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Dining

Meet the Chef: Barbara Wright

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Barbara Wright is the chef at Holy Wisdom Monastery

Submitted photo

Age: 59

Chef at: Holy Wisdom Monastery, 4200 County Highway M, Middleton. (The dining room is not open to the public unless they are attending a meeting, retreat or other event.)

How long have you been there: Since January.

How long have you been cooking: I have been working since I was 14 years old. I have more than 40 years of experience.

Did you go to culinary school: I am a self-taught chef.

Where have you worked in the past: Previously I owned the Dardanelles Restaurant on Monroe Street in Madison for 13 years.

Favorite foods: I love cooking fresh local vegetables. There is a Zen beauty to a basket of farmers' market or CSA vegetables that thrills me every time.

Favorite ingredients: I use a lot of Wisconsin home grown foods in my cooking — cheeses, sausage, fresh herbs.

Favorite restaurants: When I eat out I go to La Baguette on Mineral Point Road and pretend I'm in a Parisian cafe. I love the Weary Traveler on Willy Street, too.

Best tip for home cooks: Even the best chefs started out with mistakes and bad dishes. Don't let the difficulties of learning to cook new dishes stop you. . Even Julia Child had to practice until her beef bourguignon was a classic. Don't assume that chefs can just walk in the kitchen and turn out great food without lots of effort in the beginning. Even after 40 years, I still burn the cookies occasionally.

Favorite cookbook: I have read all of Joan Peterson's travel guides, her "Eat Smart" series. She does an amazing job of capturing the culinary zeitgeist of each country. Orange Schroeder from Orange Tree Imports is currently writing one on Denmark. Can't wait! As a great go-to cookbook, Fair Share CSA Coalition's "Asparagus to Zucchini" is a must.

Favorite recipe: Fried green tomatoes with remoulade sauce.

Recipe

Fried green tomatoes with remoulade sauce

Makes 4 to 6 servings

Remoulade sauce

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup mayonnaise

2 tablespoons finely chopped dill pickle

1 tablespoon drained capers, chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ green onion, very thinly sliced

$1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons whole grain mustard

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon Tabasco sauce

1 tablespoon chopped parsley

$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon celery seed

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt

$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon black pepper

Fried tomatoes

1 cup flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup yellow cornmeal

2 teaspoons salt

1/2 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper

1/2 teaspoon paprika or smoked Spanish paprika (pimenton)

4-5 large green tomatoes, cut into 1/2-inch-thick crosswise slices (about 16 slices)

Vegetable oil or a mixture of oil and bacon drippings for frying

1. In a small bowl, mix all the remoulade ingredients. The recipe makes 1 cup of sauce. The sauce can be made up to 4 days in advance and refrigerated until needed.

2. Preheat an oven to 165 to 200 degrees. In a plate or shallow bowl, mix the flour, cornmeal, salt, pepper, and paprika with a fork.

3. Dredge the tomato slices, a few at a time, in the seasoned flour to coat well. Set the tomatoes aside on a lightly floured baking sheet. Reserve the flour mixture.

4. In a large skillet, heat 1/4- to 1/3-inch oil over medium heat. Fry the tomato slices in batches for about 2 to 5 minutes or until golden brown on each side, turning as necessary. As the tomatoes are done, transfer them to a cake rack set on a baking pan to keep warm in the low oven.

5. Divide the tomatoes among individual plates and serve.

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