



**PUNCH IT UP
WITH HEALTHY
POMEGRANATE**

Here comes that all too short of a season for pomegranates.

As kids, I remember my siblings and me fighting over these fun and finger-staining fruits. Everyone would be frantically picking through and peeling back the pith to get to the ruby-colored nuggets with big cheesy grins on our faces.

Now health sciences are telling us our early childhood cravings were actually a very good thing. Big surprise, huh?

Pomegranates are one of the top 10 best foods you can eat. Why? It is super-charged with antioxidants (the natural substance that slows and prevents the cell damage that is linked to many diseases, as well as boosts the body's immune system). According to the United States Department of Agriculture, pomegranate is the only fruit to contain all three major antioxidants: tannins, anthocyanins and ellagic acid.

In addition to the rich antioxidants, pomegranates are a good source of potassium, vitamin C, folic acid (beneficial to pregnant women), niacin, iron, calcium, and are a rich source of fiber.

Pomegranates come from a fruit-bearing shrub native to the Middle East, ranging from Iran to the Himalayas in India. Pomegranates are also cultivated throughout the Mediterranean, and have been grown in California since 1769, when the Spanish first introduced the fruit to North America. The fruit of the pomegranate does get sweeter the more it ripens, although many people like the tart flavor of a less-ripened pomegranate.

Some biblical scholars believe that the true forbidden fruit from the Garden of Eden was a pomegranate and not an apple. In Greek mythology, Hades, the god of the underworld, used the fruit of the pomegranate to trick the beautiful Persephone into staying with him as his bride in his mythological "hell." The ancient Persians believed that the pomegranate seeds made their warriors invincible, and the Chinese say it represents longevity.

The most popular way to eat them is right out of your red-stained hands, but I would like to share some recipes that put a nice seasonal spin on your fall dinner table, and hopefully get you thinking of some new ways to integrate this fantastic fruit into more of your family's meals.

The first recipe is a Poma-Granité. I use this as a fall intermezzo to cleanse the palate between the appetizer and the entrée. You can also use it as a light dessert or as a complement to another dish (such as smoked shellfish, or smoked trout, if you are feeling adventurous).

The second is another seasonal dish that you can apply to seafood, or poultry. The method I selected is with halibut, but you can easily use a chicken breast instead. The recipe is from my contribution to the Delaware North Parks and Resorts Cookbook "Pathways to Plate." It's called pumpkin seed-crusted halibut with pomegranate-citrus relish.

Please remember to buy local, organic products as much as possible, and consult the Monterey Bay Seafood Watch program when selecting seafood for your dishes. And add you're your own touch to these recipes; keep experimenting and tweaking it, until it makes your whole tongue happy.

Poma-Granité
(Yield: 3 cups)

- 1 cup water
- ¾ cup sugar
- 3 sprigs of fresh mint, lightly bruised with the back of a knife
- 1 cup pomegranate juice
- 1 cup fresh orange juice

Steps: Combine the water, sugar and mint in a saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat, stirring just until the sugar is dissolved. Boil uncovered

Please see **Moody page D3**

Monterey County Taste

www.montereyherald.com

Coming in Go!

Movie mania
The holiday movie season begins in earnest, starting with Will Smith in "I am Legend"



D



JESSE J. RAMIREZ/Special to The Herald

Mongolia's people are constantly on the move, but there's always time for a smile and a shared meal

NOMADIC HOSPITALITY

By **MARIE PERUCCA-RAMIREZ** and **JULIO RAMIREZ**
Herald Correspondents

We entered Mongolia through its capital, Ulaan Baatar — a Soviet-style city of concrete built during the Russian occupation — our gateway to the land of Genghis Khan. Since childhood I'd been fascinated by images of Mongol hordes storming out from the steppes of Asia to create an empire that once stretched from Beijing to Vienna; of Marco Polo and his adventures along the ancient Silk Road; of wild horses and nomadic herders galloping across vast, unfenced grasslands.

