

From the Chef's Kitchen: Sarah Stegner



Sarah Stegner

What do you get when you mix quality ingredients with an award winning chef? Remarkable dishes, guaranteed to satisfy even the most critical taste buds! Meet the talented and passionate Chef Sarah Stegner. Sarah is the Co-Chef/Owner of both Prairie Grass Café and Prairie Fire. With two thriving restaurants under her belt, an overflowing list of awards and accomplishments, we were curious, what is Sarah's secret ingredient to her success?

First impression and what may be most endearing about the woman who's done it all, is her humbled perception of her extraordinary success. Perhaps the best way to explain is by sharing one of her more "telling" answers during our interview. When we asked Sarah to share with us the most memorable experience in her career, one would assume an answer like winning the James Beard award not once, but twice. However, Sarah's passion for food runs much deeper than a noble award. Instead



Sarah begins to describe the best memories are the ones created in the kitchen every day. It's the triumph she feels when she receives fresh produce and is able to create a delicious way to serve it, or the way the team comes together. "It's what the business is built on; the product, the season and the team."

Sarah grew up in a family devoted to food. Her Grandmother was a caterer and her grandfather was a backyard vegetable gardener. Sarah also often spent time cooking with her mother, whose homemade pie recipes she still uses at her restaurants today. Surrounded by food, it's surprising it took Sarah some time before she realized she wanted to be a chef. Before graduating from Dumas Pere Cooking School, Sarah studied classical guitar at Northwestern University. Sarah explains, "I didn't really understand what the profession was about...but the love for food and good quality products has always been there."

Good quality products seem to be at the center of Sarah's professional world, with Nielsen-Massey Vanillas being one of them. We asked Sarah when she was first introduced to the product, and she responded in a manner that almost makes you second guess the question. "As long as I can remember...haven't they been around forever?" Sarah goes on to explain her cooking philosophy, which is to "keep it simple" and

to highlight the ingredients. For example, Sarah uses Nielsen-Massey Madagascar Bourbon Pure Vanilla in her homemade ice cream and pie fillings. Explaining, "I use Nielsen-Massey Vanillas because of the quality and brand recognition. We have used it for years...we know them."

Sarah is without a doubt passionate about her food products and ingredients. Co-Chair of the Board of Directors of Chicago Green City Market, she stresses the importance of understanding where your food comes from and to get the best quality products you can, which is what often times inspires her most fabulous dishes. She says, "Our food is based on seasonality and the quality of products. For example we have been waiting for the gorgeous weather to come in and now we have amazing strawberries that will be served with vanilla whipped cream."

Sarah truly is a chef icon, and our hope is that she continues to create outstanding meals for years to come. In closing, we asked Sarah if she had a chef tip to share with our readers. "Keep it simple, don't use too many ingredients and highlight what you're using." When asked to describe Nielsen-Massey Vanillas in one word she said, "Delicious." ♦

Did You See?

Nielsen-Massey Vanillas was in the May/June 2011 magazine issue, *Cooking with Paula Dean*. Nielsen-Massey Madagascar Bourbon Pure Vanilla Bean Paste was used in recipe testing.



Vanilla Vine is a production of Nielsen-Massey Vanillas
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Issue 2 2011

www.NielsenMassey.com

7/11

Vanilla Vine

Nielsen-Massey Vanillas

Purveyors of Vanilla & Fine Flavorings

Madagascar Bourbon Pure Vanilla Bean Paste: A soft™ Silver Finalist by NASFT

For the third year in a row, Nielsen-Massey Vanillas has had the privilege of being named a 2011 National Association for the Specialty Food Trade (NASFT) soft™ Silver Finalist. Their Madagascar Bourbon Pure Vanilla Bean Paste is listed in the "Baked Goods, Baking Ingredient or Cereal" category with only four other products.

Since 1991, Nielsen-Massey Vanillas has been honored with one Gold and four Silver soft™ Awards. An impressive accomplishment, especially this year with a record 1,657 entries across 31 award categories. The responsibility of judging this highly coveted award falls in the laps of the specialty food industry's top professionals, who spent five full days tasting and evaluating all entries. The products are judged on six major characteristics: taste, quality, innovativeness, ingredient profile, merchandisability and best in class. The 110 Silver Finalists have already been chosen and the winners will be announced on July 11, 2011, at the Summer Fancy Food Show in Washington, D.C.

"Soft" which stands for "Specialty Outstanding Food Innovation" is celebrating its 39th annual awards ceremony this year.



