

Lemon Pepper

MAKES ½ CUP

Lemon pepper was one of my mother's favorite pantry staples. She'd keep it in a shaker and come dinnertime, she'd often whip it out from the cupboard and sprinkle it on almost everything for a flavor boost. Lemon pepper is great to have on hand to add tang and spice to chicken, fish, meat, or vegetables without adding fat. It's also a key ingredient in Mom's Honey Chicken (page 99), naturally. Forget the store-bought version in the spice aisle and take a little bit of time to make this fresh, homemade recipe.

1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns

1 teaspoon whole fennel seeds

1 teaspoon whole coriander seeds

¼ cup dried lemon peel

1 tablespoon packed dark brown sugar

2 teaspoons food-grade citric acid

½ teaspoon fine sea salt

¼ teaspoon granulated onion

¼ teaspoon granulated garlic

¼ teaspoon ground sansho pepper (see Note, page 44)

Heat a small, dry skillet over low heat and add the peppercorns, fennel, and coriander. Combine and toast for just 1 minute to release the fragrant oils, shaking the pan so the spices don't scorch. Remove and place in a spice mill or clean coffee grinder. Grind the toasted spices together for a few seconds until they are broken down but still a bit chunky (make sure you thoroughly wipe out your coffee grinder before you make coffee again). Pour the spices into a small mixing bowl and add the lemon peel, brown sugar, citric acid, salt, onion, garlic, and sansho pepper. Mix well with a spoon to distribute the ingredients evenly. Transfer to a glass jar or container with a tight-fitting lid and store at room temperature (away from the heat of the stove) for up to 3 months.

Coffee Rub

MAKES ABOUT ½ CUP

This earthy coffee-based rub sings with notes of orange, vanilla, and cardamom for a bold, well-rounded flavor. The dark and toasty undertone of this coffee-based rub jazzes up anything you want to cook up quickly on the grill, and pairs particularly well with rich meats, such as brisket, sirloin, all types of ribs, and Grilled Lamb Chops with Charred Eggplant Puree (page 121). For a vegetable alternative, sprinkle the rub over oven-roasted parsnips in the last five minutes of cooking to add an extra kick. This recipe is quick to make, and you can double, triple, or quadruple it easily.

2 tablespoons packed
light brown sugar

2 whole vanilla beans,
split and scraped

3 tablespoons finely
ground coffee,
preferably arabica

2 tablespoons dried,
ground orange peel

2 tablespoons fine
sea salt

2 teaspoons ground
cardamom

In a medium mixing bowl, combine the brown sugar and vanilla bean seeds. Add the coffee, orange peel, salt, and cardamom. Stir to fully incorporate and distribute the ingredients. Store at room temperature in a covered container (away from the heat of the stove) for up to 3 months.

Grilled Chopped Vegetable Salad with Havarti, Bacon, Kalamata Olives, and Jo-Jo's Vinaigrette

SERVES 4 TO 6

My grilled rendition of this quintessential summer salad is loaded with so many goodies! It's chock-full of bright flavors and colors and an addictive variety of crunchy textures, and the charred vegetables take it to another level. The key to making a killer chopped salad is cutting all of the ingredients into a fairly uniform size, so you get all of the flavors in one perfect bite. In fact, I often eat this salad with a spoon instead of a fork to be sure I taste everything together.

Since the salad is served chilled, you can easily grill the vegetables a day before you plan to serve it. Not only does this make a fabulous side to any of the barbecued meats in this book, but it also shines as one of the all-time great entrée salads when you want a lighter meal. I use my favorite vegetables in this recipe, but you can certainly substitute what you like better or what looks good at the farmer's market.

1 sweet onion, sliced into
½-inch rounds

1 portobello mushroom
cap, wiped of grit

¼ cup balsamic vinegar

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Fine sea salt

1 celery stalk, ends
trimmed

1 Persian cucumber

1 small zucchini, halved
lengthwise

1 small yellow squash,
halved lengthwise

½ pound green beans,
preferably Blue Lake,
ends trimmed

8 bacon strips,
cut into thirds

1 romaine lettuce heart,
quartered and
cut crosswise into
¼-inch-thick strips

¾ head iceberg lettuce,
cored, halved lengthwise
and cut crosswise into
¼-inch-thick pieces

1 pint cherry tomatoes,
halved lengthwise

6 ounces aged or firm
Havarti cheese, diced
(about ½ cup)

¼ cup kalamata olives,
pitted and halved
lengthwise

½ cup Jo-Jo's Vinaigrette
(recipe follows)

Juice of ½ lemon

Freshly ground black
pepper

1. Lay the onion rounds and mushroom flat on a rimmed baking sheet, drizzle with the vinegar and 2 tablespoons of the oil, and season with salt. You want to handle them separately so that the rings don't come apart and fall into the grill. Set aside for 15 minutes to let marinate. Rub the celery, cucumber, zucchini, and squash with the remaining 2 tablespoons oil to lightly coat. Season generously with salt.