Independent again after hundreds of years — and conscious of its vulnerability to the two giants, Russia and China, sitting on its borders — Mongolia is looking to develop ties with the West. English is taught in schools, and tourism is welcomed, although the infrastructure to support it is still in its infancy. Summer months offer

Food Wranglers Back Roads, Good Food



visitors a brief window of time for travel before the land is seized up by winter's severe storms and minus 40-degree temperatures. With only 1,000 or so miles

of paved road in a country twice the size of Texas, transportation is unreliable and travel to remote areas is best accomplished by regional planes and four-wheel-drive jeeps.

We flew from Ulaan Baatar to the Gobi Desert in a crowded plane; some seatbelts were nonfunctioning, some seats were permanently reclined and several passengers had other passengers sitting on their laps. The beverage cart loaded with vodka was wheeled up the aisle by a smiling hostess — I was thinking we could all use a drink at that point — but it

disappeared into the cockpit, never to reappear.

In the Gobi, we camped out on an expansive plain alongside the *gers* of several nomadic herding families. *Gers* ("yurts" in Russian) are felt-sided domed tents on wooden platforms supported by a lattice of wood. Furnished with beds, chests and a central stove for heating and cooking, *gers* are easy to disassemble and move as the herds' grazing needs dictate.

In Mongolia, livestock outnumbers the population 10 to 1, and Mongolians are masterful horsemen. In the early mornings we would awake to the haunting sound of *hoomi*, the unique Mongolian "throat singing," as horsemen on strong, swift ponies sang to their herds of camels, sheep and goats. Exploring the desert by jeep, we would come upon children, seemingly born in the saddle, riding ponies over

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A young nomadic girl milks a goat in front of her family's ger, a portable felt-lined tent in the Gobi Desert.

JESSE J. RAMIREZ/Special to The Herald

Above: A two-humped Bactrian camel roams the Gobi Desert, providing nomadic families with meat, milk, wool and transportation. Left: A woman offers a plate of dried reindeer curds.



MARIE PERUCCA-RAMIREZ/Special to The Herald



JESSE J. RAMIREZ/Special to The Herald

Japan's sacred bluefin, loved too much

By **BLAINE HARDEN**
The Washington Post

Tuna cannot look like skinny Japanese women."

So says Tsunenori Iida, and he ought to know. His family has been buying and selling tuna for seven generations here at the world's largest fish market. Six mornings a week for 43 years, Iida has been casting his eyes and running his fingers over the torpedo-shaped carcasses of bluefin tuna, the most precious fish in the sea. They are brought here to Tokyo's Tsukiji market, where a dawn auction sets the global price.

"I look for beauty and balanced plumpness," Iida said. "I am looking for a



NANCY DONALDSON/Washington Post
"We have to change our appetites," fish dealer Tsunenori Iida says of the shortage of bluefin tuna in Japan.

Catherine Zeta-Jones type of tuna."

As for Japan, which wolfs down a quarter of the global tuna catch, and for the rest of the world: An increasingly voracious appetite for sushi is driving the supply of plump pulchritude served raw perilously low.

Japan — after years of overfishing a species that is as much sacrament as food — is feeling the pinch more

than any other country.

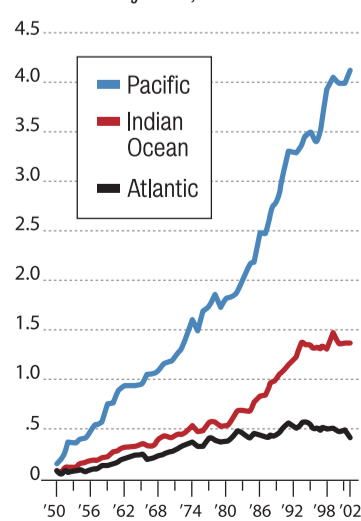
As of this year and for the next four years, the country's annual fishing quota has been slashed in half for southern bluefin tuna,

Please see **Bluefin page D4**

Tuna Trouble

The world's catch of major commercial tuna species has grown tenfold since 1950. The tuna stock has declined correspondingly, and some species have been fished almost to extinction.

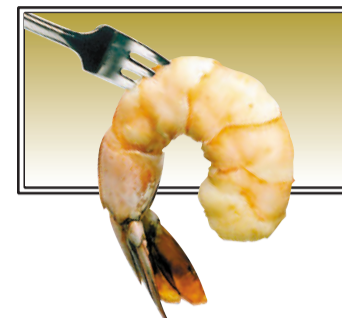
Tuna catch by area, in millions of tons



SOURCE: World Wildlife Fund

Good to know

What's cooking?



