

OFF DUTY

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Old Florida

(Not That Kind of Old)

In lesser known,
classic-feeling spots, the beaches are
serene, restaurants aren't
themed and characters are not
of the cartoon variety

Your bubble
probably
isn't on this
beach

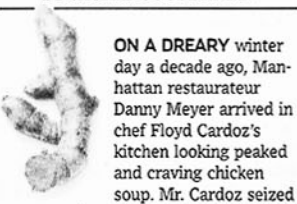


EATING & DRINKING

Snow Day Superfood

With a happy orange hue and an antioxidant content that's nothing to sneeze at, turmeric warms up the winter table

BY JACKIE COOPERMAN



ON A DREARY winter day a decade ago, Manhattan restaurateur Danny Meyer arrived in chef Floyd Cardoz's kitchen looking peaked and craving chicken soup. Mr. Cardoz seized a panacea from his Bombay childhood: the slightly bitter, bright-orange spice turmeric. He doctored a broth with a heavy dose of it, as well as root vegetables, onions, ginger, cumin, cinnamon, rosemary and chili. The soup was so successful Mr. Cardoz has prescribed it ever since—first at his restaurant Tabla (since closed) and now at North End Grill, both in New York—to ailing co-workers, restaurant regulars and even former Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

"Turmeric is really good for you," said Mr. Cardoz, who adds it to the omelets he makes at home every weekend. According to Dr. Kulreet Chaudhary, director of neurology at WellSpring Health in Scripps Memorial Hospital in La Jolla, Calif., "It has anti-oxidant, antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties. There are turmeric supplements, but the bioavailability is best when you cook with it."

Though turmeric is common in Indian, Middle Eastern and South Asian recipes, chefs of all backgrounds are taking notice of this spice's warm color and flavor. "It's really underutilized in Western food," said Ryan Hardy, chef at New York's Italian-influenced Charlie Bird, where cucumbers pickled in turmeric flank veal pastrami at lunchtime, and the roasted carrot and quinoa salad has a turmeric, cumin and carrot vinaigrette. "The flavor profile is almost unrecognizable to people expecting Italian food," he said.

Eric Kayser offers turmeric loaves at his bakeries around the world; juice companies like Organic Avenue sell turmeric-infused elixirs. At Fish & Game in Hudson, N.Y., chefs Zakary Pelaccio and Jori Jayne Emde steep cream with fresh turmeric to make crème brûlée, and age whiskey-brushed Vermont Creamery butter in turmeric leaves for six months. "I love its sour-bitter-lemmony quality," said Caroline Fidanza, of Manhattan's Little Chef and Brooklyn's Saltie, who simmers the spice with cardamom and mixes it with honey, lemon and more water to make a fortifying turmeric tonic.

A relative of ginger, turmeric is widely sold in powder form and at specialty markets as a fresh root, which is easy to peel and store. "Use it sparingly, but don't be afraid," said Ralph Scamardella, chef and partner of the TAO Group's eight restaurants in Las Vegas and New York. Mr. Scamardella, who has long used turmeric in dishes like Singapore mei fun noodles and beef rendang rolls, has recently taken to garnishing Taiwanese shaved ice with a chewy mochi topped with turmeric. "It's an extra punch at the end," said the chef. "I can't speak to the health benefits, but I'm sure there's something good."



WARMING TREND Clockwise from top left: turmeric tonic, cod and cockles in a fresh turmeric broth, crispy beets with turmeric yogurt and pickled beet stems.

Turmeric Tonic

TOTAL TIME: 15 minutes SERVES: 4-6

- 5½ cups water
- 2 teaspoons dried cardamom pods, crushed with a mortar and pestle
- 2 tablespoons ground turmeric
- 6 tablespoons honey
- ½ cup lemon juice

1. In a small pot over medium heat, simmer 1½ cups water with cardamom and turmeric until reduced by half, about 8 minutes. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a pitcher.
2. Mix in honey, stirring to dissolve. Stir in remaining water and lemon juice. Serve at room temperature or chilled.

