

## SOUL FOOD

GATHER



**FROM TOP** Tanya Holland (in orange) with husband Phil Surkis (center) and friends; main course of spiced veal shanks, mustard greens, and smoked sweet potatoes.

# THE WELCOME TABLE

Chef Tanya Holland hosts a soulful seder. *By Margo True*

**TANYA HOLLAND** is known for her fresh, California-style soul food at Oakland's Brown Sugar Kitchen, but for years, she's wanted to host a seder. Her husband, Phil Surkis, is Jewish, and she's been fascinated by the Passover dinner as a guest at other people's houses. "It's the celebration where everyone's welcome," she says.

At Brown Sugar, customers of all races and classes commune over her chicken and waffles. For her seder, Holland wanted that same harmony of people and flavors. So last year, she and Surkis invited friends—African American, Jewish, or both—to their house in Oakland. The menu reflected the heritages around the table: It was based on seder classics like matzo-ball soup, but infused with the flavors of the African American South and North Africa.

In a dining room fragrant with cumin and cloves, Surkis, with help from everyone, led the ceremony. Not all the guests knew one another, but by the time they'd finished the flourless chocolate-pecan cake, they had traded advice, jokes, and tales about their lives. Two of them discovered that they lived a block apart. "I loved the stories and memories that came up, and the sharing," says Holland. As for the recipes themselves, they're wonderful at any time of the year, for anyone.

FOOD STYLING: KAREN SHINTO; PROP STYLING: KELLY ALLEN



# FRESH ASPARAGUS with PARSLEY AIOLI

SERVES 8 (MAKES  $\frac{3}{4}$  CUP AIOLI) / 40 MINUTES

Holland began her seder menu with this bright green celebration of spring. If you have leftover aioli (garlic mayonnaise), use it with any cooked or raw vegetable, sautéed fish, or sandwiches.

- 2 large egg yolks\*
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 tsp. lemon zest
- 2 to 3 tbsp. lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup grapeseed oil
- 3 tbsp. mild, fruity extra-virgin olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. sea salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. green or white asparagus, preferably thick spears

1. In a blender or food processor, combine egg yolks, garlic, lemon zest, and lemon juice; pulse until smooth. Combine grapeseed and olive oils in a liquid measuring cup. With blender running, slowly drizzle in oils in a thin stream until mixture is thick, 2 minutes. Add salt, pepper, and parsley; pulse to blend.
2. Snap tough ends from asparagus. Lay each stalk flat on a cutting board and, using a vegetable peeler, peel to about 1 inch below the tip.
3. Bring at least 1 in. water to a simmer in a large frying pan or wide pot. Lay asparagus in pan and simmer, covered, until tender, 3 to 5 minutes (white asparagus may take longer). Cool in a bowl of ice and water; drain.
4. Serve asparagus on a large platter with aioli spooned across, or on the side.

*\*If you're concerned about eating raw egg yolks, use pasteurized egg yolks, available at well-stocked grocery stores.*

**MAKE AHEAD** Aioli, up to 4 days, chilled; cooked asparagus, up to 1 day, chilled.

PER SERVING 197 Cal., 90% (177 Cal.) from fat; 2.5 g protein; 20 g fat (2.5 g sat.); 3.9 g carbo (1.7 g fiber); 101 mg sodium; 52 mg chol. GF/LC/LS/V



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP** Holland preps the first course; her table before the feast; Creole matzo-ball soup; haroseth; guest Diane Johnson (in blue) talking with Tannis Reinhertz and Darwin Farrar before dinner.





# CREOLE MATZO-BALL SOUP

**SERVES 8 (MAKES 4 QTS.) / 2 HOURS**

Spicy matzo balls and a chile-infused chicken stock shake up this classic.

## MATZO BALLS

- 4 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 tbsp. chicken fat (skim from Roasted Chicken Stock, if you like; recipe on *sunset.com*) or vegetable oil
- 1 cup matzo meal
- ½ cup club soda
- 1 ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. Creole Spice (recipe at right) or Creole seasoning, such as Tony Chachere's
- 2 tbsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves

## SOUP

- 1 head garlic
- About ½ tsp. kosher salt
- Pepper
- About 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 green bell peppers, cut into ½-in. dice
- 1 large onion, cut into ½-in. dice
- 3 celery stalks, cut into ½-in. dice
- 4 or 5 red Fresno or large red jalapeño chiles, stemmed, seeded, and minced
- 3 qts. Roasted Chicken Stock (*sunset.com*) or store-bought reduced-sodium chicken stock
- ½ cup chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves

1. Mix matzo-ball ingredients and chill, covered, 30 minutes to 2 hours.
2. Preheat oven to 400°. Cut top off garlic, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and drizzle with some oil. Wrap in foil; roast 1 hour.
3. In a large pot, heat 1 tbsp. oil over medium heat. Add vegetables and ½ tsp. salt, cover, and cook until starting to soften, 10 minutes. Squeeze garlic from cloves into a bowl, whisk in ½ cup stock, and pour into vegetables with remaining stock.
4. About 30 minutes before serving, bring to a boil, then lower to a simmer. Using wet hands, loosely form matzo mixture into scant 1-in. balls; add to stock as you go. Simmer until cooked through, 30 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.



5. Serve hot, sprinkled with parsley.

**MAKE AHEAD** *Garlic, up to 1 week, chilled. Soup through step 3, up to 2 days, chilled.*

PER 2-CUP SERVING 228 Cal., 41% (94 Cal.) from fat; 14 g protein; 10 g fat (2.8 g sat.); 21 g carbo (2.3 g fiber); 740 mg sodium; 146 mg chol. LC

## CREOLE SPICE

**MAKES ABOUT ⅓ CUP / 15 MINUTES**

Although you'll have spice left over, you'll be glad—it's delicious on eggs, poultry, and seafood. • Mix 3 tbsp. **each** **kosher salt**, **dried herbes de Provence\***, and **ground cumin** with 5 tsp. **cayenne** and 4 tsp. **each** freshly ground **pepper** and **paprika**. Store airtight at room temperature up to 3 months.

*\*Find herbes de Provence in the spice section.*

## HAROSETH

**SERVES 8 (MAKES 4 CUPS) / 25 MINUTES**

Haroseth is a traditional side dish at the seder table. This version, with dates and warm spices, leans toward North Africa.

- 4 firm, tart-sweet apples, such as Fuji or Gala, unpeeled
- ½ cup roasted unsalted almonds, roughly chopped
- 6 pitted Medjool dates, halved lengthwise and chopped (to yield about ½ cup)
- ¼ tsp. **each** ground ginger and cinnamon
- ¾ tsp. orange zest (from 1 large orange)
- Pinch of ground cloves
- 2 tbsp. tawny port
- ¼ cup lightly toasted sliced almonds

1. Chop 1½ apples into ½-in. dice. Coarsely chop remaining 2½ apples, put in a food processor with all remaining ingredients except sliced almonds, and pulse until blended but still quite coarse.
2. Turn mixture into a bowl and stir in diced apples. Sprinkle with sliced almonds just before serving.

**MAKE AHEAD** *Up to 1 day (except toasted almonds), chilled.*

PER ½-CUP SERVING 164 Cal., 33% (55 Cal.) from fat; 3.1 g protein; 6.1 g fat (0.5 g sat.); 27 g carbo (3.7 g fiber); 0.7 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. GF/LC/LS



## BRAISED MUSTARD GREENS with SPRING ONIONS

**SERVES 8 (MAKES 8 CUPS) / 1 ¼ HOURS**

These mustard greens get a little snap from a drizzle of cider vinegar and lots of spring onions. The onions resemble green onions (scallions), but the tops are thicker and the bulbs much larger; they have a sharp, bracing flavor that mellows when cooked. If you can't find them, use a triple amount of green onions instead—it's equally good.

- 4 lbs. mustard greens (about 5 large bunches), large stems removed, greens coarsely chopped
- 4 to 5 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 8 spring onions or 24 green onions, chopped
- ½ to 1 tsp. red chile flakes
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 2 tsp. cider vinegar

1. Rinse greens and drain. Set aside with water still clinging to leaves.
2. Heat 1½ tbsp. oil over medium heat in a large stockpot. Add garlic, onions, and chile flakes and cook, stirring often, until softened but not browned, about 5 minutes. Scoop half into a bowl and set aside.
3. Add half of greens to pot and cook, covered, until wilted, then add second half. When greens are thoroughly wilted, sprinkle with salt and toss with tongs.
4. Reduce heat and simmer greens, covered, until very tender, about 45 minutes, adding water occasionally if necessary to keep about ¼ in. water in bottom of pot.
5. Add vinegar, remaining oil, and reserved garlic-onion mixture and toss to mix (it will be quite liquidy).