Quick fix

Paglia e fieno
(straw and hay)
(Serves 2)

This is a popular pasta dish served in central Italy. The straw and hay are the yellow and green fettuccine, available freshly made in supermarket refrigerator cases. The noodles are mixed with ham, peas and a light cream sauce. A salad with cannellini beans makes a great side dish.

- Vegetable oil spray
- ½ medium onion sliced, (1 cup)
- 2 tsp. margarine or butter
- 1 T. flour
- 1½ cups skim milk
- 2 oz. low-fat honey ham, cut into small pieces
- 5 oz. frozen tiny peas (1 cup)
- 2 T. light cream
- Pinch nutmeg (about ½ tsp.)
- 4 oz. yellow fettuccine
- 4 oz. green fettuccine
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan (½ oz.)
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Steps: Bring large pot with 3 to 4 quarts of water to a boil. Spray medium sized nonstick skillet with vegetable oil spray and add chopped onion. Saute, without browning, 10 minutes. Add margarine and melt. Add flour and stir until completely absorbed. Add milk a little at a time and stir to form a sauce. Add peas, ham, cream and nutmeg. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Boil pasta 3 minutes if fresh, 9 minutes if using dry. Drain and place in serving bowl. Add sauce and toss well. Sprinkle Parmesan and basil on top. Lightly toss and serve.

Italian salad with cannellini beans
½ small head radicchio
¼ small head romaine lettuce
1 T. balsamic vinegar
½ T. olive oil
1 cup rinsed and drained cannellini beans
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Steps: Wash and dry radicchio and romaine and tear into bite-sized pieces. Mix vinegar, oil, salt and pepper together in a salad bowl. Add beans. Add lettuce and toss. — Linda Gassenheimer at www.DinnerInMinutes.com.

Q&A

Q: Is couscous a grain?
A: Couscous looks like a grain, but isn't one. It's actually a pasta, usually cooked by repeated steaming. Most of the couscous found in stores has been steamed at least twice and then dried, so all you have to do is rehydrate it. It's great under stews, and it's excellent and comforting simply tossed with a little bit of melted butter and salt. There's also Israeli couscous, sometimes called pearl couscous, which is basically small, globe-shaped noodles. — Food Network

Tips

Garlic paste
To make a smooth garlic paste (for example, for scalloped potatoes) without getting your food processor messy, chop up a few cloves of peeled garlic on your cutting board. Sprinkle them with kosher salt, and use the flat side of your chef's knife to squish them into a paste. Keep squishing, adding more salt if necessary, until the paste is as smooth as you want it to be. Then add it to whatever you're making. Be careful not to oversalt the dish later. — Food Network

All about wine

Our online wine expert George Edwards of WineMarket in Pacific Grove recommends wines for Thanksgiving. Read Edwards' columns or ask him a wine-related question of your own. Go to www.montereyherald.com, click on columnists and find "All About Wine."



Mongolia

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silken sand dunes — miles from anywhere or anyone.

Our son Jesse, traveling with us, threw a Frisbee with children camped nearby and we were invited into their ger. Tsetsegmaa, their mother, was braiding a camel lead (a rope attached to a forked stick that would be anchored through the animal's septum). We "chatted" about our children and ourselves with hand gestures. Tsetsegmaa was fascinated by Jesse's leg hair, laughingly tugging on it (Mongolians have very little body hair.)

She offered us airag, fermented mare's milk, a plate of dried camel cheese, and passed the snuffbox. On leaving, she presented me with the finished camel lead. I went back to my ger wondering what she could use — and I brought her my double-sided mirror. These are a handsome people: rosy, wind-burned cheeks and laughing eyes; strong and tall. I think she liked what she saw.

In the far north, near the Siberian border, we camped among yak herders on the shores of Lake Khuvsgul, a deep-blue gem set in heavily forested taiga. Herds of huge shaggy yaks grazed nearby in alpine fields dotted with wild flowers. Chilly here even in the summer, we heated our ger with dried dung provided by the yaks. While hiking, we often found ovoo — mounds of rocks topped with offerings of bottles, prayer flags and scarves marking sacred places — reminders that the ancient shamanistic religion is still being practiced.

