



“ONE ROBIN **A SPRING** DOES NOT MAKE”



By **Becky McKinley**
beckymckinley@gmail.com

As my father always said, “One robin a spring does not make.” I smile every time I think of that line—his gentle reminder not to rush the season, not to trust the first hint of warmth too quickly. And yet, here I am, scanning the yard each morning, still hoping to spot that one brave robin. I haven’t seen it yet. But I know—without question—that spring has arrived.

Not because of the weather (this is Texas, after all, where spring can feel like winter before breakfast and summer by lunch), but because something has shifted in me. It always does. Quietly, instinctively, without permission. I felt it last week in the grocery store. There I was—I was standing near the entrance where I spied bundles of asparagus so vibrant that they practically glowed. Crisp, green, impossibly fresh... almost audacious after months of muted, roasted, and slow-simmered foods. It wasn’t just produce—it was a sign—I was standing once again between seasons.

My kitchen, actually my refrigerator, hasn’t quite let go of winter. I still crave the comfort of a perfectly roasted chicken, its skin golden and crackling, served with thick slices of crusty sourdough bread. There’s a part of me that isn’t ready to say goodbye to those slow, cozy meals that filled the house with warmth. But something new is pushing its way onto my plate.

Now, I want that same roast chicken—but surrounded by sweet English peas, tender asparagus, buttery leeks, and handfuls of fresh herbs scattered freely. I want brightness. I want color.

Where are the truffle-laced au gratin potatoes? They’ve quietly slipped out of my daydreams.

The heavy cream soups? No longer calling my name.

Even the comforting, indulgent polenta that carried me through winter feels like it belongs to another chapter.

Spring doesn’t whisper—it gently insists. It asks us to lighten up, to open the windows, to let go of rich foods in favor of lighter, brighter choices. It nudges us toward the farmers market, toward ingredients that still carry the



scent of the soil. It reminds us that food cooked at its very best is fresh and flavorful.

How does my palate know this shift has happened?

What fascinates me most is how deeply our bodies understand this shift. No calendar alert tells me to crave asparagus in March or strawberries in April. No recipe book instructs me to suddenly lose interest in cinnamon and nutmeg—but it happens every year, right on cue.

It happens with every season, just like clockwork. The moment fall arrives, I am drawn—almost magnetically—to pumpkin, spice, and everything warm and fragrant. As Christmas approaches, I dream of fudge, prime rib, and eggnog without a second thought.

But spring...spring is different. Spring feels like joy on a plate. It's the season where everything begins again—on the vine, in the garden, and on our tables. It invites us outside, encourages us to gather, and tempts us with ingredients that are no longer stored, preserved, or heavy—but freshly picked, delicate, and fleeting.

Spring doesn't just change what we eat. It changes how we feel about eating.

And so, this is where I find myself each year—standing in that delicate, delicious space between comfort and

brightness. Not quite ready to abandon the warmth of winter, but fully drawn to the promise of spring.

I take the dishes I've loved all winter and simply lift them. I lighten them. I invite in what's new and fresh and fleeting, letting the season guide me rather than dictate me.

These are the recipes I reach for when my table is caught between seasons—dishes that honor where we've been, while celebrating what's just beginning. As you can see most all my spring recipes are all centered around asparagus. I love the fact that it can be transformed to play many roles on the plate. It can be the anchor or simply the gorgeous garnish we all love to see.

ROAST CHICKEN WITH ASPARAGUS, PEAS & LEMON HERB PAN SAUCE

<i>1 whole chicken (4-5 lbs)</i>	.....	<i>1 C. fresh or frozen peas</i>
<i>2 T. olive oil</i>	.....	<i>1 shallot, finely chopped</i>
<i>Salt and freshly cracked pepper</i>	.....	<i>½ C. white wine</i>
<i>1 lemon, halved</i>	.....	<i>1 C. chicken stock</i>
<i>1 bunch fresh thyme + parsley</i>	.....	<i>1 T. butter</i>
<i>1 bunch asparagus, trimmed</i>	.....

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Pat chicken dry and season generously with salt and pepper.

Stuff cavity with lemon and herbs. Rub with olive oil.

Roast for about 1 hour 15 minutes, until golden and juices run clear. In the last 15 minutes, scatter asparagus around the pan. Add peas in the final 5 minutes.

Remove chicken and let it rest.

Place the roasting pan over medium heat.

Add shallot, deglaze with white wine, then add the stock. Simmer until slightly reduced. Finish with butter and fresh herbs. (Thyme and parsley)

Carve and serve with saffron rice. Spoon the vegetables and pan sauce over the chicken and the rice.



▲ This is spring in its purest form—simple, bright, and alive.

SHAVED ASPARAGUS & PARMESAN SALAD WITH CHAMPAGNE VINAIGRETTE

The first time you shave asparagus instead of roasting it, it feels like a small revelation. It's crisp. Clean. Almost floral.