**MAKE AHEAD** *Chopped greens, 1 day, covered and chilled; braised greens, 1 day, covered and chilled.*

PER SERVING 140 Cal., 52% (72 Cal.) from fat; 6.6 g protein; 8.4 g fat (1.2 g sat.); 14 g carbo (8.2 g fiber); 250 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. GF/LC/LS/VG

## SMOKED SWEET POTATOES

**SERVES 8 / 1 ¼ HOURS**

To make these kosher, Holland uses coconut butter instead of cow's-milk butter or cream.

- 4 lbs. orange-fleshed sweet potatoes (often labeled "yams")
- 3 cups mesquite chips, soaked in water at least 30 minutes
- ¼ cup virgin coconut butter\*
- 3 to 4 tbsp. maple syrup
- ¼ to ½ tsp. cayenne
- About ¾ tsp. kosher salt

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Peel yams, then slice crosswise 1 in. thick. Sprinkle wood chips in a large roasting pan. Set a baking rack over chips. Pour in ¼ in. water. Put yams on rack, cover with foil, and roast until a knife slides in easily, 1 hour.
2. Mash yams. Stir in remaining ingredients and a little hot water if they seem stiff.

*\*Find at well-stocked markets and online.*

PER SERVING 219 Cal., 21% (46 Cal.) from fat; 3.1 g protein; 5.1 g fat (4.8 g sat.); 41 g carbo (5.9 g fiber); 236 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. GF/LC/LS/VG



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP** Camille Mason explains the seder guidebook, the Haggadah, to daughter Adele; seder plate of symbolic foods, including a roasted lamb bone; veal shanks; matzo; smoked sweet potatoes; mustard greens.





# NORTH AFRICAN VEAL SHANKS

**SERVES 8 / 3 HOURS, PLUS 6 HOURS TO  
MARINATE**

Buy smaller shanks if you can find them (3 lbs. or so each); when cross-cut, they make ideal single servings. This recipe works well with beef short ribs too. For another seder-worthy main course from Holland (one that would go well with the rest of this menu), see her B-Side Brown Sugar Smoked Brisket recipe on *sunset.com*.

## MARINADE

- 2 tbsp. minced garlic
- 1 tbsp. minced fresh ginger
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ½ cup reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 3 whole veal shanks (about 8 lbs. total), preferably free-raised\*, cross-cut by your butcher into 2-in.-thick slices; or 7 lbs. short ribs, cut crosswise into 4-in. pieces
- 2 jalapeño chiles, cut lengthwise into quarters and seeded if very hot

## BRAISE

- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tbsp. *ras el hanout* (from recipe at right or store-bought)
- ¼ cup grapeseed oil
- 1 cup dry red wine
- ¼ cup dry sherry
- 1½ qts. reduced-sodium beef broth
- 1 tbsp. *harissa*\*
- 5 garlic cloves
- 1 large onion, cut into 1-in. dice
- 3 or 4 celery ribs, cut into 1-in. pieces
- 1½ red bell peppers, cut into 1-in. dice
- 3 large carrots, cut into ½-in.-thick batons (about 3 in. long)
- ½ cup dried apricot halves

1. Marinate shanks: Mix garlic, ginger, oil, and soy sauce. Trim membrane from shanks (it shrinks during cooking and buckles the meat). Tie shanks around their girth with twine, then arrange in a large roasting pan in a single layer. Add chiles; pour in marinade. Chill at least 6 hours and up to overnight, turning once.

2. Braise shanks: Two hours before cooking, take shanks out of refrigerator. Put on a baking sheet (discard marinade) and dry with paper towels. Sprinkle with salt, then *ras el hanout*. Rinse and dry roasting pan.
3. Preheat oven to 325°. Heat roasting pan or 2 large dutch ovens over medium-high heat on stovetop and pour in oil. Add shanks and brown on both sides. Pour in wine and sherry, scraping up brown bits.
4. Add remaining ingredients to roasting pan (if using short ribs, add vegetables after 1 hour). Bring to a simmer, then cover tightly with foil. Put in oven and braise until a knife tip slides in easily, 2 to 2½ hours (about 3 hours for short ribs).
5. Lift shanks and about half of vegetables to a platter; keep warm, covered with foil. Set pan with remaining vegetables on stovetop and boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until juices reduce by about half and thickly coat the back of a spoon, 20 minutes. Strain (spoon off fat if using short ribs) and serve with shanks.

*\*Free-raised refers to calves raised on open pasture; it's available at some butcher shops and at Whole Foods Market, often labeled "Humanely Raised" or "Certified Humane." Find harissa, a North African chile paste, at well-stocked grocery stores. Its heat level varies by brand, so taste a little before using.*

PER SERVING WITH 2 TBSP. SAUCE 666 Cal., 32% (211 Cal.) from fat; 92 g protein; 24 g fat (4.5 g sat.); 16 g carbo (2.8 g fiber); 1,351 mg sodium; 340 mg chol.

