

# SIDE DISH

A serving of favorite things from the East Bay community

BY CHERYL KOEHLER

## YAY ME!

I was leaving the Ferry Plaza Marketplace, feeling a little remorseful about the size of the BLT I'd just downed, when two cheerful young women stepped up to ask if I wanted a free compliment. "Of course," I said, even as my wariness meter flashed wildly. They explained emphatically that they weren't selling anything as they asked me to step onto an artfully-decorated scale, which was about the last thing I wanted to do, given the weight of the food I'd just consumed. But lo and behold, the scale told me that I was "hot!" The observation, true or not, propelled me on through my day.

The women were members of About-Face, an organization that seeks "to equip women and girls with tools to understand and resist the harmful stereotypes of women the media disseminates." The scale, called a "Yay Scale," is made by San Francisco artist and blogger Marilyn Wann and sold through an East Bay company, VoluptuArt. Going into the holiday eating season, these seem like some pretty good tools to have on hand, so I encourage you to visit the following URLs.

About-Face: [about-face.org](http://about-face.org)

Marilyn Wann: [fatso.com](http://fatso.com)

VoluptuArt: [voluptuart.com](http://voluptuart.com)



## YAY NATURE!

She gives us so many delicious things to eat—like chocolate, coffee, raw milk, red wine, and complex carbohydrates—and when someone tries to tell us they're bad for us, She reminds us that they really are good for us after all.

She gave us the perfect place to cut our meat and veggies—a wooden board—and when someone tried to tell us that plastic cutting boards are safer, She explained that, in fact, there are naturally occurring antiseptic properties to wood that make it the very best place to cut our meat and veggies. Yay, Nature, again!

She causes pesky things, like snails, to crawl around in our gardens feasting on the tastiest shoots, and guess what? These well-fed snails turn

out not to be pesky at all if you eat enough of them (with butter and garlic, of course).

...It always comes down to that balance thing, doesn't it?

OK, so what am I getting at?

It's bamboo...you know that stuff people regret having planted after it fills up every crevice in their yard and the neighbor complains that it's uprooting their house? Well it turns out bamboo is good—as long as you cut it back, contain it, or better yet, use it! That's what they do in Asia. They eat some of the shoots, weave its fiber into clothing, and leave some to grow up tall and strong so it can be used for building materials. Here in the West we finally figured out that bamboo is good for making blue jeans and flooring material...oh, and occasionally we're eating it too.

So now, in tree-hugging Berkeley, three very intelligent ladies put the cutting board thing together with the bamboo thing in a campaign to save the freshness of our great East Bay bread (which, of course, is good with escargots à la bourguignonne) to come up with Bamboo Bread Bags. Turns out there are microbes in bamboo that work 24/7 to guard the freshness of your bread. However, I can't tell, since a good baguette doesn't last 24 hours in my kitchen, but I love the idea of a dedicated cloth bag for bread. There are three styles and you can find them online at [bamboo-bag.com](http://bamboo-bag.com) or at these stores in Berkeley:

Acme Bread Company  
1601 San Pablo Ave  
510.525.1327

Phoenix Pastificio  
1250 Addison St  
510.883.0783

The Cheese Board  
1512 Shattuck Ave  
510.549.3055

The Wellspring Clinic  
1919 Addison St  
510.704.8888



## A PLATEFUL OF BEAUTY

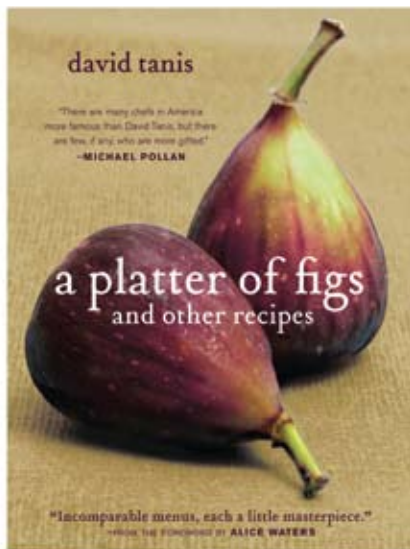
In hard times, one of the greatest blessings we receive is a renewed appreciation for what we have. An orange, a pomegranate, some dates and cinnamon on a pretty plate; an old table, three chairs and two friends to fill them; this could be enough to make a person feel rich and satisfied.

As one of two head chefs at Chez Panisse, David Tanis certainly has opportunities to indulge in magnificent meals at the world's best restaurants, but as he tells us in his new cookbook, *A Platter of Figs, and Other Recipes* (Artisan Books 2008), he might prefer to go to a friend's house for dinner, or eat at home, where he can share simple meals, beautifully presented to friends.

In his introduction to this superb collection of simple, seasonal menus, Tanis is unapologetic about the time they might take to prepare. In fact, he seems to share his treasured time in the kitchen through these recipes, which he points out are not the "30-minute-specials-with-only-3-ingredients" sort you get in the ubiquitous books for people who claim they hate to cook. Instead, the recipes impart traditions of peasant cooking all over the world—places where the cook's duties (just like the family meal) are part of the rhythm of daily life, and where ingredients come right from the garden or from local growers and crafters.

The book's photographer, Christopher Hirsheimer, gives us still-life images of the meal in motion, with stems and peels scattered on a scarred

cutting board, or a hot pot of mussels about to be ladled into bowls. We feel like we're in the kitchen with Tanis and his friends, about to savor some thinly sliced salumi with olives followed by bean soup with rosemary oil and a dessert of pear and Parmigiano. The recipe reprinted here is the dessert that ends Tanis's "simple Moroccan supper" of spiced olives, Berber pizza, and harira soup.



## ORANGE SALAD WITH DATES

- 8 navel oranges
- Sugar
- 1 pomegranate
- Cinnamon
- 2 pounds dates, Medjool, Deglet Noor, Zahidi, or a mixture

Peel the oranges. Slice crosswise into ¼-inch-thick disks. Arrange in concentric circles on a platter. Sprinkle lightly with sugar.

Cut the pomegranate into quarters. Force out the seeds by inverting the skin of each quarter over a bowl. Pick out any white pith and discard. Sprinkle the pomegranate seeds over the oranges.

Sprinkle a little cinnamon over the platter. Bring the orange salad to the table with bowls of the dates.

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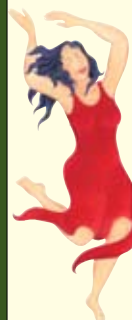
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