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| <p>1 bunch thick asparagus
 ½ C. shaved good Parmesan
 ¼ C. Marcona Almonds
 <i>(you find these at United near the fancy cheese. I hand chop these for the recipe)</i></p> | <p>2 T. champagne vinegar
 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
 1 tsp. honey
 ¼ C. olive oil
 Salt & pepper to taste
 Arugula (optional)</p> |
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Use a vegetable peeler to shave asparagus into ribbons.

Whisk vinegar, Dijon, honey, salt, and pepper. Slowly add olive oil. Toss asparagus with vinaigrette.

Finish with Parmesan and Marcona almonds.

I like to serve this over arugula that has been tossed with the same dressing. If you are using arugula, double the dressing recipe.

CHILEAN SEA BASS WITH SAKE BRAISED SHIITAKE MUSHROOMS AND GRILLED ASPARAGUS

I love Chilean Sea Bass. It is available at United and just yesterday, I saw it at Sam's at a more affordable price but larger quantity. You can always substitute another white fish for this recipe.

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| <p>1 pound fresh shiitake mushrooms
 <i>(Also found at United on Soncy or Coulter)</i>
 1-½ T. sesame oil
 ¼ C. mirin <i>(found in the Asian aisle)</i></p> | <p>¼ C. tamari or soy sauce
 ¼ C. rice vinegar
 1 C. chicken stock
 1 tsp. sugar</p> |
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Cut the stems from the shiitakes or other mushrooms. Place the caps in a bowl.

Toss the mushrooms with the sesame oil and let it stand for 30 minutes. Heat a heavy saute pan over medium heat and sear the mushrooms.

Stir in the mirin, tamarin and rice vinegar and increase the heat to high to reduce by one fourth. Add the stock and reduce the heat to medium and simmer uncovered for at to 20 minutes or until the mushrooms are tender.

For Sea Bass Preparation:

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| <p>20 to 24 ounces Chilean sea bass or 4 filets.
 I like to leave the skin on.
 2 T. butter</p> | <p>2 T. olive oil
 1/2 tsp. salt
 1/4 tsp. black, pepper</p> |
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Dry the fish filet with paper towels. Season the fish with salt and pepper to taste.

Melt the butter and the oil in a skillet in a medium hot skillet. Add the fillets skin side down and pan sear for 3 to 4 minutes on each side. The time depends on the thickness of the fillets. If the fillet sticks to the pan it may need a few more seconds of cooking time. The fish is ready when the fish flakes easily with a fork and has reached an internal temperature of 140 to 145 degrees.

Serve with sauce and rice.

Asparagus for 4 people:

24 spears of asparagus.

Remove the tough end from the asparagus. Place the asparagus on a foil lined cookie or baking sheet. Sprinkle generously with olive oil. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and everything bagel. Bake at 425 degrees for 8 minutes. It is delicious. Pop in the oven as you are preparing the plates. That way you can serve it hot. It is perfect every time.

BASMATI RICE RECIPE

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| <p>2 C. basmati rice
 4 C. water
 2 tsp. salt</p> | <p>3 whole star anise (optional)
 ½ cinnamon stick (optional)
 2 whole cloves (optional)</p> |
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Rinse the rice well under cold water until the water runs clear.

Place it in a sauce pan with a lid and add the water, salt, and spices if desired. Cover and bring to a boil over high heat.

Immediately reduce to the lowest possible level and let the rice steam for about 20 minutes. Or until all the water has been absorbed and rice is tender.

Fluff with a fork and serve.

CREAM OF ASPARAGUS/ SPINACH SOUP

- 2 T. olive oil
- 2 leeks (white and light green parts only)
- ½ onion, diced
- 3 C. chopped asparagus, tips reserved to the side
- 1 C. peeled Yukon gold potato, diced
- 1-½ tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. ground pepper
- 6 to 8 C. chicken stock
- 3 C. fresh spinach, packed
- ½ C. heavy whipping cream

Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Cook the leeks and onion, stirring occasionally 5 to 6 minutes or until soft. Add the chicken stock, bring to a soft boil. Add chopped potatoes and cook until soft. Add the asparagus pieces and cook for an additional 6 minutes or until the asparagus is soft. To that add the spinach, salt and pepper. Cook until the spinach wilts.

In the stock pot that the soup is in, blend with a hand-held wand or mixer. Once blended add the asparagus tips and simmer for about 3 minutes. Stir in the whole cream and serve.

Top with Parmesan and cayenne pepper if desired. *AW*



MAKE YOUR DREAM VACATION A REALITY

Folks thinking of traveling abroad may find the task of planning such a vacation daunting, but Clarendon's Melvin Edes says he knows someone who can help them out.

Jordan Shankles, Edes' granddaughter, is a travel concierge with Getaway Gal Travel and she has a wealth of experience in international travel and a knack for finding the best spots to visit.

