

# Food

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Market Watch  
Wine/Foraging

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 2004

MG PG VA



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Pineapple spears

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Radish flowers

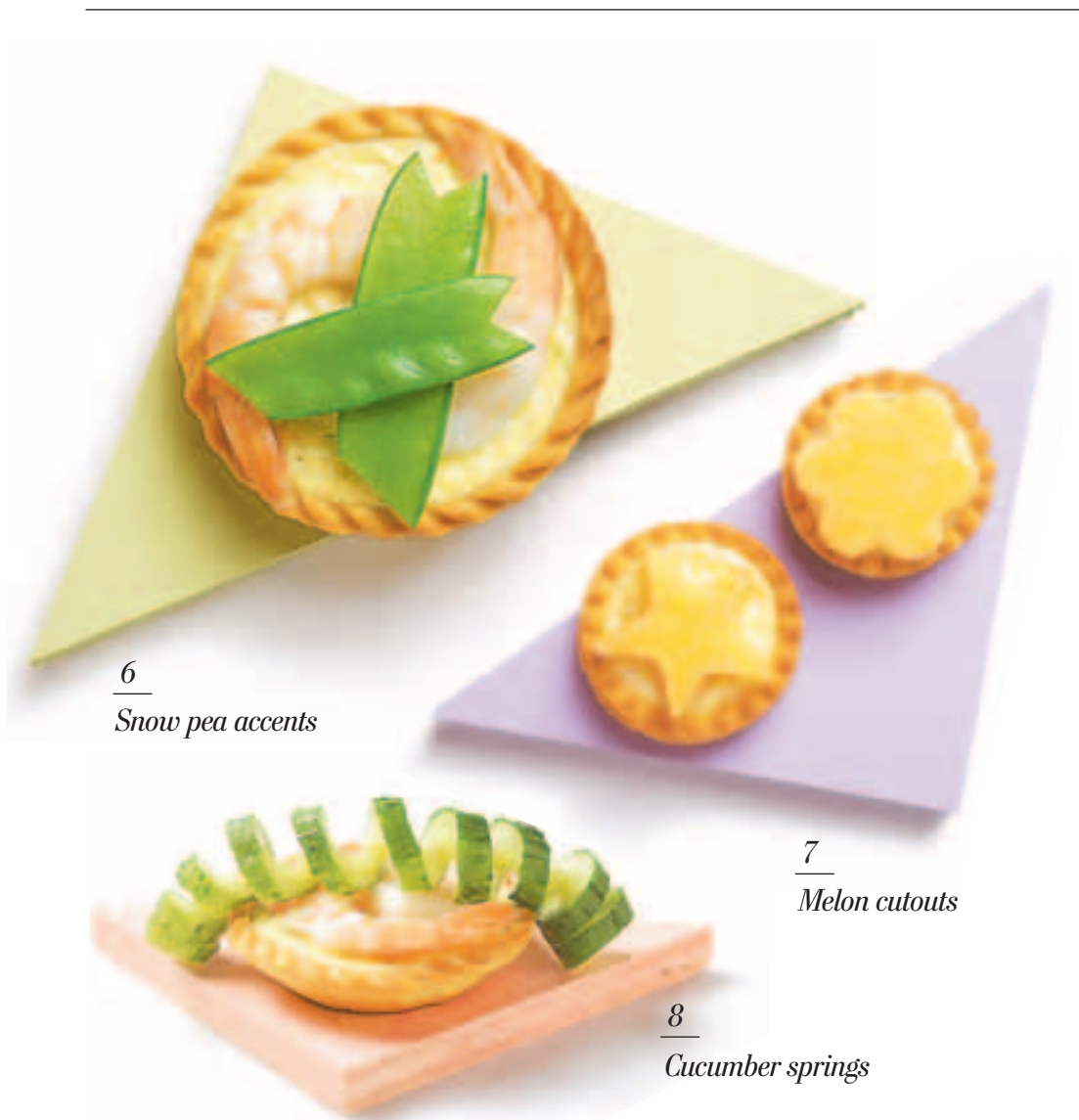
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Scallion frills