One day we came upon an extended family of reindeer herders breaking camp, their tents surprisingly like the tepees of the American Plains Indians. Reindeer provide these herders with milk and clothing, and antlers for trade, and serve as both saddle and pack animals. A smiling woman stopped her work to offer us chunks of dried reindeer curds. Even though she was busy packing, she maintained the gracious nomadic tradition of hospitality — where people are few and far between, neighborliness is essential.

Traditional Mongolian food is an adaptation to their nomadic lifestyle — like their gers, food has to be portable and it has to sustain the family during the long, brutal winters. For this, Mongolians rely on the meat and milk products from their herd animals — sheep, goats, camels, reindeer, yaks, and horses — supplemented by rice, flour, potatoes and occasional berries.

During the summer, meat is cut into strips and air-dried by hanging it from the ceilings of the gers; it's then stored in bags to be reconstituted when needed. Milk is made into yogurt, sun-dried curds, butter and fermented cheeses. Mare's milk is fermented in leather bags to produce the mildly alcoholic airag; it's also used to make home-brewed vodka.

Returning to Ulaan Baatar, we found city people still very much connected to their historic cultural identity. While urban Mongolians live in apartments, still nomads at heart, many keep gers just outside the city for weekend getaways. Buddhist monasteries, having survived the brutal Soviet campaign to suppress religion, are flourishing again and full of smiling young monks. Nomadic history and culture is proudly celebrated; the National Museum, in particular, houses a spectacular collection of historical costumes.

While most restaurants cater to ex-pats, businessmen and travelers by serving European food, locals eat in guanz, small canteens which serve typical Mongolian food: mutton stews, steamed dumplings (buuz) and deep-fried pastries (khuurshuur) stuffed with spiced minced meat.

In the capital, when you flag a taxi, often a citizen will stop first to offer a ride. When we unexpectedly found our plane was departing early — and the next flight wouldn't leave for two days — we needed to get to the airport fast: a local resident drove us.

All around us the city was surrounded by thousands of gers; colorful banners flew as Mongolians celebrated Naadam, the national festival of



MARIE PERUCCA-RAMIREZ/Special to The Herald

A nomadic yak herder at Lake Khovsgul displays the skilled horsemanship that carried the Mongol armies into Europe in the 13th century.

horse racing, wrestling and archery. Dashing along, with the airport towers visible on the horizon, we suddenly ran out of gas in the middle of the festivities; another citizen offered to siphon gas into our tank. Because urban Mongolians still practice the hospitality of nomads, we made our flight.

Yogurt cream cheese

(Makes approximately 2½ cups)
Mongolians culture, ferment and dry their milk products. One Mongolian-inspired product, yogurt cheese, is very versatile — and a healthful addition to the American kitchen. Used just like cream cheese, yogurt cheese is lower in fat and calories and contains beneficial live cultures.

1 qt. whole milk or low fat unflavored (plain) yogurt (use high quality, such as Straus Family or Stonyfield Farm with no gelatins or fillers)

Steps: Place a sieve over a bowl; line the sieve with a sterile piece of cheesecloth doubled over, and add the yogurt. (Make sure there's enough room under the sieve for the whey to collect.) Cover the yogurt with plastic wrap or a plate and put it in the refrigerator for 10 to 12 hours; gravity will separate the whey from the yogurt and it will drip down into the bowl. Jiggle and squeeze the cheesecloth to release more of the moisture from the yogurt; discard the whey. The yogurt will now have a thick creamy consistency.

Place the yogurt in a small bowl; cover and refrigerate. To serve, add salt —and perhaps some fresh herbs and use for toppings on beans, baked potatoes, soups, or in spreads and dips. Add sugar and it becomes a rich topping for fruit salads and desserts.