Cat Cora, celebrity chef, will be the keynote speaker and help present the soft™ Gold Winners of 2011.



What makes Nielsen-Massey Madagascar Bourbon Pure Vanilla Bean Paste so fabulous?

It is made with our famous Madagascar Bourbon Pure Vanilla Extract with the addition of real seeds from the vanilla pod, combined in a slightly viscous base. It is used whenever the distinctive look of vanilla seeds is desired. Pure Vanilla Bean Paste is used measure for measure the same as Pure Vanilla Extract or to replace whole vanilla beans in recipes.

Madagascar Bourbon Pure Vanilla is recognized as one of the premier vanillas of the world. Grown on the island of Madagascar, off of the east coast of Africa, Madagascar Bourbon vanilla beans are cultivated and cured by methods that have been used for centuries. This vanilla is noted for its creamy, sweet, full flavor with velvety after tones. ♦

Where to Find Us

Upcoming Shows and Events

All Things Baking
October 2-4, 2011
Schaumburg, IL

PLMA Show
November 13-15, 2011
Chicago, IL

57th Summer
Fancy Food Show
July 10-12, 2011
Washington, DC
Booth #430

NICRA
November 2-5, 2011
Jacksonville, FL
Booth # 209

Food Ingredients Europe
November 29 to
December 1, 2011
Paris, France

Did You Know?

Nielsen-Massey Vanillas sponsored The Fort's James Beard House Dinner. The dinner took place in New York City, Wednesday, June 22, 2011.

Blueberry Vanilla Booze-Sicle makes 12 popsicles

Ingredients

2 cups fresh blueberries, rinsed
½ cup simple syrup
1 cup Greek yogurt
½ cup heavy cream
2 tablespoons Wild Blossom Sweet Desire Mead
½ teaspoon of Nielsen-Massey Madagascar Bourbon Pure Vanilla Extract
pinch of cinnamon

Directions

In a large saucepan, add blueberries and simple syrup, cook and stir over medium heat until blueberry skins pop open, about 3 minutes. Be careful not to over cook blueberries, they should not break down. Cool blueberry mixture. In a medium bowl, whisk yogurt, cream, Mead, Madagascar Bourbon Pure Vanilla Extract and cinnamon. Add cooled blueberry mixture, stir to combine. Pour into popsicle molds, place in freezer until partially set. Remove from freezer and insert popsicle sticks, return to freezer until fully set.

Contributed by Sarah Stegner

Lemon—The Fruit for Every Occasion

Whether you serve it as a wedge to squeeze over crispy calamari or as a zest in a tasty entrée, lemons are enjoyed worldwide for their bright color and ability to complement just about any dish. For that perfect summertime taste consumer's desire this time of year, use Nielsen-Massey Pure Lemon Extract to add a fresh twist to your favorite foods. See our product description below for some tasty ideas!

Nielsen-Massey Pure Lemon Extract

Made with the highest quality ingredients for the best flavor, Nielsen-Massey Pure Lemon Extract has a special affinity for vanilla, orange, almond, and many other flavors. It's natural with fish, pork and chicken and it marries well with a variety of herbs such as parsley, rosemary, thyme, garlic and basil. It also blends well with beverages, vegetables, cakes, cookies and bars, gelatin and frozen desserts, jams and jellies, fillings and frostings, pies and pastries.

Lemony Sweet Treats

The versatility of this fruit has made it a long time favorite flavor. However, more recently noticeable is its popularity among sweet treats. According to Specialty Food, "Many manufacturers agree that the addition of citrus—either in chocolate or hard confections—adds a refreshing element that can cut a product's sugary sweetness, especially when the citrus has sour or tart notes." Sensational Sweets Managing Partner, Virginia Feitner states, "Citrus is both refreshing and palate cleansing." The company makes Lemon and Lemon Walnut Fudge, which is great for people who find fudge to be too sweet. She explains, "The contrast of sweet and tart from the lemon is a great balance."

The Yellow Wonder

Many are aware of the vitamin C power an orange contains, but surprisingly the lemon is a strong competitor. "One lemon contains a full day's supply of ascorbic acid, or vitamin C, but that's the whole fruit; the juice holds about a third" (Cooking Light). A common and easy way to consume a lemon's healthful content is

simply by drinking it with water. In fact, some recommend drinking lemon-water first thing in the morning. Claiming it to have a large number of benefits such as, helping digestion, the appearance of skin, weight loss, blood pressure and more. ❖



Orange—The Most Popular Fruit

Orange, a fruit so popular they named a color after it and gave its juice a nickname. For countless years, "OJ" has played a huge role at breakfast in many households. Its delightful and refreshing citrus taste isn't the only reason for its popularity. Packed full of vitamin C, the orange has long been thought to help boost the body's immune system and help aid in the fight against the common cold.