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## First, You Take a Carrot

Or a Lemon Or a Scallion and With a Paring Knife Make Store-Bought Quiche Look Like Catered Fare



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Snow pea accents

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By LISA CHERKASKY  
Special to The Washington Post

**F**or most of us, ours is a world of simple food, unadorned. We live in a time of simplicity, not frills.

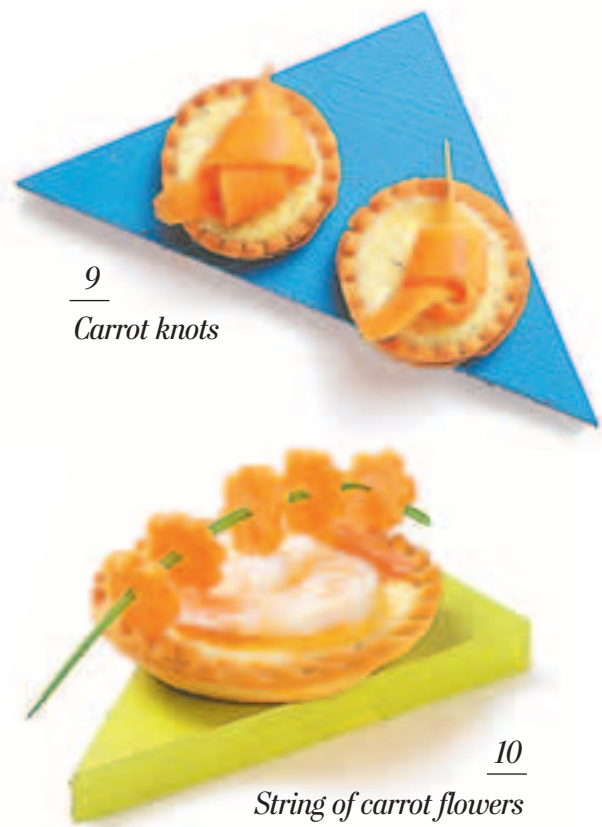
And so I am well aware that garnishes have gone out of fashion. Even some chefs find them foolish. I was not surprised when Susan Lindeborg, chef-owner of the Majestic Cafe in Old Town, told me, "No one does it." Just as I suspected. (Although she does occasionally put a fried basil leaf on a plate.)

Peter Pastan, chef owner of Obelisk at Dupont Circle, says garnishes are "useless things, sitting on the plate, serving no purpose." He thinks a bit, "Well, garnishes are okay as long as you don't have to move them out of the way, and you can eat them."

Still, if you're having a big party and can't afford a caterer, or if you're having a small group over for a Saturday night dinner, there is no better way to take something ordinary—a mini-quiche from a bulk shopping store, a small sandwich, a cocktail—and embellish it to the point where it can be put placed on a silver tray and presented as if it were fancy catered fare.

When it comes to either food or fashion, accessorizing is important. So I've come up

See GARNISH, F4, Col. 3



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Carrot knots

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String of carrot flowers

For garnish directions turn to Page 4.

PHOTOS BY RENEE COMET / STYLED BY LISA CHERKASKY FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**DIET SMART**

Katherine Tallmadge

### The Protein Puzzle

**W**hen I work with clients who are interested in losing weight I urge them to avoid falling into an easy, tempting but very unhealthy trap: making draconian cuts in their consumption of protein. Not all of us are on low-carb, high-protein diets. We love our soup and salad at lunch, and adding protein can mean adding calories.

Protein is essential for healthy living. It is one of the most important nutrients in the human body.



"Bone health, muscle function, muscle strength, muscle mass and immune function—all are impaired with a low protein intake," says Carmen Castaneda, protein researcher and acting director of the Nutrition, Exercise Physiology and Sarcopenia Laboratory at the Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University.

But how much protein do we need, dieting or not?

See TALLMADGE, F4, Col. 1

## Got a Minute?

### Success With Quick-Cooking Cuts of Meat

By RUSSELL CRONKHITE  
Special to The Washington Post

Before there were fast-food restaurants, there were minute steaks.

