

SONJA & JOSH

MY NURTURE VALENTINE

MENU & GUIDE

NURTURERETREATS.COM

A woman with long, wavy brown hair is smiling and looking down at a white plate she is holding with both hands. The plate contains a white, creamy substance, possibly rice or mashed potatoes, topped with small red and yellow garnishes. She is wearing a light green, ribbed, long-sleeved sweater. The background is a softly blurred kitchen with white cabinets and a doorway. The entire image has a warm, sepia-toned overlay.

—
Cooking
is
love
made
visible.
—

ANONYMOUS

LET'S BEGIN.

Welcome to my love story as a meal!

To me, food is love. I love picking up threads of meaning and translating them into meaningful, tasty dishes, like the ones you see outlined below.

In this example menu, each dish nods to an element of my relationship with my partner Josh: our connection, our shared memories, or the unique language of us as a pair.

What follows is a collection of recipes that are as much a memoir as they are a dinner. I consider it an honour that you're here to cook or be inspired by our love story menu and wish you much love in return.

Consider this your invitation to cook each recipe as-is, or tweak to swap out ingredients that tell your own love story!



Each meal has a built-in opportunity to embody the following values, which are as applicable to your regular meal making as they are to this special menu:

- Work with what you already know but in new ways and meaningful flavour combos
- Outsourcing to ready-made products where that makes sense, to save time and money
- Get fresh and quality ingredients where it counts
- Explore texture, colour, flavour and composition through the lens of personal meaning ie: tell a story, YOUR story, and it's bound to be extra-delicious

You'll note that in some dish elements, the 'recipes' don't have exact measurements. This is on purpose. You are meant to taste as you go and add what is needed according to YOUR preference.

What I'm offering is a curated framework for culinary play. A 'palate' of complementary flavours and techniques so that you'll create what truly resonates with you.

There is flexibility. There is space to breathe. There are often handy leftovers to freeze or feed your family.

Photos used throughout are by [Katie Harrison Photo](#)

BONUS: feel free
to contact me!



Happily, you do not have to embark on
this adventure alone.

I am available to answer questions you
may have along the way, or to guide you
through any parts of the recipes you
need assistance with. Shoot me a DM
via Instagram [@nurtureretreats](#) or send
an email to
connect@nurtureretreats.com and I'll
respond as soon as I'm able.

I'd also love to see your progress! Feel
free to tag me if you take any photos or
share to stories.

Much love and happy cooking,

Sonja

Sonja & Josh



THIS IS OUR LOVE STORY AS A MEAL



COCKTAIL

***Side-By-Sidecar** – Cedar smoke, pine needle simple syrup, lemon, cointreau & smoky bourbon.*

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE SYRUP

pine sprigs, fresh**

1 cup sugar

1 cup water

FOR THE COCKTAIL

2 strips lemon zest

2 oz lemon juice

4 oz bourbon

2 oz cointreau

ice cubes

1 TBSP pine simple syrup

FOR THE SMOKE

cedar sprigs, dry

DIRECTIONS

1. Make pine needle simple syrup ([**forage safely - instructions here](#)).
2. Chill 2 cocktail glasses.
3. Fill a shaker with cracked ice. Add bourbon, Cointreau, and lemon juice. Shake assertively for a minute or so.
4. Using your cocktail smoker, infuse glasses with cedar smoke. If you don't have a smoker, light your dry cedar sprig over top of a baking sheet for safety and allow smoke to rise upward into your glasses before adding your liquids. Safely extinguish your cedar. You can also skip this step, as the bourbon itself has smoky notes.
5. Strain shaken cocktail into smoke-filled cocktail glasses.
6. Garnish with lemon zest & serve.

LOVE NOTES

Many of our fondest memories are sitting next to one another in our car, Claudia, exploring back country roads. We often open our windows to catch scents of evergreen trees and wood fires.



STARTER

Champ-Oignons For Life – Mushroom medley, caramelized onion, shallot, maple herb drizzle topping a creamy white bean dip, served with local sourdough crostini from that bakery we love.

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE DIP

- 1 can canellini beans, drained
- 2 1/2 TBS bean water, reserved
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup tahini
- 2 1/2 TBSP lemon juice
- salt & pepper to taste
- crostini, to serve

FOR THE TOPPING

- 1 1/2 TSP each olive oil & butter
- 1 large cooking onion, diced
- 300 g assorted mushrooms, roughly chopped
- 1/4 TSP liquid smoke
- 1/4 cup assorted chopped herbs
- 1/2 TSP lemon zest
- 1/8 cup olive oil
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- salt & pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. In a food processor or blender, combine beans, garlic, olive oil and tahini. Blend for 20 seconds. Stop to scrape sides before blending for 20 seconds more.
2. Add bean water, lemon juice, salt and pepper.
3. Blend for 2 minutes to achieve a creamy consistency. Refrigerate covered until needed.
4. In a frying pan on medium heat, sauté onions in butter and olive oil until soft and caramelized.
5. Add mushrooms and cook until juices release and they brown slightly.
6. Add liquid smoke and salt and pepper to mixture.
7. Chop herbs finely. Combine with zest, olive oil, maple syrup, salt and pepper.
8. To serve, spread bean dip on a shallow platter of choice. Sprinkle with onion and mushroom mix.
9. Drizzle with herb mixture and additional olive oil. Serve with crostini and enjoy!