Orange Flavor

Orange flavored vitamins, jell-o, candies, fruit snacks and beverages of every sort, you name it—it has been created. It's obvious that orange is a crowd pleasing flavor, which is an impressive accomplishment for a healthful fruit!

Beyond a great flavor for grocery shelves, orange is also a wonderful additive to so many dishes. Like orange-flavored fried chicken with rice, a meal that has become increasingly popular in recent years. And a traditional favorite is orange flavored sherbet. For more delicious pairing ideas please see our product description.



Nielsen-Massey Pure Orange Extract

People of all cultures enjoy the bright, sunny flavor of orange. Nielsen-Massey Pure Orange Extract is made from the finest quality oranges, and complements a range of foods and flavors, including vanilla, chocolate, strawberries, pineapples, kumquats and other fruits. Try it in rice, chicken and fish dishes, even jams and marmalades. Add an orange burst to fruit pies, salad dressings, cream and custard deserts, and of course ice cream and sherbets, gelatin desserts, cakes, cookies and beverages.

Fun Orange Facts

- Oranges are high in antioxidants which are believed to prevent the appearance of aging and some diseases.
- Orange is the world's third favorite flavor, next to chocolate and vanilla.
- One orange contains about 130% of the daily vitamin C requirement.

Facts from Sunkist.com

Lemon-Bleu Stuffed Tomatoes

Ingredients

2 tablespoons dry white wine
2 teaspoons finely minced shallots
8 ounces cream cheese, softened
1 teaspoon finely minced garlic
½ teaspoon Nielsen-Massey Pure Lemon Extract
¼ teaspoon white pepper
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional)
5 ounces blue cheese crumbles
2 pints cherry tomatoes (approximately 48)

Directions

Combine the wine and shallots in a small bowl. Let stand. Combine the cream cheese, garlic, lemon extract, white pepper, cayenne pepper and shallot mixture in a mixing bowl. Beat until well blended using an electric mixer. Fold in the blue cheese with a wooden spoon. Chill, covered, in the refrigerator. Rinse the cherry tomatoes. Remove the tops by slicing a small amount off each tomato. Scoop out the seeds with a small measuring spoon. Cut a small slice off the bottom of each tomato so it will stand upright when plated. Fill each tomato with ½ tablespoon of the chilled Lemon-Bleu Stuffing, using a pastry bag or spoon. Makes 24 tablespoons of stuffing for 48 tomatoes

Note: You may use the stuffing as a gourmet appetizer on toasted slices of a French baguette topped with small cooked shrimp.

Recipe from A Century of Flavor

Tropical Fruit Parfait and Vanilla Pastry Cream

Ingredients

8 ounces cream cheese, softened
3 tablespoons confectioners' sugar, sifted
2 to 4 tablespoons whole milk
½ teaspoon Nielsen-Massey Pure Orange Extract
4 fruit choices such as finely diced mango, pineapple, grapes, strawberries or whole blueberries

Directions

Combine the cream cheese, confectioners' sugar, milk and orange extract in a mixing bowl and beat using an electric mixer. Alternate layers of the cream cheese mixture and the fruit in a trifle dish or parfait glasses by either spooning the cream cheese mixture or piping with a pastry bag. Serves 6

Note: Approximately ¼ cup of each fruit choice allows for 2 tablespoons per layer in parfait glasses.

Vanilla Pastry Cream

½ cup sugar
1 egg
3 egg yolks
1 teaspoon Nielsen-Massey Madagascar Bourbon Pure Vanilla Extract
2 ½ tablespoons cornstarch
1 ½ cups whole milk
½ cup sugar
2 tablespoons, butter, softened

Whisk ½ cup sugar, the egg, egg yolks, vanilla extract and cornstarch in a bowl. Cook the milk and ½ cup sugar in a saucepan over medium-low heat until foam rises, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat. Temper the eggs with the hot milk mixture, stirring after each addition of the hot milk mixture. Pour the egg mixture into the saucepan. Cook over low heat until the pastry cream reaches 160 degrees and becomes thick, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat and whisk in the butter. Spread over parchment paper to cool. Makes about 1 ½ cups.

Recipe from A Century of Flavor