

A Juicy Prime Rib



A few special touches turn this classic into a sophisticated dinner

BY SUZANNE GOIN



Despite what most people think, I usually play only a supporting role in my family's kitchen during the holidays. Ever since my restaurant career began some 20 years ago, my mother has made a point of not putting me to work at the stove. She takes care of the big items—the turkey or the roast—and lets me fiddle with the stuffing or the vegetables. For these dishes, I avoid overly complicated, “chefy” preparations. I prefer to stick with classic dishes and keep things simple. But I

always like to add a little something—a fancy garnish or an unusual ingredient—to mark the specialness of the occasion.

This holiday menu, which combines family favorites with a few beloved menu items from my restaurants, is in tune with this spirit. While all the dishes are straightforward at heart, a few twists make them feel elegant and unusual. Take the soup: It's a simple purée of white beans—nothing too fussy. But top it with some earthy sautéed wild mushrooms and a dollop of

herbed mascarpone cheese, and it becomes a refined first course. A smooth, silky texture also sets it apart from your average bean soup. The trick to getting that texture is to purée the beans and vegetables with only a small amount of the cooking liquid first, and then to slowly pour in more liquid until you get a nice, creamy consistency.

We've always been a roast-beef-at-Christmas kind of family, so I decided to play a bit with this tradition for the main course. I bury a three-bone prime-rib

for the Holidays



roast under a big pile of smashed garlic, butter, and fresh herbs, and then I slow-cook it in a low oven for at least two hours. The results are luxurious. The meat becomes meltingly tender, and the herbs and garlic infuse it right to the core.

For a twist on classic mashed potatoes, I borrowed a technique we use at my restaurant AOC, where I boil tiny fingerling potatoes, crush them slightly, enrich them with butter, and top them with crème fraîche. Here, I add a little horseradish—an obvious winner with

the beef—to the crème fraîche. To play counterpoint to the richness of both prime rib and potatoes, I toss roasted carrots and shallots with oil-cured olives and a vibrant gremolata of garlic, lemon zest, and parsley.

As a chef, I'm used to breaking recipes down into steps so that they can be mostly made ahead. For this menu, I've done that for you with the timeline on p. 42. If you follow it, you'll have plenty of time to do all the cooking and still enjoy some quality time with your guests.

Menu

Serves six

◆
**White Bean
Soup with Wild
Mushrooms &
Chive Mascarpone**

◆
**Arugula, Mint
& Apple Salad
with Walnuts
& Buttermilk
Dressing**

◆
**Slow-Roasted
Prime Rib**

**Smashed Potatoes
with Horseradish
Crème Fraîche**

**Roasted Carrots
& Shallots with
Oil-Cured Olives
& Gremolata**

◆
**Chocolate
Caramel Tart with
Macadamia Nuts
& Crème Fraîche
Whipped Cream**

Timeline

This menu isn't difficult, but it does have a lot of steps. The key to making it do-able and stress-free is to plan ahead, do your shopping early, and organize yourself. Here's a strategy for making it happen.

Make it fun for yourself. When I cook at home, I have a ritual that involves picking what music I listen to and what I drink while I cook—this ranges from green tea to water to champagne or wine.

A week ahead:

Make, roll out, and freeze the tart crust

The day before:

Make the soup

Clean and dry the mushrooms

Make the chive mascarpone

Clean and prep the carrots

Slice the shallots for the carrots

Slice the olives

Make the horseradish cream

Make the buttermilk dressing

Defrost the tart crust in the fridge

In the morning:

Wash and spin-dry the salad greens

Toast the walnuts

Make the gremolata

Boil the potatoes

Cut the herbs for all the recipes

Make the tart

Take the beef out of the fridge to come to room temperature

In the afternoon:

Sauté the mushrooms

Prepare the butter for the beef

Smash the garlic for the beef

Heat the oven

Sear and roast the beef
(about 2 hours 45 minutes
before you want to serve it)

Just before dinner:

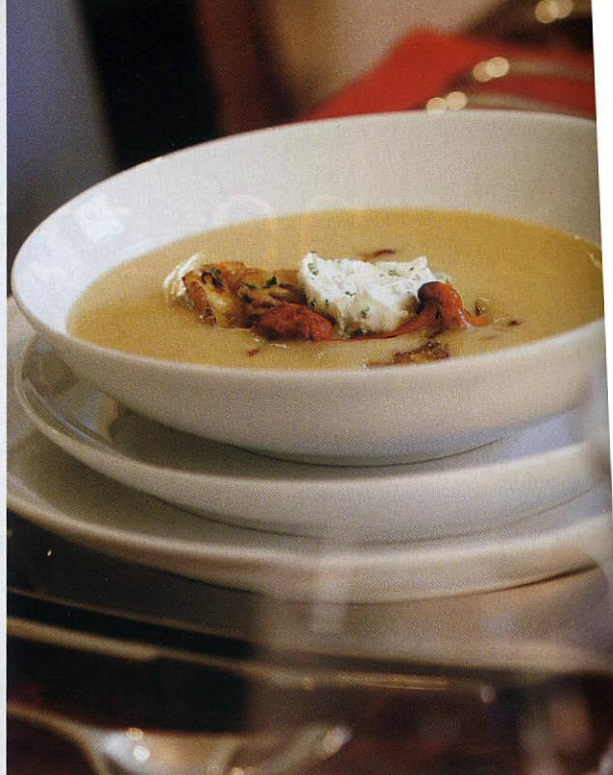
Slice the apples and assemble the salad (don't dress it until you're ready to serve it)

Reheat the soup and the mushrooms

Open the wine

Roast the carrots and finish the potatoes while the roast is resting

Make the whipped cream just before serving the tart



White Bean Soup with Wild Mushrooms & Chive Mascarpone

Serves six to eight; yields 8 cups.

- 1 Tbs. fennel seeds
- ½ cup plus 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small sprig rosemary (leaves only)
- 1 chile d'árbol (or other small, hot dried chile), stemmed and crumbled
- 1 cup chopped yellow onion
- ½ cup chopped fennel
- 1 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. fresh thyme leaves
- 2 cups dried cannellini beans, picked through and rinsed
- Kosher salt
- ½ cup mascarpone cheese
- 1 Tbs. minced shallots
- 1 Tbs. minced chives
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 Tbs. unsalted butter
- ½ lb. wild mushrooms, stems trimmed, caps thinly sliced (such as shiitake, oyster mushrooms, or chanterelles)
- 1 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Make the soup: Toast the fennel seeds in a small skillet over medium heat until they release their aroma and are golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Pound them coarsely in a mortar or grind them coarsely in a spice grinder.

Heat a 6- to 8-qt. heavy-bottomed pot over high heat for 2 minutes. Pour in ½ cup olive oil

tip: If making the soup ahead, save the leftover cooking liquid. The soup will thicken as it sits and may need to be thinned with more of the liquid before serving. If necessary, adjust the seasoning as well.

[Download](#) a printable shopping list and timeline at finecooking.com

and add the rosemary leaves and chile. Let them sizzle in the oil for about 1 minute. Add the onion, fennel, fennel seeds, and 1 Tbs. thyme and cook until the onion is softened, 3 to 4 minutes.

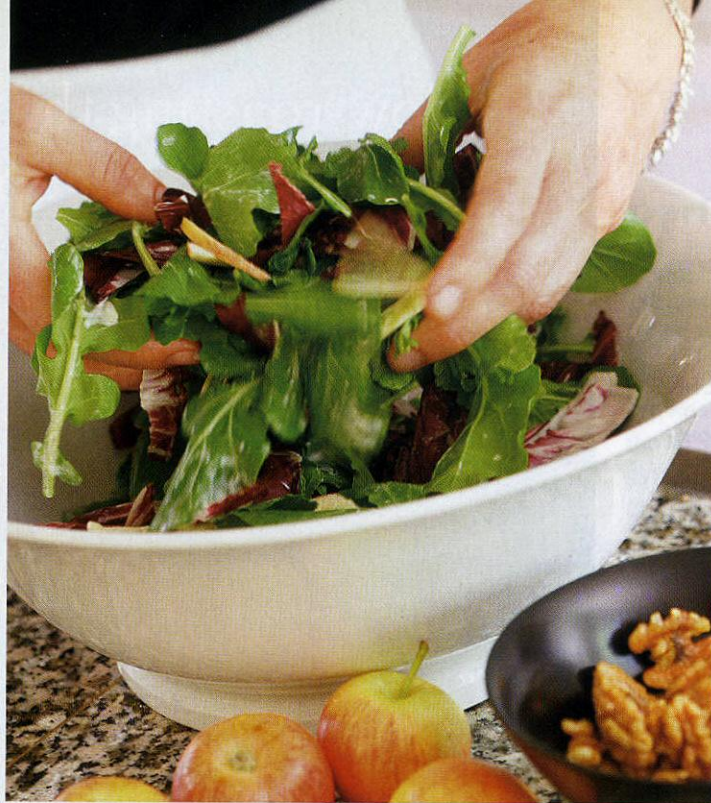
Add the beans to the pot and cook a few more minutes, stirring to coat well. Add 3 quarts of water, and bring to a boil over high heat. Turn the heat to low and place a circle of parchment over the beans to keep them underwater. Simmer, stirring occasionally. After 30 minutes, add 1½ Tbs. salt to the beans, and continue cooking at a low simmer until the beans are tender, 1 to 1½ hours.

