

FALL+WINTER 2010

Savor

WineCountry

**WANT TO GET A
LITTLE DIRTY?**

Gather eggs, tend
veggies, pick grapes

Warmed By the Fire

Harvest's frenzy peaks with richer dishes, bolder wines

CHRIS HANNA

Winery head shares her
family Thanksgiving

HAPPENING NAPA

With hot food-and-wine
spots, the town finally finds
its groove as a stepping-out
destination





At Charlie and Lisa Palmer's 30-acre estate in the Dry Creek Valley outside Healdsburg, all roads lead to the kitchen.

Because the busy entrepreneur spends most days on the road overseeing his coast-to-coast restaurant empire, Palmer can't wait to return to his Wine Country home, where he's never too tired to whip up an easy but elegant weekend meal for family and friends.

In the fall, when the slanted sunlight infuses the vineyard and olive trees with a golden glow, the couple invite friends and family to dine al fresco on their patio overlooking the pool. Palmer will sink his big, beefy hands into some homemade pizza dough, then grill up crisp, sizzling pies in his custom outdoor oven. For these New York natives, pizza is a Friday night ritual and comfort food rolled into one.

"As fast as you can make it, it gets eaten," says Palmer, who likes to throw on toppings like smoked duck and pheasant, smoked salmon and crème fraîche. "It's continual, until everybody is full."

The down-to-earth farm boy from upstate New York has come a long way since baking pies in his high school home economics class (he took the course on a dare) and washing dishes at the Colgate Inn in Hamilton, N.Y.

In 1979, Palmer graduated from the prestigious Culinary Institute of America at Hyde Park, N.Y., and worked at several renowned restaurants in France and New York. At age 28, he opened Aureole on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, his first of 13 high-end restaurants now stretching from Washington, D.C., to Las Vegas.

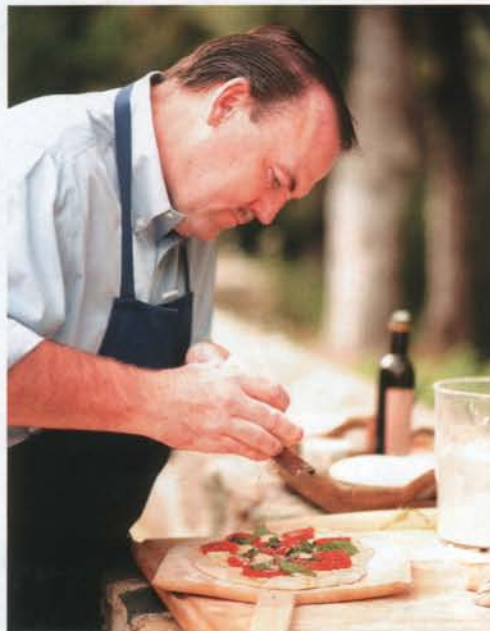
When Palmer opened the Dry Creek Kitchen on Healdsburg's Plaza in 2001, there was no doubt that the nationally known chef had given a big boost to the once-sleepy town of prune farmers as it evolved into a food-and-wine mecca.

Even before that landmark date, as Charlie and Lisa were starting a family of four sons (Courtland, 16, Randall, 15, and twins Reed and Eric, 12) in their tiny apartment off Central Park East, they were plotting a 10-year plan to move to Northern California, one of their favorite vacation spots.

After building a modern, comfortable home in the Dry Creek Valley, the family moved west in 2004, and Palmer wasted no time in planting a garden to help his home-cooked meals shine.

Like other homes in bucolic Wine Country, the Palmer residence blurs the line between indoors and out, with lots of big windows and limestone

Dry Creek Kitchen proprietor Charlie Palmer and his wife, Lisa, kick back by firing up the outdoor oven and preparing an elegant fall feast



Outdoor SIZZLE

STORIES BY DIANE PETERSON • PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHARLIE GESELL

Charlie and Lisa Palmer's Flavors of Fall Feast



Fire Roasted Shrimp with Walnut Pesto is served garnished with sprigs of fresh basil.

Fire Roasted Shrimp with Walnut Pesto

Serves 6 as an appetizer

For walnut pesto

- 2 cloves garlic, whole
- 2 cups fresh basil leaves
- ¼ cup walnuts, toasted
- 2 tablespoons capers
- ¾ cup olive oil
- 1 lemon, zested
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- Salt and pepper

For shrimp

- 18 large shrimp (U-16/18 size), peeled, deveined, tail on
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Splash chili oil
- 6 fresh basil sprigs for garnish

For the pesto: Combine garlic, basil, toasted walnuts and capers in a food processor. Pulsate until mixture is coarsely chopped. With motor running, slowly pour in enough olive oil to bind the mixture. Process until fully incorporated. Remove pesto from food processor bowl into a large mixing bowl. Stir in lemon zest. Add Parmesan cheese, season with salt and pepper to taste, and mix thoroughly.

For the shrimp: In a medium sized bowl, toss shrimp in olive oil and spicy chili oil. Place a cast-iron pan in a wood-fired oven and preheat until smoking hot. Place shrimp in the hot pan and place in wood-fired oven. Continuously toss shrimp every minute for 4 minutes until shrimp are cooked. (Note: If using a conventional oven, cook 6-8 minutes at 500 degrees).

To serve, carefully remove the cast iron pan from the oven and toss the shrimp with walnut pesto. Arrange on a platter and garnish with fresh basil sprigs.

