Invention & Intention

Cooking with Yogini Sarah Trelease

Sample her *sattvic* soup
and make a winter day a little more soulful

By Joelle Hann

When you sample Sarah Trelease's culinary creations *and* take one of her yoga classes, it's like having your yoga and eating it, too. Born into an Italian family on the West Coast, Trelease, an OM Yoga instructor, and her siblings grew up experimenting in the kitchen. "It was how we communicated," says Trelease, 39. After a stint in 1996 as a pie-maker for Baby Jupiter, a New York City restaurant, other jobs flowed in—she worked as a recipe tester and a food stylist and paid her way through yoga school by catering large events. In spite of her talent for creating warm, joyful food, being able to teach yoga takes priority over cooking full-time. "I don't want to lose the joy," says Trelease. "Cooking is like barn-raising. It's a community event."

Fit Yoga spoke to Sarah about intention and invention in cooking, practicing, and teaching one rainy night in her apartment on Ludlow Street in New York City.

Fit Yoga: *Your food is warm and subtle. It balances textures, flavors, and senses—sweet, salty, pungent, etc. One of Patanjali's limbs of ashtanga yoga,* pratyahara, *is often defined as the withdrawal of the senses, but I think that it could also be interpreted as the bal-*

Roasted Potatoes with Truffle Salt

This simple dish relies on the warmth and texture of the roasted potatoes, the pungent smoky taste of the truffle salt (sold at specialty markets), and the cool contrast of the crème fraîche.

Small potatoes like new potatoes or fingerlings (3-5 small potatoes per person)
Olive oil to coat
Sea salt and pepper, to taste
Crème fraîche, sour cream, or tofu sour cream
Truffle salt
Chives for garnish

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Rinse and cut the potatoes into halves or wedges. Rinse again, and pat dry.
3. Toss with the olive oil and a pinch of sea salt and pepper. Be sparing with the salt, as you'll be salting the potatoes again when they are cooked. If you are concerned about over-salting, skip this first salting.
4. Spread potatoes on a baking sheet or roasting pan with the cut sides up. Roast until the potatoes are soft inside and the sides are golden brown (about 45 minutes).
5. Just before serving, arrange potatoes either on separate plates or a serving dish, depending on the occasion. Add a dollop of crème fraîche on top; and sprinkle the truffle salt and chopped chives on top.

Preparation time: 1 hour

of the senses. If you're aware of being rajasic [active, stimulated] *or* tamasic [slow, dull], *you'll try to attain a more* sattvic [energetically balanced] *state. Is there a connection between your yoga practice and the way you cook?*

ST: There should be—that sounds really good! I'm largely a person who works intuitively. I don't know why I'm doing what I'm doing. I'm completely ill-informed. What happens is because I'm interested in texture—life as fabric and food as part of that. I cook seasonally because I shop seasonally. When I think about what I want it's, 'What texture do I want in my mouth right now? What does today ask for?' Then, I add the other things. It just comes. That everything has its own quality—and is a part of our ongoing transformation—is completely interesting to me.

FY: *And you see that in your yoga, too?*

ST: Yes, as a teacher I'm cooking up the meal. The

Continued on page 88

Peace Broth

Tastes great either hot or cold. If hot, serve immediately; that's when the color is most vibrant.

2-3 medium leeks
2 teaspoons butter
2 teaspoons olive oil
1 small potato, peeled and cubed in ½-inch pieces
3 cups vegetable stock
1 pound spinach (fresh or frozen)
1 cup coconut milk
¾ cup Greek-style yogurt (or 1½ cups regular yogurt strained through a cheesecloth)
Chili powder (or your favorite hot sauce or curry powder), to taste
Zest of one lemon
Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Trim the leeks down to the whites. Slice each stalk in half, then in ¼-inch half circles. Wash well. If using fresh spinach, wash thoroughly and trim the stems.

2. Heat butter and olive oil in a large saucepan, add the leeks and a pinch of salt, and sauté until very soft (about 10 minutes). Stir often, being careful not to burn. Add the potato, and stir to coat. Add the vegetable stock and simmer until potatoes are soft. Add the spinach.

3. Bring the mixture to a simmer, and add the coconut milk. Simmer 10 minutes more. Remove soup from heat, let cool enough to purée safely in a blender or food processor.

4. In the meantime, mix the yogurt with the chili powder. Set aside.

5. Pour the puréed stock back into the pan, and add the lemon zest and salt and pepper, to taste. If necessary, thin with water or stock, or, to thicken, cook a little longer.

6. Serve with a dollop or swirl of the chili yogurt.

Yield: 3 servings as a main course, or 4-5 as a starter
Preparation time: 45 minutes

Honey and Chai Poached Pears

All the ingredients here can be found at a good Indian market, specialty market, or upscale supermarket; and they will last for a long time. Don't worry if you have trouble finding any of them; the idea is to have layers of flavors, but the recipe is forgiving.