2. Preheat a charcoal or gas grill to medium-high heat (400 to 450°F).

3. Working in batches, place the celery, cucumber, zucchini, squash, onion rounds, and mushroom on the grill and cook, turning periodically, until tender and lightly charred on all sides. Each vegetable takes a different amount of time, anywhere from 2 to 10 minutes. Transfer the vegetables to a side platter as they become

recipe continues

Mom's Honey Chicken

SERVES 4

My mother, Huli, was a big influence and inspiration on my becoming a chef. She was a well-known caterer back in the day and owned a prominent cooking school in Santa Monica, where I grew up. After cooking professionally all day, she would then come home and prepare dinner for my two sisters and me. Her baked honey chicken was the one meal our entire family could unanimously agree upon. Using accessible ingredients like soy sauce, honey, lemon, and mustard, this dish is a simple, craveable crowd-pleaser and deserves a spot on your permanent roster. I updated my mom's recipe by grilling the chicken, as it adds another layer of smoky flavor to an already terrific dish. Serve with your favorite sides, such as Blistered Broccolini with Rosemary and Lemon Bread Crumbs (page 76). Thanks, Mom!

¾ cup soy sauce

½ cup honey

1 tablespoon sesame oil

2 garlic cloves, crushed
after removing the germ
(see Note, page 31)

One 1-inch piece fresh
ginger, peeled and grated
(about 1 tablespoon)

1 tablespoon Dijon
mustard

1 tablespoon fresh
thyme leaves

Finely grated zest of
1 lemon

8 boneless, skin-on
chicken thighs (about
2 pounds)

1 teaspoon fine sea salt

1 tablespoon Lemon
Pepper (page 45),
plus more for serving

Vegetable oil, for greasing
the grill

6 scallions (green parts
only), chopped, for
serving

¼ cup fresh mint leaves,
chopped, for serving

3½ to 4 hours. Take the chicken out of the refrigerator about 30 minutes before cooking so that it comes up to room temperature.

2. Preheat a charcoal or gas grill to medium heat (350°F).

3. Take a few paper towels and fold them several times to make a thick square. Blot a small amount of vegetable oil on the paper towel, then carefully and quickly wipe the hot grates of the grill. This will create a nonstick grilling surface.

4. Season the chicken with the salt and lemon pepper. Cook until all the fat is rendered out, 30 to 35 minutes. This will create crispy, golden skin. Move the chicken as necessary to prevent sticking. Turn the chicken over and grill the flesh side, uncovered, until no longer pink, 3 to 4 minutes. An instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the chicken should read 170°F.

5. Transfer the chicken skin-side up to a wire rack and let rest for about 5 minutes to allow the juices to recirculate. Arrange the chicken on a serving platter. Season with additional lemon pepper and scatter the scallions and mint over top.

OVER THE COALS

Honey-Marinated Pork Chops with Pea Shoots

SERVES 4

One of the biggest problems that most people have with cooking pork chops is that they turn out dry and tough, with a shoe-leather texture. Pork is lean, prone to drying out, and easy to overcook. But if you flip the chops repeatedly—every 30 seconds or so—you can achieve a nice sear on the outside and an evenly cooked, moist interior.

I developed this simple marinade years ago when I was the chef at JiRaffe in Santa Monica, with my dear friend Raphael Lunetta. You might think vanilla and pork is an odd combination, but the fragrant spice lends itself beautifully to savory dishes, especially meat. If pea shoots are not available, substitute arugula.

1 lemongrass stalk, tough outer layer removed, smashed, and chopped into 2-inch pieces

1 whole vanilla bean, split and scraped, or ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1 tablespoon fine sea salt, plus more for seasoning

1 tablespoon whole black peppercorns

1 tablespoon dried red pepper flakes

1 tablespoon fennel seeds
½ whole nutmeg, finely grated

1 tablespoon sherry vinegar

10 fresh thyme sprigs, leaves stripped from the stems

1 fresh rosemary sprig, leaves stripped from the stem

Finely grated zest of 1 orange

Finely grated zest of 1 lemon

¼ cup honey

2 cups extra-virgin olive oil, plus more to lightly coat the pea shoots and tendrils

Four 10- to 12-ounce bone-in pork rib chops, about 1-inch-thick and preferably free-range or Berkshire

Vegetable oil, for greasing the grill

1 cup pea shoots and tendrils or baby arugula

Juice of 1 lemon

Fleur de sel

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Prepare the marinade: In a medium mixing bowl, combine the lemongrass, vanilla seeds and pod, sea salt, peppercorns, red pepper flakes, fennel, nutmeg, vinegar, thyme, rosemary, orange zest, and lemon zest. Pour the honey in a microwave-safe container and microwave on medium power for 30 seconds to melt. Pour the liquefied honey into the mixing bowl and stir the ingredients together until evenly distributed. Slowly whisk in the olive oil.