Minute steaks are thinly sliced cuts of meat that can be cooked in a matter of minutes. These intensely flavorful, remarkably quick-cooking steaks were once a mainstay of moms hustling to put dinner on the table on a weeknight. But then they seemed to fall out of fashion with Americans, perhaps because of the convenience of packaged foods or the ubiquitousness of the boneless, skinless chicken breast.

The problem may have a lot to do with lack of marketing. Minute steaks aren't clearly labeled "minute steaks" in supermarket refrigerator cases. A minute steak can be almost any cut of meat sliced

between 1/4 and 1/2 of an inch thick, whether beef, lamb, pork or veal. There are more than a dozen different steaks that qualify as minute steaks, so instead of one moniker they go by different names that include the words "rump" or "blade," cuts of meat that are typically associated with long, slow cooking rather than a quick turn in the skillet.

And often minute steaks aren't readily displayed in cases but must be specially requested.

But once you find them, minute steaks are relatively trouble-free. As with a boneless, skinless chicken breast, the trick is not to cook it too long. And like pan-seared chicken, the flavorful pan drippings can easily be incorporated into a simple sauce.

The only hitch? The perfect "minute steak" actu-

See MINUTE, F5, Col. 1





# Counting on Protein

TALLMADGE, From F1

I first became interested in this issue when I came across a study that found that people who ate the recommended dietary allowance of protein experienced alarming bone losses as compared with those who ate higher protein levels. This grabbed my attention. The recommended dietary allowance (RDA) is a guideline for healthful eating that is set by the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Research Council of the National Academy of Science. The amount of protein it recommends depends on several factors, such as sex and age. But if the study found that people who were eating the recommended amount of protein were still losing bone mass, what could it mean for those of us who weren't eating even the minimum requirement? Or for those of us who were trying to lose weight by cutting back on protein?

New research has found that a higher protein diet is essential to effective weight loss: it's more likely to minimize muscle loss and maximize fat loss. Keeping muscle stores high is critical for several reasons.

"Losing muscle decreases resting metabolic rate, making it harder to maintain a healthy weight and lose body fat," says William Evans, director of the Nutrition, Metabolism, and Exercise Laboratory at the Donald W. Reynolds Center on Aging at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

Protein is also essential for bone health. Should we risk bone loss tomorrow to lose pounds today?

Your bones, composed of protein, calcium and other minerals, are constantly in a state of flux and in need of replenishment to keep them strong and dense. Until age 30, you are building bone mass. After your early thirties, you're losing it. It's critical to maximize your bone mass, so that your bones are strong and dense enough to prevent osteoporosis. Osteoporosis leads to humped backs, broken bones and pain for its 10 million sufferers in the United States.

For many years, scientists have observed that protein undernutrition was associated with osteoporosis, frailty and bone fractures. But the relationship had never been fully understood until researchers decided to test the theory for the first time in a group of 855 participants from the Framingham Study (originally established in 1948). Researchers analyzed food intake and bone mass every other year for four years. Their findings, published in the Journal of Bone and Mineral Research in 2000, were dramatic.

The subjects eating the lowest protein diets lost the most bone

mass—4 percent in four years. People who ate the highest protein diets experienced the smallest losses—less than 1.5 percent in four years. Think about it: If you're losing as much as 4 percent of your bone mass in four years, that means that one-fifth of your bone mass will be lost in 20 years. That is not a positive development.

And while these studies were conducted on older men and women (68-plus years old), Katherine Tucker, Associate Professor of Nutritional Epidemiology at Tufts University, says the data may be important to people of all ages.

"At younger ages, you need the protein to build the bone, and after age 30 you need the protein to protect the bone from being lost," said Tucker. "Keeping bones is a life-long effort," she said.

This study and others have shown that eating about 20 percent of your calories as protein protected bone mass most efficiently—but that's more than the recommended dietary allowance (RDA) for protein, which is about 15 percent of calories.