While the soup is cooking, stir together the mascarpone, minced shallots, and chives in a small bowl. Season to taste with salt and pepper, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate.

Separate the bean mixture from the liquid by straining the soup over a bowl. Put half the bean mixture into a blender with ½ cup of the liquid (you will need to purée the soup in batches). Process on the lowest speed until the mixture is puréed. With the blender running at medium speed, slowly pour in more of the liquid, until the soup is the consistency of heavy cream. Turn the speed up to high, and blend until completely smooth, about 1 minute. Set aside, and repeat with the second batch. (Save any extra liquid for thinning the soup later, if necessary.) Taste and adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper. Keep the soup warm in a pot on the stove. If making ahead, cool completely before refrigerating.

Sauté the mushrooms: Turn on the exhaust fan. Heat a 12-inch skillet over high heat for 1 minute. Swirl in the remaining 2 Tbs. olive oil and the butter. When the butter melts, scatter the mushrooms into the pan. Season with ¼ tsp. salt and a pinch of pepper. Cook the mushrooms, stirring occasionally, until they are tender, browned, and a little crispy, about 5 minutes. Stir in the parsley and the remaining 1 tsp. thyme and remove from the heat.

Ladle a cup of hot soup into each warm bowl. Scatter warm mushrooms over the top and add a dollop of the mascarpone.



Arugula, Mint & Apple Salad with Walnuts & Buttermilk Dressing

Serves six.

The dressing may be made a day ahead.

FOR THE DRESSING:

- 2 Tbs. finely diced shallots (about 1 medium)**
- 1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice**
- ½ tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste**
- ¼ cup crème fraîche**
- ¼ cup buttermilk**
- ½ cup mayonnaise**
- Freshly ground black pepper**

FOR THE SALAD:

- ¾ cup walnuts (about 3 oz.)**
- 1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- Kosher salt**
- 2 apples (preferably Gala, Fuji, or Pink Lady)**
- ½ lb. baby arugula, washed and spun dry**
- 1 medium head radicchio (about 4 oz.), washed, spun dry, and torn into bite-size pieces**
- 1 cup small fresh mint leaves (or large leaves torn into small pieces), washed and spun dry**

Make the dressing: Combine the shallots, lemon juice, and ½ tsp. salt in a small bowl, and let sit 5 minutes. Whisk in the

crème fraîche and buttermilk, then the mayonnaise. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper to taste.

Assemble the salad: Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F.

Spread the walnuts on a baking sheet and toast them, stirring once or twice, until they smell nutty and are lightly browned, 8 to 10 minutes. When the nuts have cooled slightly, toss them with the olive oil and a generous pinch of salt. Crumble half of them with your hands.

Cut the apples into ⅛-inch slices and put them in a large salad bowl. Dress the apples with half of the buttermilk dressing and then very gently toss in the arugula, radicchio, and mint. The salad should be lightly dressed—add more salad dressing only if needed (you will have leftover dressing, which will keep for a few days in the fridge).

Arrange the salad on six plates and scatter the toasted walnuts (both crumbled and whole) over the top.

This bright, tangy salad is a refreshing break between the rich bean soup and the luxurious prime rib.

Slow-roasting the prime rib makes it exceptionally tender and juicy.

Slow-Roasted Prime Rib

Serves six to eight.

For a delicious sandwich using the leftovers, see p. 78. Fleur de sel is a premium sea salt harvested in France (see p. 84 for sources).