## RAS EL HANOUT

**MAKES 6 TBSP. / 10 MINUTES**

Loosely translated as "top of the shop," *ras el hanout* is a blend of 12 or more North African spices. • Heat 1 tsp. **each cumin seeds and coriander seeds** in a dry frying pan just until fragrant and a shade darker. Let cool. Grind 2 tsp. **peppercorns** to a powder in a clean coffee or spice grinder and turn into a bowl. Grind cumin and coriander and add to pepper. Blend in 2 tsp. **cinnamon**; 1 tsp. **each ground allspice, cardamom, cloves, ginger, nutmeg, turmeric, and dried thyme**; and ½ tsp. **cayenne**. **MAKE AHEAD** Up to 2 months, covered airtight at room temperature.





# FLOURLESS CHOCOLATE-PECAN CAKE

SERVES 8 TO 12 / 2 HOURS

This cake will rise as it bakes, then sink dramatically in the center. Don't worry—just trim the top and save the pieces for snacks.

- 12 oz. bittersweet chocolate (63% or 64% cacao), chopped
- ½ cup plus 1½ tbsp. roasted pecan, almond, or walnut oil
- 3 tsp. vanilla extract, divided
- 1 cup lightly toasted pecans or almonds or ⅔ cup purchased nut flour\*
- ½ cup plus 2 tbsp. granulated sugar, divided
- 3 to 4 large, firm oranges
- 7 large eggs, separated
- ½ cup packed light brown sugar
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 cup powdered sugar

1. Preheat oven to 325° with a rack in the middle. Grease a 9-in. springform pan and line with parchment paper, cut to fit.
2. Heat chocolate in a double boiler or metal bowl set over (not in) a pot of simmering water until about half-melted. Remove pan from heat and stir until smooth. Stir in oil. Cool slightly; stir in 2 tsp. vanilla.
3. Grind pecans and 1 tbsp. granulated sugar in a food processor in 2 batches, pulsing so you don't end up with pecan butter (you'll have some larger pieces). With a medium-mesh sifter, sift to yield ⅔ cup pecan flour.
4. Zest 2 oranges with a 5-holed zester; juice enough oranges to yield 1¼ cups juice.
5. Using a mixer, beat egg yolks and brown sugar in a medium bowl until mixture is pale and, when beaters are lifted, falls in thick ribbons, 5 minutes. Beat in 2 tbsp. plus 1 tsp. orange juice (mixture will get more liquidy). Gently fold in pecan flour. Fold in chocolate mixture.
6. In another bowl with clean beaters, beat egg whites with salt until foamy. Gradually rain in 7 tbsp. granulated sugar; beat into soft peaks, 3 minutes. Gently fold half

of egg whites into chocolate mixture; then fold in remaining whites.

7. Pour batter into pan and bake until a toothpick inserted in center comes out with crumbs adhering, 1 to 1¼ hours. Let cool on a rack (it will sink a lot).
8. Make glaze: In a large frying pan, boil remaining orange juice, 2 tbsp. granulated sugar, and the zest over medium-high heat until reduced to ½ cup, 10 minutes. Sift powdered sugar into juice and whisk smooth. Let cool 5 minutes, then whisk in remaining 1 tsp. vanilla.
9. Let cake cool, then run a heated thin metal spatula (heat under hot water, then dry with a towel) around inside of pan.
10. Remove rim of pan. Starting from edge and working toward center, carefully trim uneven top layer from cake using a large serrated knife. Invert cake onto a plate.
11. Cut cake with a heated knife, wiping between slices. Drizzle slices with glaze.

\*Find nut flours at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) (pecan flour is called "meal"). 🐼

PER SERVING 575 Cal., 54% (309 Cal.) from fat; 5.6 g protein; 34 g fat (12 g sat.); 63 g carbo (1.2 g fiber); 148 mg sodium; 148 mg chol. GF (with GF powdered sugar)/LS/V

## Holland's wine picks

**Brown Estate 2011  
"Chaos Theory"**  
(Chiles Valley District, Napa Valley)

**Esterlina 2011 Esterlina  
Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir**  
(Anderson Valley)

**Murrieta's Well 2012  
"The Whip"**  
(Livermore Valley)

**Urban Legend 2012  
Sauvignon Blanc**  
(Lake County)

