mahi and marinate in the refrigerator for at least 5 hours and up to 8 hours.

Drain the fish and refrigerate until needed.

Prepare the Pineapple Relish: Combine all the ingredients and stir until well blended. Refrigerate until needed.

To serve, mix the mahi mahi ceviche with the pineapple relish and spoon into the coconut shells. Top with the toasted coconut and garnish with the cilantro sprigs.

### WINE:

*Mantel Blanco, Verdejo, Rueda, Spain 2009*

Alternatives: *Super-high-acid wine with some tropical fruit notes. New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc.*

*With any ceviche, it is important to recognize the acid that is used to “cook” the fish. The wine must have as much acidity as or more than the dish to make a balanced match.*



## HOT AND SOUR THAI SHRIMP SOUP

SERVES 4 AS AN ENTRÉE

6  $\frac{2}{3}$  cups Chicken Stock (page 120)  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup lemongrass sliced in 1-inch pieces (white part only, smashed)  
 1 tablespoon chopped galangal (skin on)  
 5 fresh kaffir lime leaves, sliced in  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch strips  
 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon Thai fish sauce  
 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons sambal oelek (chili paste)  
 1 cup Mae Ploy Thai chili paste in oil with shrimp (see note)  
 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons salt  
 2  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups canned diced tomatoes in juice, drained  
 3 cups canned straw mushrooms, drained  
 3 tablespoons plus 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons fresh lime juice

For serving:

1 cup peeled and chopped white Gulf shrimp ( $\frac{1}{2}$ - to  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch pieces)  
 8 fresh kaffir lime leaves  
 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons fresh lime juice  
 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons very coarsely chopped fresh cilantro

Place the stock, lemongrass, galangal and kaffir lime leaves in a stockpot. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to very low, cover, and simmer for 4 hours. Strain the stock and remove the lemongrass, galangal and lime leaves.

To the strained stock add the fish sauce, sambal oelek, chili paste in oil and salt. Cook over medium heat for 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes and mushrooms, and cook for 5 minutes. Add the lime juice. Let cool, then refrigerate or use immediately (see note).

To serve, place 48 ounces (6 cups) of the soup base in a large saucepan, add the shrimp, and bring to a boil. Remove from the heat.

Place 2 kaffir lime leaves in each bowl, then pour the soup into the bowls, being sure to distribute the shrimp, mushrooms and tomatoes evenly. Add the lime juice to the soup and top with cilantro.

Notes:

This is a classic Thai recipe from the family of my Seastar Raw Bar chef David Putaportiwon. We have made some minor adjustments, but it is important to use the specified ingredients to achieve the proper flavors.

Thai chili paste in oil with shrimp is essential to the integrity of the recipe. The brand could be different, but it is important to include this ingredient.

There will be some leftover soup base — it will keep for up to a week in the refrigerator.

### WINE:

*Renardat-Fache, Cerdon du Bugey, France*

Alternatives: *A lightly sparkling, semi-sweet wine to balance the hot spice element of the soup.*  
*Moscato d'Asti from Italy.*



## PLANK-ROASTED PORK LOIN CHOPS WITH ROASTED GARLIC AND ROSEMARY

SERVES 4

¼ cup whole garlic cloves, peeled  
6 tablespoons olive oil, divided  
4 boneless pork loin chops, 1½ inches thick (see note)  
2 teaspoons salt, divided  
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary, divided  
12 very small new red potatoes, quartered  
¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese  
4 fresh rosemary sprigs

The first time I cooked pork chops on a cedar plank, I knew I would never have them any other way!

Special equipment: 2 large cedar baking planks (page 25)

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Toss the garlic cloves in 1 tablespoon olive oil. Place on a cedar plank and set in the oven for 12 to 15 minutes, or until golden brown. Remove from the oven and let cool. Then place in a food processor and add 2 tablespoons olive oil. Process until pureed.

Season the chops with half of the salt and pepper. Rub the roasted garlic puree all over the chops. Then sprinkle each chop with 1 teaspoon chopped rosemary. Place the chops on one of the planks.

Toss the potatoes with the remaining olive oil, salt, pepper and rosemary, and the Parmesan cheese. Place them on the other plank in a single layer.

Place both planks in the oven and bake for 18 to 20 minutes. Turn the chops over and return to the oven for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the internal temperature of the chops is 140°F and the potatoes are tender.

Transfer the potatoes and pork chops to individual plates. Garnish with the rosemary sprigs.

Note: Bone-in pork chops can also be used; they may take longer to cook.

### WINE:

The “life is too short” pick:

***Evening Land, Pinot Noir, “The Red Queen,” Willamette Valley, Oregon 2008***

The “just because it’s inexpensive doesn’t mean you’re cheap” pick:

***Lemelson, Pinot Noir, “Three Vineyards,” Willamette Valley, Oregon 2008***

Alternatives: *A red wine with vibrant red fruits, moderate tannin and creamy-toasty notes. Gamay (Beaujolais) from France or Garnacha from Spain.*



Talking about the middle of the economic crisis in 2009:

John had a big manager meeting in the back and he started crying. At first I lost it; it was the first time I had seen a sign of weakness. He was scared, so I gave him a hug and he hugged me back. I thought, jeez, I just hugged John Howie, and he showed that side of himself, that side he doesn't usually show. He does have a heart, and he was afraid for the restaurant but really more for all the people and what they were going to do. He didn't want to lose anyone. He told us to hold on, we are going to get through this — and we did. Tonight we have 235 people coming to dinner. Hold on! You just have to believe you will get through it.

KAREY COBLE  
MANAGER / PARTNER  
SEASTAR RESTAURANT & RAW BAR

He has always said bring me anything. It can be intimidating. He's not going to say he loves it. Normally you bring him something and he will tell you it needs this or that, but not in a rude way. Seeing him dissect something will help you learn, and you really get it — I should have thought of that, it needed a little extra green or something red on the plate, maybe some acid, a squirt of lime. This is where the learning really comes in. Much of it you do learn in culinary school, but he is so passionate about it that you learn by example.

Every guest every time. If you don't think like that, it's so easy to get into a routine. All the little touches make a difference. I see things differently now — I want to find things before John does, not just to make the boss happy, but because he has taught me how important it is. He doesn't skimp on anything, and he doesn't want us to.

JOE HAYNES  
CHEF / PARTNER  
SEASTAR RESTAURANT & RAW BAR

## SWEETS



