

John Shaver
JCC Winter Camp 2015
Cooking Together

Today we learned how to balance flavors. We identified five distinct flavor profiles and discussed how they work together to create a delicious dish.

Five Flavor Profiles

FAT

- Creamy, rich and luscious. Soft and silky on the tongue. Mellow and satisfying.
- Ex. butter, olive oil, veg. oil, lard, cheese, nuts and seeds, avocados

ACID

- Sour, tart, and zesty. Sharp on the tongue. Perky and refreshing.
- Ex. citrus fruits: lemon, lime, grapefruit; vinegars; cranberries; tomatoes

SWEET

- Sugary. Very pleasant on the tongue. Soothing and indulgent.
- Ex. sugar; honey; fruits: pomegranates, strawberries, figs, bananas, apples

AROMATICS

- Impart character and quality of flavor. Provides the spirit and style of the dish.
- Ex. herbs: parsley, cilantro, tarragon, basil, dill, thyme, bay leaf, rosemary, mint
spices: pepper, cumin, coriander, cardamom, chilies, paprika, sumac
vegetables: garlic, onions, carrots, celery, fennel, parsnips, asparagus

SALT

- Briny, earthy, pungent. Stinging on the tongue. Alluring and provocative.
- Accentuates and focuses flavor.
- Ex. sea salt, Kosher salt, Fleur de Sel, rock salt, Celtic sea salt, table salt

Cucumber and poppy seed salad *

We tasted each ingredient individually and discovered how they fit into the five flavor profiles.

Fat: sunflower seed oil

Acid: white wine vinegar

Sweet: honey, pomegranate seeds

Aromatics: cilantro, poppy seeds, cucumbers, mild red chiles, freshly ground black pepper

Salt: Kosher salt

Serves 4-6

For the vinaigrette:

½ cup sunflower seed oil

3-4 tbsp white wine vinegar (I like to use champagne vinegar)

2-3 tbsp honey, add more to taste

3-4 tbsp cilantro, coarsely chopped

2 tbsp poppy seeds

2 mild red chiles, thinly sliced

Salt, start with 1-2 teaspoons salt and add more to taste

Freshly ground pepper, a twist or two

1. Combine all ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Allow 10+ minutes for flavors to marry.

For the salad:

1 pomegranate, half of the seeds will do the trick

6 small cucumbers, the short (5-inch) seedless variety preferred

2. Release the pomegranate seeds. Halve the pomegranate along its “belly.” Hold half in one hand with the seeds facing your palm. Over a large bowl with your palm facing up, bash the skin side of the fruit with a wooden spoon. The seeds will magically fall through your fingers and into the bowl.

3. Chop off and discard the ends of the cucumbers. Slice the cucumbers 3/8 inch thick at an attractive angle.

4. Add the cucumbers to the pomegranate bowl and pour in the dressing. Use your hands to gently massage the flavors into the cucumbers. If not serving immediately, you may need to drain some liquid just before serving. Adjust the seasoning, adding more salt and honey if needed. Serve with good, crusty bread to soak up the vinaigrette.

* Recipe inspired by the Ottolenghi Cookbook (2008), Yotam Ottolenghi and Sami Tamimi

Cucumber and Avocado Soup

Fat: avocado, Greek yoghurt, Greek feta, pepita seeds

Acid: lemon, lime

Sweet: just the natural sweetness from the avocado, yoghurt, tarragon and cucumber

Aromatics: tarragon, cucumber

Salt: Kosher salt

Serves 4-6

For the soup:

2 large English cucumbers

1-2 avocado

4 tbsp tarragon, add more to taste

$\frac{3}{4}$ -1 cup yoghurt

Juice of 1-2 lemon and/or lime

Zest on 1-2 lemon and/or lime

Salt, start with 2 teaspoons and add more to taste

1. Combine all ingredients into a food processor and blend until smooth. If too thick, slowly pour in water while processing to achieve desired consistency. Adjust seasoning, adding more salt, tarragon and lemon/lime juice to taste.

2. Garnish with pepitas and feta. This recipe is very flexible and allows for experimentation with ingredient quantities. Serve with good, crusty bread or toasts.

John Shaver's sensitive approach to food and cooking mirrors his enthusiasm for community engagement. He believes that cooking with others can cultivate meaningful connections across boundaries. Sharing a meal is sharing culture and to eat another's food is to experience a piece of their life. Through such exchanges, people learn about each other, fostering equitable relationships and peace.