Should the requirement be changed?

It's been reported for years that high-protein diets result in high levels of calcium in the urine, and it's been assumed that this would affect bone mass negatively and might produce kidney stones. But it appears, instead, to be a function of just how much protein is consumed and how balanced the diet is. The National Academy of Sciences, in a recent report, recommended Americans never exceed 35 percent of their calories as protein, as that may be when adverse symptoms begin to appear. Other researchers surmise that if protein is extremely high while carbohydrates are very low, this may be responsible for the negative consequences.

It may take years before this new research is confirmed by additional studies and in turn can result in changes in the official recommended protein levels.

In the meantime, it would not be harmful to increase protein intakes to 20 percent of calories, says NAS food and nutrition board protein panelist Peter Garlick.

"Even though the National Academy of Science's Food and Nutrition board did not change the RDA for protein because we're still waiting for more evidence to show that it's necessary, these are safe and reasonable levels," said Garlick.

*Katherine Tallmadge is a Washington nutritionist and author of "Diet Simple" (Lifeline Press, 2002). Send e-mails to her at food@washpost.com.*

## In Pursuit of Protein

Although for most Americans the recommended dietary allowance of protein may be adequate, if you're losing weight or are worried about bone loss, consider increasing your protein.

Protein can be found in a wide range of foods. Animal protein is in seafood, dairy, meat, poultry and eggs. Vegetarian protein can be found in legumes, soy, vegetables and grains. And while it's true that high-protein foods often bring fat and calories along as uninvited guests, it doesn't have to be that way.

The lowest-calorie animal protein sources are the leanest. Go for seafood, poultry with no skin, lean veal cuts, pork tenderloin, lean beef cuts such as the round or tenderloin or 95 percent lean hams (less than 3 grams of fat per ounce). Soy products also provide great low-calorie options.

Toss four ounces of lean beef, chicken or seafood or 12 ounces of spiced tofu into your salad and gain 28 grams of high-quality protein and no more than 150 to 200 calories.

### HOW MUCH PROTEIN DO I NEED?

At present, the recommended dietary allowance for protein is computed using the following formula:

0.37 grams of protein per pound of body (this usually means people are eating about 15 percent of their calories as protein).

But some evidence suggests that to protect bones and muscle we can consume more, though the amount of protein should never be more than 35 percent of daily calories.

So, if you weigh 150 pounds, this means the minimum amount is:

**150 pounds X 0.37 grams protein per pound = 55.5 grams of protein**

But you could safely increase your protein intake:

**150 pounds X 0.45 grams protein per pound = 67.5 grams of protein**

**150 pounds X 0.55 grams protein per pound = 82.5 grams of protein**

So, the sample 150-pound active woman should get between 67.5 and 82.5 grams of protein per day

### WHERE DO I GET PROTEIN?

8 ounces milk/yogurt . . . . .	8 grams protein
½ cup cooked beans/tofu . . . . .	8 grams protein
1 ounce meat/fish/chicken/cheese (the leaner the meat, the more protein and the fewer calories). . . . .	7 grams protein
1 large egg . . . . .	7 grams protein
½ cup cooked or one ounce dry (1 slice bread) grain . . . . .	3 grams protein
½ cup cooked or one cup raw vegetables . . . . .	2 grams protein

—Katherine Tallmadge

# Garnishes to Go

GARNISH, From F1

with some simple garnish bylaws:  
 ■ Nothing overboard; one simple garnish is appropriate.  
 ■ Garnishes need to be tasteful and tasty too. They should complement the food they dress, create an accent in color, texture and/or taste.  
 ■ Anything inedible is ruled out. That means no radish mice with toothpick feet.  
 ■ Have some fun. I am not above a bow made of bubble gum on a kid's cupcake. Hardboiled-egg chickens with little clove

eyes aside, a little effort, something not too unnatural, can give a dish a focal point, add needed color or simply interject whimsy. Some folks go for salads sprouting carrot and pepper palm trees. That's not my style, but if you like this sort of thing, I applaud your effort.