LOVE NOTES

Mushrooms and onions were the iconic duo that graced many breakfasts and burgers when Josh started cooking for me. “You nurture everyone else. Let me nurture YOU.”



MAIN

Never Gonna Galette You Go – Flaky, buttery pastry hugging roasted butternut squash, sweet onion and Gruyère, with a kiss of thyme.

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE PASTRY

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 TSP salt
- 2 sticks unsalted butter, cold
- 1/2 cup greek yogurt
- 1 TBSP white wine vinegar
- 1/3 cup ice water

FOR THE FILLING

- 1 large butternut squash, peeled and cubed
- 3 TBSP olive oil
- 1 TBSP butter
- salt & pepper
- 2 large sweet onions, thinly sliced
- 2 cups grated Gruyère
- 1 tsp chopped thyme
- 1 egg yolk

DIRECTIONS

1. Blend flour, salt and chilled butter until the texture is like cornmeal.
2. Whisk yogurt, vinegar and ice water, pour over flour mixture, stirring and kneading a few times until it comes together. Wrap and chill for minimum 1 hr.
3. Peel and cube squash into 1/2 inch chunks. Roast in a 400 F oven with 2 TBSP olive oil, salt & pepper for 30 minutes, or until tender and browned evenly.
4. While squash roasts, caramelize onions with 1 TBSP olive oil and 1 TBSP butter over medium-low heat till soft and tender.
5. Mix onions, squash, thyme and cheese in a bowl.
6. Roll out dough on a floured work surface into a 16 inch round. Transfer to a lined baking sheet.
7. Spoon squash mixture onto the pastry, leaving a 2 inch border. Fold the edges over, towards the filling, pleating as you go. Brush with beaten egg yolk and bake 30-40 min or until golden brown. Enjoy!

LOVE NOTES

The first “Nurture Sonja” main dish I ever made for Josh. **TIP:** use the leftover dough to make a galette with other roasted leftover veg and cheese in your fridge, or try a sweet one with apples or berries. You can also make simple cinnamon sugar butter, spread it on the rolled out dough and roll it up into flaky cinnamon rolls.



SALAD

Pecan’t Get Enough of You –Lacinato kale, lardons, bourbon raisins, Sonja’s maple house dressing, toasted pecan crumble.

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE DRESSING

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 2 TBSP white wine vinegar
- 1 TBSP Dijon mustard
- 1 TSP anchovy paste, optional
- 1 TBSP shredded Parmesan
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 3 TBSP mayonnaise
- 2 TBSP maple syrup

FOR THE SALAD

- 1 bunch lacinato kale, chopped
- 3 slices thick cut bacon
- 1/4 cup raisins
- 2 TBSP bourbon

FOR THE CRUMBLE

- 1 cup bread crumbs
- 100 GRAMS pecans
- 2 TBSP butter

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine all dressing ingredients and blend to emulsify.
2. In a small bowl, soak raisins in bourbon.
3. Cube bacon slices and pan fry to desired consistency. Drain onto paper towel.
4. In the same pan, allow butter to melt and brown a bit. Add bread crumbs and pecan pieces and toss in brown butter until toasted and crispy.
5. In a bowl, place chopped kale, lardons and bourbon soaked raisins.
6. When ready to serve, toss salad with dressing to taste. Sprinkle with some of the crumble, toss again, and sprinkle with more crumble to top. Enjoy!

LOVE NOTES

We've enjoyed pilgrimages to source pecan pies and butter tarts that cause exclamations normally reserved for the bedroom. I love this savoury spin on our favourite treat.



SWEET FINISH

***Pie Lover Pavlova** - Meringue nests, vanilla bean whip, key lime curd, local blueberry preserves, fresh blueberry, toasted coconut.*

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE MERINGUE

1 pkg meringue nests
(or make your own)

FOR THE CREAM

1/2 cup whipping cream
2 TBSP sugar
1 vanilla bean, scraped

FIXINGS

1 jar key lime curd
1 jar blueberry preserves
fresh blueberries
1/2 cup unsweetened coconut,
toasted

DIRECTIONS

1. in a dry frying pan under medium heat, toast your coconut until golden brown and fragrant.
2. Carefully score your vanilla bean lengthways and using the back of your knife, scrape out the seeds into a chilled bowl.
3. Add your whipped cream to the bowl and whisk, adding sugar in slowly as you beat it until thickened.
4. When ready to serve, crumble meringue nest pieces into whipped cream. Scoop out into bowls and pass spoonfuls of lime curd and blueberry preserves through the mixture so that they ripple throughout.
5. Top with blueberries and toasted coconut. Enjoy!