3-bone beef rib roast (about 6 lb.), preferably from the small or loin end and Prime grade (see p. 82 for buying information)

3 Tbs. fleur de sel or other flaky sea salt

1½ Tbs. coarsely cracked black pepper

1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

8 to 10 sprigs rosemary

8 to 10 sprigs thyme

10 medium cloves garlic, smashed and peeled

3 Tbs. unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes

Take the beef out of the refrigerator 2 hours before cooking so it can come to room temperature. After 30 minutes, season the meat on all sides with the fleur de sel and cracked black pepper.

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat oven to 325°F.

Turn on the exhaust fan. Heat a 12-inch skillet over high heat for 1 minute. Swirl in the olive oil and, when the oil puts off its first wisp of smoke, place the beef in the pan, and sear it on all the outer sides (not the cut sides) until well browned, 6 to 8 minutes total. Use a set of tongs to flip the beef; be careful of splattering oil. With two sets of tongs, transfer the beef, bone side down, to a roasting rack set in a small roasting pan. Arrange the rosemary, thyme, garlic, and butter evenly on top.

Roast the beef, basting every 30 minutes with a bulb baster, until a thermometer inserted into the center reads 120° to 125°F for rare, about 2 hours. Cook to 130° to 135°F for medium-rare (about 2¼ hours), 140° to 145°F for medium (about 2½ hours). Let the meat rest at least 15 minutes before carving (see p. 82).

How to serve: Divide the meat, potatoes, and carrots among six large warmed dinner plates. Drizzle with the roasting juices, if you like.

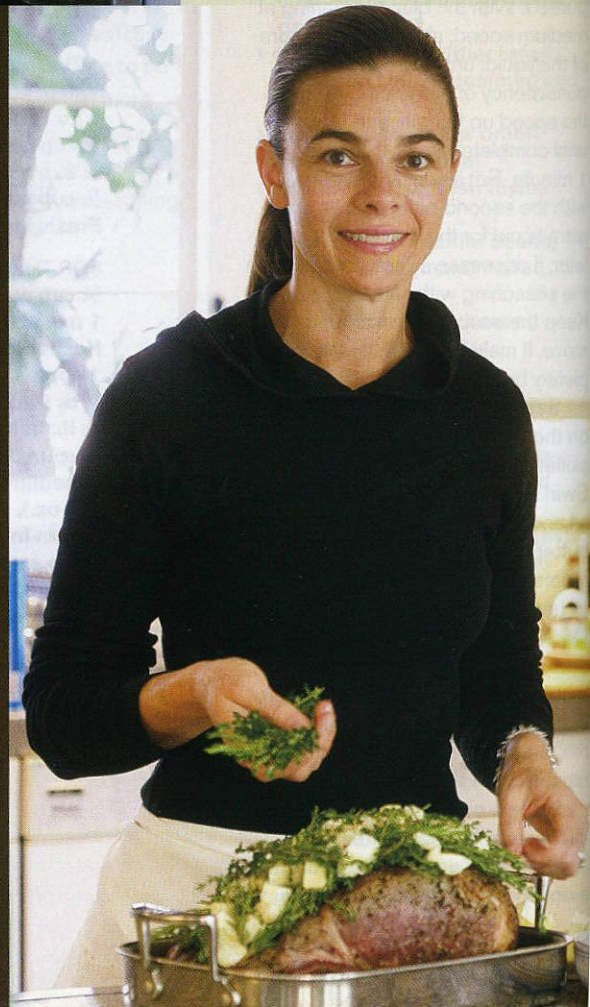


Three tips for a perfect rib roast: bring the beef to room temperature before cooking, baste it often, and let it rest before carving.

Sear the rib

roast in a skillet to give it a nice caramelized crust. Grab the bone side with a pair of tongs to help you flip it in the skillet.

Pile on garlic, fresh herb sprigs, and butter to infuse the roast with flavor. When the butter melts, it creates rich drippings for basting.





Roast it in a 325°F oven for 2 to 2½ hours, depending on the desired doneness. Internal temperature is more reliable than time, though, so use a meat thermometer.