Mongolian hot pot

(Serves 4)

A tasty, fun meal, the hot pot is an interactive dining experience in two parts: a Mongolian "fondue" and a rich, broth-based soup. This dish, inspired by nomadic Mongolians gathered around their fires, cooking chunks of skewered meat in their boiling stew pots, was really developed by Chinese chefs, centuries ago, who created the "Mongolian Hot Pot" that is enjoyed in many parts of Asia today.

8 leaves of Chinese cabbage, washed, cut into 3-inch pieces

1 bunch spinach, washed, stems removed

1 head of broccoli, washed, thick stem removed, florets cut in bite-sized pieces

8 shiitake mushrooms, stems removed (set aside), caps sliced in half

4 oz. extra firm tofu, cut into ½-inch squares (optional)

½ lbs. lamb leg sirloin chops thinly

sliced (¼ inch) against the grain or 1½ lbs. beef flank steak, thinly sliced (¼ inch) against the grain

6 cups chicken stock

1 bunch green onions, washed, chopped

1 T. minced garlic

1 T. minced ginger

2 T. minced cilantro

1 T. soy sauce

1 cup minced shiitake mushrooms (include stems from mushrooms above)

1 bundle (4 oz.) soba noodles or cellophane (mung bean) noodles

Steps: Arrange cabbage, spinach, broccoli, mushrooms, meat and tofu on a serving platter; set aside.

In an electric frying pan, or wok, bring stock to boil; add green onions, garlic, ginger, cilantro, soy sauce and minced mushrooms. Simmer over medium for 5 minutes.

Set electric pan or wok in center of table within easy reach of diners; keep broth at a low simmer. Place serving platter of meat and vegetables and individual dishes of dipping sauce on table.

Give each diner a fondue fork (or skewer) and a bowl: Diners spear pieces of meat and vegetables, and cook them in the broth (3-5 minutes for meat, 1-2 minutes for veggies), then remove, dip into sauce and eat.

When the meat and vegetables have been eaten: Add noodles and any remaining vegetables to the broth; bring to boil, reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Ladle soup into individual bowls and serve immediately.

Hot pot dipping sauce

(Makes 1 cup)

2 T. soy sauce

1 tsp. sesame seed oil

2 T. rice vinegar

1 T. minced garlic

1 tsp. Chinese barbecue sauce (char siu), e.g. Lee Kum Kee brand (see note)

4 T. water

3 scallions, finely minced

2 T. finely minced cilantro

1 Thai chile, finely minced

(optional)

Steps: Mix ingredients well, store, refrigerated, in a nonreactive bowl.

Note: Available at Safeway and other supermarkets.

Buuz

(Makes 24 dumplings)

Buuz are typical Mongolian dumplings — minced beef, goat, camel or lamb seasoned with onions and garlic, wrapped in dough and steamed.

1 lb. ground lamb or ground sirloin

½ cup minced onions

1 T. minced garlic

¼ tsp. caraway seed

¼ tsp. black pepper

2 tsp. salt

4 T. water

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for two minutes, remove from the heat and allow to cool to room temperature. Strain out the mint. Add the remaining ingredients, stir and pour into a metal pan, such as a cake pan. Freeze for 3 to 4 hours, stirring every 30 minutes with a fork and scraping the ice crystals that form around the edge of the pan. When finished, the granité should have a fine, crumbly texture, like coarse snow.

Pumpkin seed crusted halibut with pomegranate-citrus relish

(Yield: Six 8-oz. portions)

For the halibut:

6-8-oz. fillet of Pacific line-caught halibut, cleaned and trimmed (may substitute other firm-white flesh fish)

1 tsp. vermouth

1 T. white worcestershire

3 T. grape seed oil, or extra virgin olive oil (reserve 2 T. for cooking)

1 tsp. thin sliced fresh Chives

Salt and white pepper to taste

For the relish:

2 grapefruits (peel and remove

About the authors

Julio Ramirez and Marie Perucca-Ramirez, creators of the Fishwife Seafood Restaurants and Turtle Bay taquerias on the Peninsula, sold their restaurants to start The Food Wranglers Inc., a restaurant consultant group.

Julio is certified as an executive chef by the American Culinary Federation and in 1999 was inducted into the prestigious American Academy of Chefs.

Marie is a writer with a degree in history and sociology and a master's in applied linguistics.

