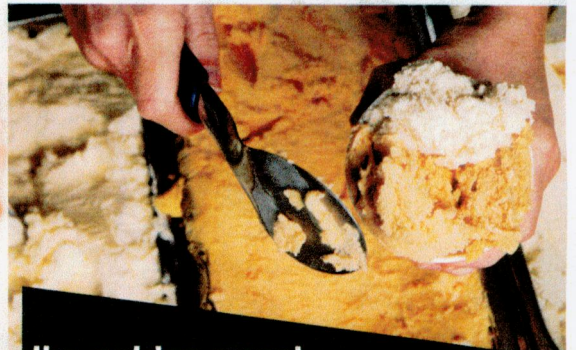


If the thought of wassail gets you singing and chestnuts roasting over an open fire make you misty-eyed with nostalgia, it might be time to explore some new flavors.



the golden angel

At Lon Lane's Inspired Occasions (816-444-8372), the Golden Angel combines ginger, mango and apricot nectar with orange juice for a concoction that's even better in a glass than on top of a tree. "This just might be the perfect drink for a holiday brunch—light and delicious," Lane notes. Here's how he does it:

- Put crushed ice in a martini shaker and add:
- 3 oz gingered orange juice (see recipe below)
- 1 oz Skyy ginger vodka

Shake and strain into a martini glass, and top with Prosecco or Champagne. Garnish with a slice of star fruit, mango or orange.

Gingered Orange Juice

- ½ gallon orange juice
- 5 cups apricot nectar
- 3 cups Mango Mania by Jette Tea
- ½ cup fresh ginger juice

Note: To make ginger juice, finely chop fresh ginger in a food processor then put in a strainer and squeeze out the juice. Recipe yields 1 gallon.

Times are changing and taking the classics with them. This year, for example, Blue Pot Catering's Mark Juhnke (816-916-0169) is swapping out figgy pudding for beef tenderloin with an *agrodolce* of raisins, grapes and fennel seeds (above left). "It's important to look for sustainable, locally grown foods," the chef notes. "The flavors are brighter and fresher."

Jo Marie Scaglia, owner of The Mixx (4855 Main St. and 1347 Main St.), concurs: "We work with local farmers, and we use what they grow. Our flavor combinations and menus are, in part, decided by what's available."

Scaglia's Autumn Squash Salad, for example (above, top right), mixes roasted butternut squash, wild rice, dried cranberries, candied pecans and flat-leaf Italian parsley with a honey-sage vinaigrette. And, featuring fresh roasted turkey, cranberry-apple chutney, mayo and field greens on a Farm to Market ciabatta roll, The Mixx's Thanksgiving sandwich is as much a part of the holidays as the lights on the Country Club Plaza.

Start a new tradition with the unique flavor pairings at Christopher Elbow's artisanal ice cream parlor, Glacé (4960 Main St.; above, bottom right). The holidays bring flavors like butternut squash and brown sugar, spiced carrot, and pine needle. And don't let a chilly wind deter you from sampling: "There's no bad time of the year for ice cream," Elbow notes.

There's no bad time for chocolate, either. And with Jack Frost nipping around every corner, what could be better than the kahlua, peppermint schnapps and peppermint sticks that Delish! Catering's Mary Berg (913-829-0133) includes in her fabulous hot chocolate buffet? Cocoa and Frangelico are another match made in heaven—especially when topped with Berg's homemade marshmallows. ■

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