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floors that flow from the patio into the main house.

On the back patio, Palmer designed a simple, long dining table from a single slab of redwood. Table accessories are rustic and natural. A large wooden basket in the middle of the table holds seasonal fruit such as figs and pears.

Rustic copper pots are set out, perfect for serving oysters on the half shell over ice. Casserole dishes set into straw baskets slide easily from oven to table.

Most of the couple's tabletop acces-

sories, including the handcrafted Jars dishes made in Provence, come from Lime Stone, a boutique they own in the Healdsburg Hotel that carries everything from candles and home fragrance to lighting and furniture.

"It's about being around the table, and it has things we've found for the restaurants, like the basalt pots and steak knives," says Lisa, who runs the shop. "It's my own little flea market. I go away and discover things and bring them back."

At the Palmer residence, guests are greeted by the family dog, Brock, and ush-

ered to the rear patio, where Lisa sets up a small bar and an array of soft wraps and throws, in case the evening turns chilly.

There is plenty of wine to suit everyone's tastes, from crisp Iron Horse Vineyards sparklers to the velvety Pinot Noirs that Palmer learned to love in Burgundy.

"We're a big Pinot house," Palmer says. "But we have other things around."

In 2006, Palmer's first crop of home-grown Pinot Noir came in and he launched his first vintage of Charlie Clay

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Citrus Spiced Roasted Pork Loin with Market Fresh Wild Onions and Carrots comes out of the Palmers' wood-fired oven done to perfection.

Citrus Spiced Roasted Pork Loin with Market Fresh Wild Onions and Carrots

Serves 6

For roasted vegetables

- 6 bulb onions with greens, 2-inches round, cut in half
- 8 to 10 carrots (1-inch-diameter mature, market fresh carrots with greens), peeled, whole
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- 4 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar

For pork loin

- 4-pound pork loin (fat on)
- 1 lemon, whole
- Salt and pepper
- 4 sprigs rosemary

For garnish

- 4 sprigs fresh rosemary
- Splash olive oil

In a large bowl, combine the halved onion bulbs and carrots with olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Toss with white balsamic vinegar. Once thoroughly combined, layer the vegetables in the bottom of a roasting pan. Set aside.

For the pork loin, score the fat by lightly pressing a sharp knife into the fat

layer in diagonal parallel lines from both directions, forming diamond-shaped markings. Do not slice into the pork loin beyond the fat layer. Squeeze lemon juice over fat. Sprinkle salt and pepper over entire pork loin and cover the fat layer with rosemary sprigs.

Next, tie the pork loin with 6 ties of butcher's string, evenly spaced over loin. Set roast on top of seasoned vegetables in roasting pan. Place pork loin in wood-fired oven and cook for 35-40 minutes or until desired temperature. If pork begins to brown, make a tent with aluminum foil to cover loin. (Note: If using a conventional oven, cook for 55-70 minutes at 450 degrees).

Remove the roasting pan from the wood-fired oven and remove pork loin from pan. Place pork loin on a cutting board to rest for 15 minutes (keep vegetables in a warm place until ready to serve). Remove strings and slice the roast into ½-inch slices. Place slices on a large platter and arrange roasted vegetables around pork loin. Garnish with fresh sprigs of rosemary and drizzle with extra virgin olive oil.

Brick Oven Roasted Ratatouille

Serves 6

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 medium onion, medium dice
- 1 medium butternut squash, peeled, ¾-inch dice, blanched
- 2 medium yellow zucchini, ¾-inch dice
- 2 medium green zucchini, ¾-inch dice
- 1 medium eggplant, ¾-inch dice
- 1 cup tomato puree (fresh tomatoes or canned San Marzano)
- 1 teaspoon fresh rosemary, chopped
- 1 tablespoon parsley, chopped
- Salt and pepper
- ¼ cup Parmesan cheese, grated

Preheat pizza oven (or conventional oven to 500 degrees).

Heat canola oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the garlic and onion and cook, stirring often, until softened. Add the diced butternut squash, zucchini and eggplant to the pan in 2-3 batches and cook each batch for 10 minutes, stirring often (add additional oil to the pan if necessary to lightly coat the vegetables). Add the tomato puree, rosemary and parsley to the pan to heat through, season with salt and pepper to taste.

Transfer mixture to a large ovenproof casserole and mix thoroughly. Top with grated Parmesan. Place casserole in pizza oven and bake until golden brown, approximately 5 to 8 minutes.



Brick Oven Roasted Ratatouille



Lisa Palmer pours a glass of Lime Stone Sauvignon Blanc as she prepares for a fall party at her Dry Creek Valley home.

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wines, blended with the help of winemaker Clay Mauritson of Mauritson Family Vineyards. Palmer also had a Lime Stone Sauvignon Blanc made for Lisa, who is partial to that crisp and refreshing white wine.

After his guests have their fill of pizza, Palmer serves up a rustic entrée from the outdoor oven, such as a pork roast with autumn vegetables, and throws together a salad and cheese course.

With more wine and more conversation comes the *pièce de résistance*: homemade cobbler that Palmer has crafted from fresh pears and dried cherries.

After the sun sets, the party will move indoors to the formal dining room, romantically lit with candles and candelabra, or gather around the outdoor fireplace, a massive edifice soaring nearly two stories.

For this big, American chef with a towering reputation, all roads lead to hearth and home.♦