For information on buying and carving prime rib, see *From Our Test Kitchen*, p. 76.

perfect pairings

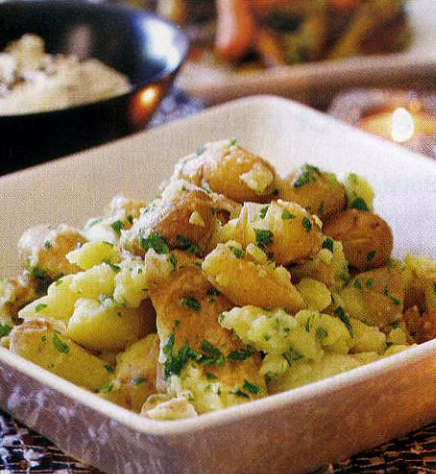
Soup: Dry sherries, such as Palo Cortado and Amontillado, are traditional drinks to pair with soup. The **NV Palo Cortado Solera Reserva Peninsula** (\$19) or the **NV Amontillado “Los Arcos”** (\$16), both from famed producer Emilio Lustau in Jerez, Spain, would be delicious with the White Bean Soup. Serve them chilled.

Salad: The perfect accompaniment to the Arugula, Mint & Apple Salad would be a vibrant Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand; look for the **2005 Seifried Sauvignon Blanc, Nelson** (\$16) or the **2005 Matua Valley Paretai Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough** (\$19).

Prime-rib roast and side dishes: The Slow-Roasted Prime Rib calls for a truly grand red. For a special meal such as this, I'd splurge on a fine Cabernet Sauvignon, such as the **2002 Etude Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, California** (\$75) or the **2002 Penfolds Bin 707 Cabernet Sauvignon, South Australia** (\$80). Both are simply fantastic and widely available. For a more affordable option, try the **2002 Château Souverain Cabernet, Alexander Valley, California** (\$20).

Tart: Finally, a fine tawny port would be just right with the rich Chocolate Caramel Tart; try the **Nieport 10 Year Tawny Port** (\$28) or the **Grahams 20 Year Tawny Port** (\$40). Both are also delicious with cheeses or sipped solo.

—Contributing editor **Tim Gaiser**
is a master sommelier.



Smashed Potatoes with Horseradish Crème Fraîche

Serves six.

- ¾ cup crème fraîche
- 3 Tbs. prepared horseradish, more to taste
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ lb. small fingerling potatoes or baby potatoes, such as baby Yukons or Red Bliss
- 4 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Combine the crème fraîche and horseradish in a small bowl. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and more horseradish, if you like.

Put the potatoes in a medium pot, cover with cold water (by about 2 inches), and add 1 Tbs. salt. Bring to a boil, turn down the heat to medium low, and simmer gently until the potatoes are tender when pierced with a skewer, 15 to 20 minutes. Reserve about ¼ cup of the water and drain the potatoes. At this point, you can hold the potatoes for a few hours (To reheat, immerse them in boiling water until they're heated through, about 5 minutes.)

Let the potatoes cool for a moment and then slightly smash them with a wooden spoon just until they crack open. Return the potatoes to the pot over medium heat. Add the butter and ¾ tsp. salt. Stir to coat the potatoes with the butter. Add a few tablespoons of the reserved potato water to help coat and glaze the potatoes. Stir in the parsley, taste, and adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper.

Top each serving with crème fraîche and a sprinkle of pepper.



Roasted Carrots & Shallots with Oil-Cured Olives & Gremolata

Serves six.

- ½ cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- Zest of 1 medium lemon, finely chopped (1½ to 2 Tbs.)
- 1 tsp. minced garlic
- 2 lb. medium carrots
- 1 cup ¼-inch-thick-sliced shallot rounds (3 or 4 medium shallots)
- 1 Tbs. fresh thyme leaves
- ⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup pitted and thinly sliced oil-cured olives

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 425°F.

Toss the parsley, lemon zest, and garlic in a bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and set aside. This mixture is called gremolata.

Peel the carrots and slice in half lengthwise. If they're big, slice each half lengthwise again into long quarters. Put the carrots on a large rimmed baking sheet and toss with the shallots, thyme, olive oil, salt, and several grinds of pepper. Arrange the carrots in a single layer.

Roast the carrots, tossing occasionally, until they are tender and ever so slightly browned, 20 to 30 minutes. Remove from the oven and toss in the olives and the gremolata. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper to taste.

The sweet earthiness of the carrots pairs perfectly with the briny flavor of the olives.

tip: To prep the lemon zest for the gremolata, peel it off in long strips with a vegetable peeler, cut away any of the white pith, and chop the zest finely.



Chocolate Caramel Tart with Macadamia Nuts & Crème Fraîche Whipped Cream

Serves twelve to sixteen.