And if you present your meal and someone asks, "What is this twig doing on my plate?" it's clear you've gone a bit too far.

*Lisa Cherkasky, a Washington writer and food stylist, last wrote for Food about the \$100 cocktail party.*



### 1. Pineapple spears

**USE THEM FOR:** A pina colada or any smoothie or blender drink, to top a bowl of fruit salad, a bowl of yogurt with honey or cereal, a platter of barbecued chicken or pork chops.

**WHAT YOU WILL NEED:** Fresh pineapple, unpeeled, top intact; chef's knife or other sharp knife; paring knife

**HOW TO CUT:** Pull the green leaves off the top of the pineapple and wash them well. Cut each leaf lengthwise into thin strips about ½-inch wide.

Slice off the top and bottom of the pineapple so the fruit will stand flat. Cut the pineapple lengthwise into quarters. Stand the quarters on a cutting board and slice out the core. Cut each quarter in half lengthwise again, making 8 long wedges. Slice each wedge crosswise into ½-inch-thick triangles. Make small incisions in the center of each pineapple triangle and thread the strip of green leaf through two or more of the triangles. To store, cover first with a damp paper towel and then with plastic wrap and refrigerate.



### 2. Radish flowers

**USE THEM FOR:** A plate of raw vegetables, finger sandwiches, a relish tray, atop potato pancakes.

**WHAT YOU WILL NEED:** Radishes, trimmed; citrus stripper; paring knife

**HOW TO CUT:** Use the citrus stripper to cut lengthwise grooves evenly spaced around the radishes. Slice the radishes into thin flowers. To store, first cover with a damp paper towel and then with plastic wrap and refrigerate.



### 3. Scallion frills

**USE THEM FOR:** A plate of store-bought sushi, stir-fry, a bowl of chicken soup, a platter of pork tenderloin with a side of hoisin sauce and some Asian pancakes.

**WHAT YOU WILL NEED:** Scallions, paring knife and/or small, sharp scissors

**HOW TO CUT:** Trim the root ends and tough green tops from each scallion. You should have about a 4-inch length. Slice through one or both ends lengthwise, three or four times, creating thin strips. Store in ice water, refrigerated, until the frills curl, about 15 minutes.



### 4. Fancy lemon wedges

**USE THEM FOR:** A plate of steamed shrimp, a glass of ice tea or homemade lemonade, a summer salad of greens, a platter of grilled fish.

**WHAT YOU WILL NEED:** Lemons, citrus stripper or canelle knife, chef's knife or other sharp knife.

**HOW TO CUT:** Stand the lemon on one end on a flat surface. Starting at the top, use a citrus stripper to cut a single strip vertically down to the bottom end but do not remove the strip completely. Rotate the lemon ⅛ of a turn and continue around the lemon, cutting eight of these longitudinal strips, all of which are still attached at the bottom. Use a knife to cut the lemon into wedges, with each wedge containing one of the thin strips of zest. To store, cover first with a damp paper towel and then with plastic wrap and refrigerate.



### 5. Citrus crowns

**USE THEM FOR:** The rim of a gin and tonic, a bowl of seviceh or tuna tartare, the top of a key lime pie, the side of a platter of salsa and chips.

**WHAT YOU WILL NEED:** Citrus fruit, paring knife

**HOW TO CUT:** Each citrus fruit will yield two crowns; your zigzag cutting in the middle of the fruit will produce two, saw-toothed halves that pull away from each other at the end of the process. Using a small, pointed, sharp paring knife cut a thin slice off the two ends of the fruit, so each end will sit flat. Stand the fruit on one end. In your mind, divide the fruit into thirds horizontally. Go to the middle third of the fruit—the equator. Insert the point of the knife into the equator, piercing the fruit to its center but not through to the other side and not up to the top third or down to the bottom third. This will yield a small, straight-up-and-down cut in that middle third. Take the knife and go to the top of the vertical cut. Turn the knife to a 45-degree angle and make the next cut at that angle. Again, pierce the fruit to its center but do not go through to the other side and do not extend to the cut up to the top third or down to the bottom third. Continue around the middle of the fruit, alternating straight up and then on an angle, connecting your cuts as you go. When you have completed the circle, pull the fruit apart. To store, stick fruits back together, first wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate.