—Adapted from Caroline Fidanza of Little Chef, New York

Cod and Cockles in a Fresh Turmeric Broth

At Carmel Valley Ranch, chef Tim Wood makes this dish with Monterey line-caught rock cod and Pacific Northwest cockles. You can refer to the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch (seafoodwatch.org) to find the best alternatives available in your area.

ACTIVE TIME: 30 minutes TOTAL TIME: 1 hour SERVES: 4

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, thinly sliced
- 1 bulb fennel, cored and thinly sliced

- 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced lengthwise
- 2 tablespoons ginger, peeled and thinly sliced
- 4-inch piece fresh turmeric, peeled and thinly sliced
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup white wine
- 1 pound cockles or Prince Edward Island mussels
- Ciabatta or sourdough bread, thickly sliced
- 4 rock cod or other flaky white fish fillets (6 ounces each)
- ½ bunch cilantro, chopped, plus ¼ bunch, whole

1. Set a heavy, lidded pot over medium heat. Add 2 tablespoons olive oil, onions, fennel, garlic and ginger to pot. Decrease heat to medium-low and cook until vegetables soften, 10 minutes. Add turmeric, season with salt and pepper, and cook until spice releases a little of its flavor, 5 minutes more. Add wine and increase heat to medium-high. Add cockles, cover with lid and cook until cockles are beginning to open, 5 minutes more.
2. Meanwhile, toast bread in oven or toaster oven.
3. Add fish fillets to pot, cover and let steam 8 minutes for medium to medium-rare fish. (Check occasionally to make sure pan has enough liquid, and add water if necessary.)
4. In a small bowl, combine remaining

oil with chopped cilantro. To serve, top fish with cockle mixture and spoon some broth from pot overtop. Garnish with remaining cilantro. Drizzle bread with cilantro oil and serve on top of or alongside fish.

—Adapted from Tim Wood of Carmel Valley Ranch, Carmel, Calif.

Crispy Beets With Turmeric Yogurt and Pickled Beet Stems

ACTIVE TIME: 30 minutes TOTAL TIME: 2 hours SERVES: 4-6 (as an appetizer)

- 2½ pounds baby red beets with tops
- 1 cup water
- ¾ cup Champagne vinegar
- ½ dried bay leaf
- ¾ teaspoon fennel seed, toasted
- ¾ teaspoon coriander seed, toasted
- 2½ teaspoons dried turmeric
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons salt, plus 2½ teaspoons
- 1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper, plus ¼ teaspoon
- 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 cups vegetable oil
- Juice and zest of ½ lemon
- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt

1. Prepare beets: Remove most of stems from beets, leaving 2 inches of stem on beets. Set beets aside. Remove leaves

from beet stems and reserve for garnish. Cut stems to 1-inch lengths and place in a bowl for pickling.

2. Pickle beet stems: In a medium pot over high heat, bring water, vinegar, bay leaf, fennel seeds, coriander seeds, ¼ teaspoon turmeric, pepper flakes, sugar, 2½ teaspoons salt and ¼ teaspoon black pepper to a boil. Pour liquid over beet stems and let marinate 1 hour.

3. Meanwhile, roast beets: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place beets in a roasting pan. Season with 2 tablespoons salt, 1 tablespoon pepper and 3 tablespoons olive oil. Cover with foil and roast until tender, about 45 minutes. (Larger beets may take longer.) Remove from oven and let cool. Place beets between sheets of parchment paper and press with your hand until beets are partially flattened but still hold together.

4. In a high-sided frying pan, heat vegetable oil to 360 degrees, using a deep-fat or candy thermometer to monitor temperature. Working in batches to avoid overcrowding pot, fry beets until crisp, 2-3 minutes per batch. Use a slotted spoon to remove beets from oil and place on a paper-towel-lined plate to drain. Season with salt.

5. In a small bowl, toss beet greens with remaining olive oil and a squeeze of lemon juice. In another small bowl, mix yogurt with lemon zest and remaining dried turmeric. Season with salt and pepper. To serve, top yogurt with crispy beets, pickled stems and beet leaves.

—Adapted from Jeff Mahin of Stella Barra Pizzeria, Santa Monica, Calif.