LOVE NOTES

Josh loves blueberry pie (and once drove an extra 40 min to bring me one during early lockdown). I love key lime so intensely.

GROCERY LIST

To help determine how much of an item you may already have in your pantry, I've indicated below how much of each you'll actually need for each recipe.

FRUITS

- LEMONS (2)
- BLUEBERRIES, FRESH (1 PINT)

PROTEIN

- THICK CUT BACON (2-3 STRIPS)

DAIRY

- BUTTER (1 LB, UNSALTED)
- PLAIN GREEK YOGURT (1/2 CUP)
- GRUYÈRE (185 GRAMS)
- EGG (1, FOR THE YOLK)
- WHIPPING CREAM (473 ML)
- 2 TBSP PARMESAN CHEESE, GRATED

CANNED GOODS & PANTRY

- CANNELINI BEANS (1 CAN)
- ALL PURPOSE FLOUR (3 CUPS)
- PECANS (100 GRAMS)
- RAISINS (1/4 CUP)
- SUGAR (1 CUP + 2-3 TBSP)
- UNSWEETENED COCONUT (1/2 CUP)

BREADS & GRAINS

- CROSTINI, OR BAGUETTE TO MAKE THEM WITH (ENOUGH TO SERVE WITH DIP STARTER)
- BREADCRUMBS (1 CUP)

VEGETABLES

- BUTTERNUT SQUASH (2 1/2 LBS)
- ONIONS (3 LARGE)
- 'POULTRY BLEND' MIXED HERBS PACK (SAGE, THYME, ROSEMARY, PARSLEY)
- MUSHROOM MEDLEY (300 GRAMS)
- LACINATO KALE (1 BUNCH)
- GARLIC (1 CLOVE)

SPICES & CONDIMENTS

- TAHINI (1/4 CUP)
- OLIVE OIL (1/2 CUP PLUS GENERAL USE)
- MAPLE SYRUP (4 TBSP)
- MAYONNAISE (3 TBSP)
- DIJON MUSTARD (1 TBSP)
- ANCHOVY PASTE (1 TSP, OPTIONAL, BUT YUMMY)
- WHITE WINE VINEGAR (3 TBSP)
- KEY LIME CURD (1 JAR, SERVE TO TASTE)
- BLUEBERRY PRESERVES (1 JAR, SERVE TO TASTE)
- GROUND PEPPER (GENERAL USE)
- SALT (GENERAL USE)

OTHER

- CEDAR SPRIG, DRIED (1)
- PINE NEEDLE SPRIGS, FRESH (A FEW)
- BOURBON (4 OZ + 2 TBSP)
- COINTREAU (2 OZ)
- LIQUID SMOKE (TO TASTE)
- MERINGUE NESTS (1 PKG) OR MAKE YOUR OWN (4 EGG WHITES, 1 CUP SUGAR, 1 TSP WHITE WINE VINEGAR, 1/2 TSP CREAM OF TARTAR, 1/2 TSP VANILLA EXTRACT)

SET THE SCENE (AND YOUR TABLE)



You're worth the good dishes!

As you prepare your table for this special meal, remember that your best dishes and linens need not be reserved for guests!

You didn't fill out a wedding registry, or inherit that beautiful dishware set from your godmother for these items to stay in the back of a cupboard expensively acting as dishware for dust bunnies.

Beauty matters, and doesn't necessarily equal 'costly' either.

Reading this, you already 'know' which items in your house fit the bill here. Or, maybe reading this sparks a feeling from a time you both ate at a particular restaurant you loved or visited a place you made incredible memories in. Work with that feeling.

What were the elements of the location's setting that you can (re)create in your own home? Can you find or buy even one of those key items as an invitation to bring the spirit of that experience home with you? Think about this through all the senses - is there a playlist to evoke the soundscape of this memory? Is there specific lighting that brings you back there? How are you seated: facing one another, or side by side? What are you both wearing? Aside from your food, what other smells are around - did you wear a different scent or use a different shampoo during this time? Bring those scent memories back and travel through time.

Vessels are time capsules and platforms for connection.

What you eat FROM has the ability to enhance what you eat, because of the ways in which your senses engage, and memories awake to create meaning. We are creatures of meaning, and our dishware and table decor vessels are an often overlooked and underappreciated arena in which to play, get intentional, remember, or connect. Did you purchase any kind of vessel while on vacation together? Find a place for it on your table, either as decor, or a dish to serve some element from. This is an opportunity to get playful with your place settings and enjoy your meal on a deeper level.



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Cooking is like
love.

It should be
entered into
with abandon
or not at all.

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HARRIET VAN HORNE