FOR THE CRUST:

- 6 oz. (1⅓ cups) unbleached all-purpose flour, plus a little more for rolling
- 3 Tbs. granulated sugar
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- 4 oz. (8 Tbs.) cold unsalted butter, cut into small cubes
- 2 Tbs. heavy cream
- 1 large egg yolk

FOR THE FILLING:

- 1¼ cups macadamia nuts
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1½ oz. (3 Tbs.) unsalted butter, cut into chunks
- 1 cup plus 1½ Tbs. granulated sugar
- ¼ cup light corn syrup
- ½ vanilla bean, split and scraped
- 6 oz. 70% bittersweet chocolate, chopped (about 1¼ cups)
- ½ cup whole milk
- ¼ cup crème fraîche



Make the crust: In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the flour, sugar, salt and butter and mix on medium speed until the butter blends into the flour and the mixture resembles a coarse meal. Mix the cream and yolk together in a small bowl. With the mixer on low speed, gradually add the cream mixture and mix until just combined. Do not overwork the dough.

Transfer the dough to a work surface and bring it together with your hands. Shape the dough into a 1-inch-thick disk. If the dough seems too soft to roll out, put it in the refrigerator for 5 to 10 minutes to firm it up a little. Set the dough on a lightly floured work surface, sprinkle a little flour over it, and roll it out into a 1/8-inch-thick circle 14 to 15 inches in diameter, re-flouring the dough and work surface as necessary.

Starting at one side, roll and wrap the dough around the rolling pin to pick it up. Unroll the dough over an 11-inch fluted tart

pan with a removable bottom and gently fit it loosely in the pan, lifting the edges and pressing the dough into the corners with your fingers. To remove the excess dough, roll the rolling pin lightly over the top of the tart pan, cutting a nice, clean edge. Cover loosely with plastic and chill for 1 hour.

Make the tart: Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F.

Prick the bottom of the crust with a fork and line it with a piece of parchment paper or several opened-out basket-style coffee filters. Fill the lined tart shell with dried beans or pie weights and bake until set around the edges, about 15 minutes. Take the tart out of the oven, and carefully lift out the paper and pie weights (if using coffee filters, spoon out most of the weights first). Return the tart to the oven and bake until the crust is golden brown all over, another 10 to 15 minutes. Cool completely on a rack.

While the crust is baking, spread the nuts on a baking sheet and toast (in the same oven) until they are golden brown and smell nutty, 10 to 12 minutes. Let them cool, and then chop coarsely.

In a small pot, bring 3/4 cup of the cream and the butter to a simmer. Set aside.

Combine 1 cup of the sugar with the corn syrup, vanilla bean seeds and pod, and 1/4 cup water in a 3- or 4-qt. heavy-based pot. Boil over high heat, stirring frequently with a wooden spoon, until the mixture becomes caramel-colored. Remove from the heat and immediately (but slowly and carefully; you don't want the hot sugar to overflow or splatter) whisk in the hot cream mixture.

Pour the caramel into the baked tart shell and pick out the vanilla bean halves with a fork or tongs. Sprinkle about two-thirds of the macadamia nuts on top of the caramel. Let cool completely in the refrigerator.

When the tart is cool, put the chocolate in a large bowl. In a small pot, bring 1/2 cup of the cream, the milk, and the remaining 1 1/2 Tbs. sugar to a boil over medium-high heat. As soon as it boils, pour it over the chocolate. Let stand for 2 minutes and then stir very gently with a whisk until smooth and thoroughly combined. Let cool at room temperature for 5 minutes and then pour the chocolate filling over the completely chilled tart, covering the nuts and caramel.

Chill in the refrigerator for at least 4 hours or until completely set. Unmold the tart, using a long thin metal spatula to release it from the pan bottom. Place it on a cutting board or a serving plate, depending on how you intend to serve it.

Just before serving, whip the remaining 3/4 cup cream and the crème fraîche to soft peaks. Slice and plate the tart in the kitchen or at the table. Top each serving with a dollop of the whipped cream and scatter the remaining macadamia nuts over and around.

Tricks for a successful tart

First, fully bake the crust.

If it's underbaked it'll be soggy. You want a crumbly, cookie-like texture.

Second, be careful with the caramel.

Turn off the heat and whisk in the hot cream cautiously, a little at a time, so it doesn't overflow all over the stove (and you).

Last, let the caramel set

completely before you pour the chocolate filling over it (let the chocolate cool slightly before pouring).

Suzanne Goin is the chef and co-owner of Lucques and AOC wine bar in Los Angeles. Her book, Sunday Suppers at Lucques, won a James Beard award. ♦