Her industry experience and strong partnerships enable her to secure competitive rates and value added amenities for your trip. Her services are complimentary as she is compensated through commission from the travel suppliers. This ensures her recommendations are unbiased and prioritize your satisfaction.

"She has been to every country in Europe and has skied the Alps in France and Switzerland," Edes says. "I highly recommend her!"

Shankles is a graduate of Texas Tech University and now lives in Dallas. Her impressive connections and insider knowledge ensure that your journey will be nothing short of extraordinary.



JORDAN SHANKLES

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A guide to dining out in Amarillo and the area, Chomp is a result of opinions and experiences of the Accent West staff. Publication of a listing cannot be purchased or influenced by advertising. Reviews of restaurants are by anonymous critics to ensure no special treatment. Accent West is always interested in hearing about new restaurants and/or entertainment enterprises. Ideas and comments should be sent to Chomp Editor, Accent West Magazine, Box 1504, Amarillo, TX 79105. Deadline is six weeks prior to date of publication. Price scales are for a typical meal for one person, excluding drinks, tax or tip as follows:

Inexpensive – under \$7.00

Moderate – \$7.00 to \$20.00

Expensive – over \$20.00

Sa-vor Tapas Bar, 7679 Hillside Rd., Ste 600, 806-310-2600. Definitely an upscale, social dining experience! Urban, chic, small bites, big flavor. So many delicious options to choose but do start with the charcuterie board – bold, fresh and delicious, especially with an imaginative cocktail. Select cold or hot tapas to your liking – such as the Mejillones (mussels), Albondigas (pork meatballs with manchego), roasted artichoke flatbread... the list goes on and on! Of course, there're are salads, and entrees –including prime beef, seared snapper, Rainbow trout. Wines are extraordinary. Don't miss the crème brulee for dessert! Open daily 11 a.m. – Midnight; Brunch (Sat & Sun) 10 a.m. -3 p.m. Moderate to expensive.

Sad Monkey Mercantile, 9800 TX-217, Canyon, TX 79015, 806-488-2658. Just 15 minutes from Canyon and 25 from Amarillo, Sad Monkey Mercantile is the perfect stop for a relaxing break on your way to or from Palo Duro Canyon. This unique spot offers everything from hot sandwiches and fresh local coffee to craft beer from area breweries like Pondaseta Brewing Co., plus wine flights and mimosas at the Monkey Bar. The food trailer, open on weekends, serves delicious meals, while the pet-friendly patio with cornhole and occasional live music sets a laid-back vibe for all ages. Check out their Instagram for the latest on live music events. You'll also find camping gear, homewares, and "Panhandle Proud" merchandise to take home as souvenirs. With scenic views, a small dog park, and Texas longhorns nearby, Sad Monkey Mercantile offers a peaceful, family-friendly space to relax, grab a drink, and explore the best of the Texas Panhandle. Whether you're hiking, biking, or just looking to unwind, it's the perfect place to recharge. Open Sun – Thurs, 9 AM – 8 PM and Fri/ Sat, 9 AM – 9 PM. Moderate.

The Brunch Truck, 213 SW 7th, 806-373-4199. Downtown Amarillo has a flavorful new addition worth the stop—**The Brunch Truck**, the city's latest food truck concept with a twist. While meals are prepped in the truck, guests enjoy the comfort of indoor dining just steps away, combining the charm of street food with the ease of a sit-down experience. Offering a fast-casual approach to breakfast

and lunch, The Brunch Truck serves up an eclectic mix of morning favorites and midday staples. Think hearty breakfast burritos, fluffy pancakes, French toast, and the All-American breakfast alongside bold options like migas, tacos, burgers, enchiladas, salads, and sandwiches. Stop by for a quick bite that doesn't skimp on flavor—and stay for the fun, laid-back vibe that makes this local gem a standout. Lunch specials, Tues-Thurs (10 a.m. – 2 p.m.) Hours: Tues: 6:30 AM – 2 PM.; Wed-Fri: 6:30 AM – 7 PM; Sat-Sun Brunch: 9 AM – 3 PM. Call in orders for takeout. Moderate.

BORGER

Smitty Brothers All About Burgers, 3245 Fairlanes Blvd. 806-275-9107 Just off Hwy 136, west of Borger, sits a country-cozy stop made for hungry travelers. Family-friendly and laid-back, it's all about hearty, two-fisted burgers done right. Classics like the double cheeseburger and green chile burger never miss, but the standout is the **Triple "B" Burger**—topped with Kickin' Bourbon sauce, bacon, and your choice of cheese. For variety, try the avocado-topped **California Burger** or the smoky **Hickory Burger** with homemade BBQ sauce. Beyond burgers, there's crisp salads, golden chicken tenders, and catfish dinners. Don't skip the sides: hot, real-cut fries and irresistible onion straws seal the deal. Open for lunch 11 AM to 2 PM and dinner 4:30 to 8:00 PM, Mon – Fri. *AW*

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