

Carpenter brings 'craftsmanship' to cooking

Nominated by son Cory Feig-Sandoval, 10:

"I nominate my dad as chef of the week for lots of reasons: He's creative, he likes to cook and he experiments. He doesn't really specialize, but he makes almost everything taste good.

"On Sunday mornings we like to make crepes, pancakes or waffles [until our waffle iron broke], which are all egg- and dairy-free. I like to help flip the crepes and pancakes. When we make crepes, he makes a really good compote, a sweet maple-cashew cream, and super buttered and sugared pecans."

One might expect a carpenter to apply an eye for detail to his cooking.

"Sometimes when you're doing carpentry, there's no recipe," said Danny Feig-Sandoval, a general contractor and owner of Small Carpenters at Large. "There are no two jobs that are exactly alike.

"When I'm cooking, no two meals are exactly the same, either," he said.

Feig-Sandoval, who became a vegetarian with his wife, Lori, shortly after they were married in 1987, enjoys the entire process of food preparation.

"I'm kind of into chopping food — something about that is very satisfying," he said. "There's something about process today that's lost in our world. Craftsmanship is lost."

He says the joy of cooking comes from celebration of that process: "Going to the farmers market and picking out fresh — as local as we can find — organic vegetables, getting everything ready, including lining up all my ingredients before starting, and then the Zen of chopping, shredding, mixing and whatever else goes into making a good meal."

Son Cory says the eating's pretty good, too.

> Family/background: Married 17 years to Lori, has a 10-year-old son, Cory. Born in New York City but moved to Atlanta at age 2. Graduated from Georgia State University in 1974.

> Career: Owner of Small

Carpenters at Large for 24 years.

> Hobbies, interests: "Woodworking, tennis, bird-watching, cooking, guitar, bike riding, hiking, community activism and politics, and sitting on our screened porch with my family and friends eating, reading, playing guitar or relaxing."

> Who taught you to cook? "I learned on my own, starting at home cooking breakfast as a kid. I also worked an on-and-off, two-year stint at a food cooperative near Emory called the Morningstar Inn in the early 1970s."

> Cooking style: "Eclectic. I like to mix it up, from Thai to Italian to Mexican/New Mexican to Mediterranean."

> Culinary ambitions: "Mastering the art of cooking with seitan [a protein-rich, meatlike food made from wheat gluten], baking more egg-free desserts, getting more creative with food presentation, cooking for more than 10 people."

> Most memorable meal you ever prepared: "When my wife and I cooked for my company annual holiday party for about 20 people — all New Mexican dishes — and when we cooked Mediterranean dishes for about 50 folks for my sister's 50th birthday."

> Do you favor a particular ingredient? "Tofu, flaxseed blended with water for egg replacer, cilantro, lots of



JOEY NANSO / Staff

Danny Feig-Sandoval enjoys "the Zen of chopping, shredding, mixing and whatever else goes into making a good meal." He prepares tofu and asparagus with son Cory, 10.

garlic."

> Favorite cookbook: "Passionate Vegetarian" by Crescent Dragonwagon (Workman Publishing, \$35), "Tofu Cookery" by Louise Hagler (Book Publishing Co., \$16.95), and "Still Life With Menu Cookbook" by Mollie Katzen (Ten Speed Press, \$19.95) — or any of the Moosewood cookbooks.

> When I eat out, I like to order: "Creative vegetarian fare. Cafe Sunflower makes a great vegetarian fajita and veggie meatloaf."

> If you could prepare a fantasy meal for anybody, who would it be and what would you cook? "Benjamin Franklin and John Prine [as guests]. I would serve cucumber/onion/peanut salad

Thai Tofu Asparagus Stir-Fry

6 servings

Hands on: 40 minutes Total time: 40 minutes

The curry sauce tastes complex — tangy, sweet and savory all at once — but the dish is actually very easy to make and quite hearty when served over rice. Danny Feig-Sandoval prefers the local tofu brand called the Soy Shop, which he freezes and then defrosts and drains to give it a more "meaty" texture.

Tester's notes: To cut down on the fat, use light coconut milk and a tablespoon of brown sugar instead of the sweetened cream of coconut. Lemon grass, a common ingredient in Thai and Vietnamese cooking, can be found in international or Asian grocery stores.

- ½ cup liquid aminos (or soy sauce)
- 5 tablespoons sesame oil, divided
- 6 (or more) cloves garlic, finely chopped, divided
- Juice from 1 lime
- 1 15-ounce can sweetened cream of coconut
- 1-2 teaspoons green curry paste
- 6 tablespoons extra-crunchy peanut butter
- 2 pounds firm tofu, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 onion, sliced into 1-inch, thin slivers
- 1 celery stalk cut into 1-inch, thin slivers
- 1 stalk lemon grass, trimmed and finely chopped (use the first 8-10 inches of the meaty end, minus the tough bottom and outer leaf)
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 2 bunches asparagus, cut into 1-inch pieces
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil
- 1 cup chopped fresh cilantro

For the sauce: Combine in a large mixing bowl the liquid aminos, 1 tablespoon sesame oil, half the chopped garlic, lime juice, cream of coconut, curry paste and peanut butter. Mix well and set aside.

For the tofu: In a wok, heat 3 tablespoons sesame oil. Toss in the tofu and cook, stirring often to keep from sticking, until lightly browned. Transfer the cooked tofu into the curry sauce and set aside.

Return wok to the stove. Add remaining tablespoon sesame oil. Cook onions and remaining garlic for 1 minute. Add the celery, lemon grass and red bell pepper and cook another minute or two. Add the asparagus and cook 2 to 3 more minutes, or until tender-crisp. Add the tofu and sauce and cook 2 to 3 minutes, until heated through. Stir in the basil and cilantro before serving.

Serve over jasmine or basmati rice.

Per serving: 645 calories (percent of calories from fat, 53), 19 grams protein, 61 grams carbohydrates, 4 grams fiber, 40 grams fat (14 grams saturated), trace cholesterol, 1,543 milligrams sodium.

Who are Georgia's best home cooks? We want people who deserve recognition and have recipes to share. To nominate someone, tell us the name, phone number, and a little about what makes this cook special. Give us your name and number, too. E-mail kitchen@ajc.com, fax 404-526-5509, or write to Julia McBee, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Eighth Floor, 72 Marietta St. N.W., Atlanta, GA 30303.



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marinated in sweetened vinegar], stir-fried tofu/asparagus in a coconut/peanut sauce, egg rolls, and a chocolate espressoorte for dessert. After dinner, we would sit around and talk

about politics, inventions, ideas [or just about anything] and play some music with my favorite songwriter."

— Deborah Geering,
for the Journal-Constitution