### 6. Snow pea accents

**USE THEM FOR:** A platter of stir-fried vegetables and rice, a bowl of Asian-style broth, with chicken breasts glazed with hoisin or teriyaki sauce.

**WHAT YOU WILL NEED:** Snow peas, ends trimmed; paring knife.

**HOW TO CUT:** Use a paring knife to cut a V-shape in one or both ends of the snow peas. Blanch in boiling water and refresh in ice water. To store, cover first with a damp paper towel and then with plastic wrap and refrigerate.



### 7. Melon cutouts

**USE THEM FOR:** A cheese plate, an antipasto platter, to top off fruit soups, to top a round of pumpernickel and prosciutto.

**WHAT YOU WILL NEED:** Assorted melons, chef's knife or other sharp knife, 1- or 2-inch cookie cutters.

**HOW TO CUT:** Slice cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon or any other melon into ½-inch thick slices. Place on a flat surface and use small cookie cutters to create shapes. To store, cover first with a damp paper towel and then plastic wrap and refrigerate.



### 8. Cucumber spring

**USE THEM FOR:** Gazpacho, a plate of smoked salmon, chicken salad, the rim of a bloody Mary.

**WHAT YOU WILL NEED:** Cucumber, chopstick, paring knife.

**HOW TO CUT:** Cut off both ends of the cucumber. Insert a chopstick in the center of one end of the cucumber, driving it all the way through to the other end. Use the paring knife to cut around the cucumber in a spiral (like a barber pole) cutting all the way to the chopstick as you go. Slide the chopstick out. Stretch your cucumber into a spring.



### 9. Carrot knots

**USE THEM FOR:** An accent to a side dish of peas, a cold vegetable soup such as vichyssoise, to encircle a relish tray, atop a cream cheese or sour cream dip.

**WHAT YOU WILL NEED:** Carrots, vegetable peeler, salt

**HOW TO CUT:** Peel the carrots. Use the peeler to make long strips. Fill a bowl with cold water, salting it heavily. Add carrot strips and refrigerate at least 15 minutes, or until needed. Drain carrot strips and twist into knots.



### 10. String of carrot flowers

**USE THEM FOR:** A salmon fillet, a plate of celery stalks stuffed with herb cheese, carrot or squash soup, an assortment of miniature empanadas or other filled pastries.

**WHAT YOU WILL NEED:** Carrots, chives, vegetable peeler, citrus stripper, skewer

**HOW TO CUT:** Peel the carrots and cut them into 3-inch lengths. Use the citrus stripper to cut lengthwise grooves evenly spaced around the carrot pieces. Slice the carrots crosswise into ½-inch slices; they should appear to be small flowers. Blanch in boiling water and refresh in ice water. Pierce the center of each flower with a skewer and string onto chives. To store, cover first with a damp paper towel and then with plastic wrap and refrigerate.



PHOTOS BY RENEE COMET  
 STYLED BY LISA CHERKASKY FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

## The Tools You'll Need for Garnishes

- **Cutting board**
- **Paring knife**
- **Chef's knife**
- **Small, sharp kitchen scissors**
- **Vegetable peeler** (the sharper the better; replace yours regularly.)
- **Citrus stripper** Removes peel from citrus fruit skins, without any of the bitter white pith, in one long strip. There are several varieties: I

prefer the one that is a combined stripper and zester (see two examples at right). The single blade allows you to cut strips; the five tiny circular blades make thinner strips of zest—fine shreds to scatter over vegetables or fruit salads or to toss in sugar and use as a cake topping.

■ **Canelle knife** For cutting decorative channels into the skins of citrus fruit, this tool, far right, has a V-shaped blade that you pull with steady pressure along the length of the fruit to remove evenly spaced strips.



Citrus strippers

Canelle knife

—Lisa Cherkasky