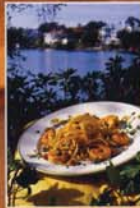


# southern BREEZE™

living and relaxing on the gulf coast

let's eat



by carolyn deariso

## Simplicity Rules This Kitchen

*Chef to  
the stars  
cooks up  
lively classes  
and tasty  
fish.*

With an entertaining style that mixes humor in his recipes, he teaches his pupils that the arts of cooking AND having a good time are not mutually exclusive... all while preparing Grouper Vince to perfection or folding those pesky little spring roll wrappers without so much as one misplaced tuck.

No "bam" tossed with butter here. For this cooking class belongs to Chef Tim Creehan, owner and executive chef of Beach Walk Café Restaurant in the gulfside resort town of Destin, Florida. Tim's classes are among a myriad of culinary venues that fill his schedule, but it is his pure talent in the kitchen that accounts for his accolades.

This 30-something food maestro has served as guest chef in venues from here to Hong Kong, and he has cooked alongside the likes of Chef Emeril Lagasse. He also was invited to cater Vince Gill and Amy Grant's wedding after they dined at Beach Walk while on vacation.

"The key to great food preparation," says Tim, who began working in restaurants at age 15, "is to buy a great, fresh product, season it simply, and prepare it properly."

Since the restaurant hugs the Gulf of Mexico shoreline, it's only natural that fish highlights the menu.

He moves around the kitchen of the cooking school with the finesse of a magician. He transforms lifeless ingredients into amazing cuisine, while his intimate, captivated audience leans toward each other with whispers of "how does he do that?"



photography by

karim shamsi-basha

"Tuna, snapper, grouper and cobia in season are all indigenous to this area," says Tim, "but we also have cold-water fish flown in."

"Tuna is my favorite because it is multifaceted," he adds (although the notoriety of Vince Gill's visit to the restaurant has made the renamed Grouper Vince the most popular).

The biggest mistake people make in preparing fish is overcooking. Fish can cook as quickly as two minutes, according to this chef, and should always be cooked last. Once fish is white—no longer spongy or pliable—it is done.

Beach Walk's executive chef seasons his fish simply with garlic salt and white pepper. He uses lighter sauces to complement the fish, not cover the taste, side dishes such as basmati rice, and a light, crispy vegetable with texture. His own non-stick sauce, Chef's Grill Plus, also is a great seasoning. (Interested? You can look it up at [www.chefsgillplus.com](http://www.chefsgillplus.com)).

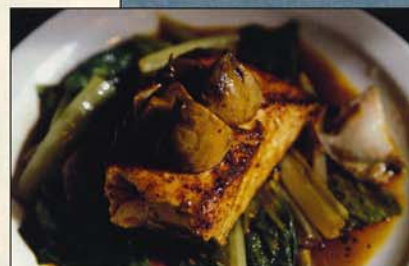
With the fame that has come his way, you have to ask what keeps him in Destin. So I did.

"I love Destin and the beach, and I'm a big sailor," he said. "I've had many offers, but every day I look out across that gulf, and I know that nothing could make me leave."

And if you've ever enjoyed dining at Beach Walk Café or watched this chef entertain and amaze from one of the coveted seats of his cooking classes, you will be glad to know that Tim Creehan is here to stay.

Left: Tim is in his natural element in the kitchen. Inset: Fresh local ingredients combine for a tasty creation. Above: Tim shares cooking skills with his class.

[gabreezing.com](http://gabreezing.com) ~ Summer 20



#### Salt and Five Spice Crusted Salmon with Braised Romaine and a Mushroom Eel Sauce

*Sautéed romaine lettuce provides a unique foundation for Tim's salmon masterpiece.*

- 1 (7-ounce) salmon fillet
- 2 ounces canola oil
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Chinese five spice, to taste
- 2 cups romaine lettuce, chopped
- 2 tablespoons melted butter

#### Mushroom Eel Sauce

- 1—Preheat oven to 450°. In an oven-safe sauté pan, heat the oil and season the salmon with salt and five spice to taste.
- 2—Brown the salmon heavily on one side and flip. Place the sauté pan in the oven and cook to desired doneness, approximately 7 minutes.
- 3—Heat the butter in a sauté pan. Add lettuce and cook until soft.
- 4—Place the cooked romaine on the base of a plate. Top with salmon. Drizzle Mushroom Eel Sauce over the salmon. Yield: 4 servings.

#### Mushroom Eel Sauce

- 1 cup (4 ounces) prepared eel sauce
- 2 cups domestic mushrooms, quartered
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic, chopped
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1 teaspoon black ground pepper

Place all ingredients in a saucepan and reduce by one-third. Set aside.

#### Tortilla Soup

*A warm Southwestern treat that's perfect in any season.*

- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 1 teaspoon garlic, chopped
- 8 ounces masa harina
- 4 tablespoons chili powder
- Juice of 1/2 lime
- 2 quarts chicken stock
- 1 chipotle pepper
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin

#### Salt, to taste

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 corn tortillas, cut like fettuccine and fried
- 4 green onions, chopped
- 1/2 tomato, chopped

1—In a heavy saucepan, melt butter. Sauté onion and garlic for 5 minutes. Stir in masa and blend well.

2—Add the next 5 ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer for 20 minutes. Puree with a hand blender.

3—Season with salt, to taste. Blend in heavy cream.

4—Serve in a bowl and garnish with tortillas, onions and tomato. Yield: 12 servings.



Above left: Salt and Five Spice Crusted Salmon with Braised Romaine and a Mushroom Eel Sauce. For left: Cooking school host Julie Smith (standing). Left: Attendees enjoy a festive atmosphere. Next page: Shrimp Scampi. The lesson ends with the best part—eating the finished product!

#### Chef's Grill Plus® Shrimp Scampi

*A Gulf Coast favorite.*

- 1/2 pound medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
  - 4 tablespoons Chef's Grill Plus® Herbs and Garlic
- 1—Heat Chef's Grill Plus® Herbs and Garlic in a medium saucepan at medium temperature until sauce begins to sizzle. Stir in shrimp and sauté for 5 minutes or until desired doneness.
  - 2—Serve alone as scampi, over rice or with angel hair pasta. Yield: 4 servings. ~



Carolyn Deariso is a marketing and public relations consultant who also does freelance writing for regional and national publications.

