

A Small Luncheon with Friends

Three things you probably don't know about me. 1) I have Royal Worcester soup bowls I love and have never used (after hunting for them for 10 years!); 2) I have always wanted to host a sophisticated lunch with friends; 3) I am design-challenged. I can pick out tile and do a massive restoration project, but when it comes to decorating I can honestly say it is not my strong suit. Low confidence in this arena.



I decided to put all those things together and organized a lunch with friends who are superb at design and whose opinion I value. The deal was I would provide lunch if they would help me with my design obstacles.

Soup was a definite item on the menu as I was excited to use these beautiful footed cream soup bowls and saucer. Since it is January and many people are watching their nutrition, I decided on a simple broccoli soup~~one without cream. Plus I was able to use fresh broccoli from the garden!



I've never made cheese crisps before (very easy) and it was a nice accompaniment to the soup. All you do is shred cheese in a 2" pile on a cookie sheet (lined with parchment paper) and bake for 18 minutes.





The entree would be my Pomegranate, Kale and Wild Rice Salad with walnuts and feta (see previous post [here](#)), but I also added baked chicken and avocado.



Since we are in the height of our citrus season here, I thought it might be fun to attempt a new cake~~something small but reasonably healthy? It was timely to receive a blog post from Kitchen McCabe with a recipe for a Candied Orange Olive Oil Cake + Cornmeal and Rum.



This was my inspiration...however, mine didn't look this good! I made the soup the night before so it was easy to heat up just before my guests arrived. However, the cake is supposed to be made on the same day you serve it. A rather big undertaking the morning of the lunch.

Thankfully, the table was set the night before and the centerpiece was two simple glass rectangular vases with yellow and white flowers. Placemats vs. a tablecloth seemed more appropriate for lunch too.





The cake preparation took longer than expected. So naturally, I was running a bit late~~hence some of the blurry photos! After looking at the inspiration photo, I think I cut my

oranges too thin before I candied them. As a result they didn't stick as well to the cake. Also, the recipe called for a 6" pan but 3" deep. Mine are only 2" deep, therefore I made 3 layers.



In spite of it not looking as GREAT as the one from Kitchen McCabe, it was still pretty and was very tasty. Kumquats and mint are from our garden.



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In addition to a delicious lunch, my friends gave me several constructive ideas on how I can improve the dining room and family room. At first I thought they would tell me to throw everything out and start again, but with they were very complimentary and helpful. Their suggestions were affordable and reasonable and I am excited to make some changes.

I don't know why it has taken me so long to have a luncheon with friends in my dining room. Typically we would go to a restaurant, but having guests in your home, with food you have lovingly made, is the best gift you can give yourself.

It was so much fun I can't wait to plan another one! Recipe links below.

Mary

Creamy Broccoli Soup with Cheddar Crisps (Note: I seasoned my soup with Better than Bouillon Chicken in lieu of more salt)
<https://www.foodandwine.com/recipes/creamy-broccoli-soup-with-cheddar-crisps>

Pomegranate, Kale, and Wild Rice Salad with Walnuts and Feta (I added cooked chicken and avocado)
<https://pinchofyum.com/pomegranate-kale-wild-rice-salad-with-walnuts-feta>

Candied Orange Olive Oil Cake and Cornmeal & Rum

<https://www.thekitchenmccabe.com/2019/01/13/candied-orange-olive-oil-cake-cornmeal-rum/>

Beverages: water, Miraval Cotes de Provence Rose, coffee/espresso