The pears can be made a day ahead of time and stored in their liquid. Serve them warm or chilled.

FOR THE PEARS

4-6 firm pears
1 bottle of sweet white wine, such as Gewürztraminer
4 cups water (or enough to cover the pears in the pan)
⅓ cup honey
Zest of ½ orange cut into thin strips

SPICE MIXTURE

¼ whole vanilla bean (sliced down the middle)
1 tablespoon cardamom pods (whole)
1 tablespoon (or slightly less) allspice seeds (whole)
2 sticks of cinnamon
1 finger-sized piece of dried whole ginger root (or fresh, 2-finger sized)
½ teaspoon cloves (whole)
Small handful of star anise (4-6 whole stars)
1 small handful dried rose petals

FOR THE SAUCE

1 cup good plain or vanilla yogurt
4 tablespoons honey
¼ cup chopped pistachios

1. Combine wine, water, ⅓ cup honey, orange zest strips, and all the dried spices—except the rose petals—in a large, heavy-bottomed pot.

2. Peel pears, and core them from the bottom; leave the stem on. Place pears in the liquid, so they are fully covered. (The liquid will evaporate; that's OK.)

3. Simmer for about an hour or until the liquid begins to slightly thicken. Add half the rose petals, and simmer for another few minutes. Remove the pears from the heat, and let cool.

4. Put a dollop of yogurt on each plate, and swirl in a little of the honey. Place each pear, upright, next to the yogurt. Drip a little of the honey on the pears, and sprinkle with chopped pistachios.

5. Garnish with rose petals and orange-zest strips.

Yield: 4-6 servings
Preparation time: 1½ hours

Yoga Crossword

Continued from page 61

Cook/Sarah Trelease

Continued from page 55

recipes have been handed down but I have to cook it up fresh and new. Every teacher, every student is cooking it up fresh. I like that. When I enter a class, I might have a really detailed plan or I might not have any idea at all. But there's always going to be an element of, 'What does the room want right now?' What are the restrictions? It's about reading the energy of the room.

FY: *That seems connected to intention. You're present whether you're combining asanas or flavors and textures. What's the story behind your Peace Broth?*

ST: There used to be a Chinese restaurant in Greenwich Village where I'd go whenever I felt cold or lonely. The restaurant closed, and I mourned the loss of my favorite spinach soup called "Peace Broth." Then, one wet day in Seattle, stranded by cancelled flights, I returned to a friend's house, and we spent the afternoon painting and making a new version of the soup. I didn't know what was in it, so my friend Sarah said, 'Let's just start with a potato and a leek, and then we'll add spinach, and what about some coconut milk? That's how it became Peace Broth.

FY: *It started with an idea and a soulful memory. You explored your way into a new soup.*

ST: That moment with Sarah was a magical one. That's why the soup took on something more meaningful to me. The restaurant was just the beginning.

Sarah Trelease shares three of her favorite recipes, Peace Broth, Roast Potatoes with Truffle Salt, and Honey and Chai Poached Pears.

The soup, rich in iron, calcium, and phytochemicals to keep eyes and memory healthy, is dense and fortifying, while the roasted potatoes are earthy, salty, and grounding. The finishing pears—a healthy dessert with plenty of potassium and dietary fiber—add notes of soft, spicy sweetness with the crunch of pistachios. It's a well-rounded, bright, vegetarian meal for dark mid-winter months.

Joelle Hann is a poet, editor, and freelance writer. She teaches yoga in Brooklyn, New York.

A Day in the Life

Continued from page 60

"I love my hometown," Johnson says. "It's soulful and romantic and full of paradoxes that stir the imagination."

Here is an example of a typical day in his life:

9am: Wake-up, shower, and use neti pot.

9:30-10am: Eat fruit and cereal with soymilk.

10am-noon: Make cup of Yogi Throat Comfort Tea. Practice singing and asana. Create theme and sequencing for evening class.

noon-2pm: Yoga studio and music-selection tasks

2:00-2:15pm: Drive from mid-city to uptown.

2:15-3:15pm: Lunch at Whole Foods: vegetable soup and a salad

3:30-4:30pm: Meet with Wild Lotus office staff.

4:30-5:45pm: Continue preparation for evening's class and kirtan, reviewing themes, asanas, music, and recording equipment for Alive Yoga.

5:45-6pm: Greet students.

6:00-7:30pm: Teach vigorous vinyasa class including storytelling, innovative sequencing, readings, chanting, and music mix.

7:30-8pm: Set up P.A. system for kirtan.

8:00-9:30pm: Kirtan concert with Sean and The Wild Lotus Band

9:30-10pm: Call in and pick up order of Veggie Pad Thai from The Basil Leaf restaurant on the way home.

10pm-midnight: Eat, relax, and catch up on the day's events with wife Connie and dog Lance.

12:15am: Wash up, use neti pot.

12:15-1am: Meditation

1am: Bedtime

For more on Sean Johnson, visit *www.wildlotusyoga.com*