The couple have always enjoyed traveling the back roads

of the world; they are interested in seeing what other ethnic groups grow, what they eat, how they prepare their food — what their various cultures "taste like."

During their travels they have met many remarkable individuals, had a number of unusual experiences, eaten a variety of unfamiliar foods — and collected some great recipes they have adapted for home use.

Once a month they will share their experiences — through words and photos — with Herald readers. Write to them at marie@foodwranglers.com.

1 tsp. minced serrano chile (optional twist)

Steps: Mix all ingredients together with a fork until water is incorporated into the meat. Make 24 meatballs; set aside.

For dough:

2½ cups flour

1 cup water

¼ cup flour to dust rolling surface

Steps: Mix the flour and water well, until dough is formed; roll dough into a large ball and let rest for 20 minutes.

Cut the dough ball in half, and then in half again. Sprinkle a bit of flour on a smooth surface, and roll each quarter section of dough into a cylinder. Slice one cylinder into six circular portions. Sprinkle a bit more flour on the working surface, and using a rolling pin, flatten each portion into a disk. Place meat into the center of the flattened dough, pull two opposite sides up over the meat and pinch together; pull the other two opposite sides up and pinch together forming a pouch around the meat. Repeat with remaining dough cylinders.

Place the buuz dumplings in a

bamboo steamer; steam over medium heat for 10 minutes. Serve with ketchup, as the Mongolians do — or, try a sweet and spicy Asian dipping sauce.

Khuurshuur

(Makes 24 meat pastries)

Khuurshuur are fried meat-filled pastries. The ingredients for the filling and the dough are exactly the same as for the buuz (see above).

Follow recipe for buuz until reaching the directions for filling the flattened dough disks. Instead: Place a meat ball into the center of the disk, fold the dough over (as you would for a turnover), pressing the edges together with your fingers — or with the tines of a fork — to create a decorative seal.

Steps: Fry the khuurshuur in a pot with 2 inches of peanut oil at 325 degrees for 4 to 5 minutes until golden (the khuurshuur are done when the meat juices from the pastries start bubbling in the oil).

Remove from oil, place on absorbent napkins, sprinkle immediately with salt and serve hot with ketchup, as Mongolians do — or try a sweet and spicy Asian dipping sauce.

segments)

2 navel or other ripe oranges (peel and remove segments)

1 ripe and red pomegranate (remove and reserve seeds; discard pith)

1 tsp. fresh tarragon, finely chopped

1 tsp. fresh cilantro, finely chopped (optional)

1 T. red onion, finely minced

1 T. champagne vinegar, or other dry white vinegar

Salt and white pepper to taste

For the pumpkin seed crust:

8 oz. pumpkin seeds

1 cup Japanese bread crumbs, or plain white bread crumbs

Salt and white pepper to taste

Steps: Two to 4 hours prior to serving, place halibut filets in a shallow pan, or casserole dish. In a small bowl, whisk together the

vermouth, white worcestershire, 1 T. grape seed, or olive oil, and chives until well incorporated. Season with salt and white pepper to taste. Brush this mixture on all six pieces of

halibut, every side. Cover with plastic and refrigerate until ready to cook.

For the relish:

Medium dice the grapefruit and orange segments, then place in a

medium bowl. Add the pomegranate seeds, tarragon, cilantro, red onion and vinegar. Gently mix together ingredients. Now season to taste with salt and white pepper. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

For the crust: In a food processor, place pumpkin seeds, breadcrumbs, salt and white pepper to taste. Pulse blend until well mixed.

Thirty minutes prior to serving, preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, place 2 remaining tablespoons of grape seed oil (or olive oil). Take the halibut out of the refrigerator, and place skin-side up in the pan, doing three at a time. Sear in pan for about 2 minutes, or until golden brown.

Then place filets brown-side-up on a baking sheet. Top filets evenly with pumpkin seed crust, and place in the oven for 8-10 minutes. Garnish with pomegranate relish and serve with your favorite side dish.

Colin Moody is executive chef at Asilomar Conference Grounds and president of the American Culinary Federation, Monterey Bay. He is passionate about local and sustainable foods. Contact Moody at chefcolinmoody@sbcglobal.net.

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