2. Put the pork chops side by side in a baking dish and pat dry with paper towels. Pour the marinade over the pork, flipping them over to coat both sides. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 8 hours or preferably overnight to marinate, turning the pork over a couple of times. Take the meat out of the refrigerator about 30 minutes before grilling so that it comes up to room temperature.

3. Preheat a charcoal or gas grill to medium-high heat (400°F).

recipe continues

OVER THE COALS

TO DO

The Charcoal Bison Burger

SERVES 4

What makes a great burger? For me, it's the perfect ratio among meat, bun, and toppings. While I love buttery brioche or challah buns for my burgers, too much of a good thing tends to overpower the other elements. I like to cut out and discard the doughy center of the buns, leaving just the top dome and bottom base to ensure the bread does not upstage the burger itself. While ground beef reigns supreme in the burger world, bison (a.k.a. buffalo) meat is readily available in stores nowadays and is really lean with a rich, meaty flavor that bodes well for a burger. Since bison is low in fat, these burgers cook more quickly than beef and are best served medium-rare so they don't dry out.

1½ pounds ground bison

1 sweet onion, sliced into
¼-inch rounds

Vegetable oil, for greasing
the grill

2 tablespoons extra-virgin
olive oil

Fine sea salt

2 tablespoons mayonnaise

Freshly ground black
pepper

4 slices white American
cheese

4 large brioche or challah
hamburger buns, top
and bottom cut off and
center discarded

Burger Sauce
(recipe follows)

Butter or iceberg lettuce

Heirloom tomatoes,
sliced ¼ inch thick

1. Using your hands, gently shape the ground bison into four patties, about 6 ounces each, 5 to 6 inches in diameter, and about 1 inch thick. Don't pack the meat too tightly—too much pressure will result in a tough, chewy burger. Place the formed burgers side by side on a pan and refrigerate to allow the patties to set for about 15 minutes.

2. Prepare the onions: Preheat a charcoal or gas grill to medium-high heat (400°F).

3. Take a few paper towels and fold them several times to make a thick square. Blot a small amount of vegetable oil on the paper towel, then carefully and quickly wipe the hot grates of the grill. This will create a nonstick grilling surface.

4. Lay the onion rounds flat on a rimmed baking sheet, drizzle with the olive oil, and season with salt. Grill the onions for 8 to 10 minutes, turning them over halfway through the cooking, until charred on both sides. Transfer the rounds to a cutting board and chop them into small pieces.

recipe continues

OVER THE COALS

TO DO

5. Brush both sides of the burgers lightly with mayonnaise and season generously with salt and pepper. Put the burgers on the grill and gently flatten them with the bottom of a spatula.
6. Grill the burgers for 3 minutes and then flip them over with a spatula. You want to flip the burgers only once; they should turn easily without sticking because of the fat in the mayo.
7. Sprinkle the burgers with the chopped charred onion, put a slice of cheese on top of each, and continue to grill the other side for 3 more minutes. An instant-read thermometer inserted into the center should read 140°F for medium-rare.

8. Transfer the grill rack with the same paper towel as before to clean the small charred pieces, then toast the hamburger buns cut-side down for 1 minute.

9. To build the burgers, spread 2 tablespoons of the burger sauce on the bottom bun, add a lettuce leaf and slice of tomato; season with salt and pepper. Top with the burgers, cheese-side up. Spread another 2 tablespoons of the sauce on the top bun and close.

Burger Sauce

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

This killer "secret" sauce is great on a burger or even French fries. A little bit different from the typical norm of mayo, ketchup, and relish, I came up with this custom concoction by playing around with what I had available in my pantry and fridge. The result is an insane balance of sweet, spicy, acidic, and savory.

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| 1 cup mayonnaise | 1½ teaspoons honey |
| 1½ tablespoons ketchup | 1½ teaspoons grated fresh ginger |
| 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce | ½ teaspoons wasabi paste |
| 2 teaspoons Champagne vinegar | |

In a small mixing bowl, combine the mayonnaise, ketchup, Worcestershire, vinegar, honey, ginger, and wasabi. Whisk until smooth. The sauce may be stored, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 10 days.

done. Cover and refrigerate the grilled vegetables for at least 1 hour to chill them. You may prepare the vegetables up to 1 day before you plan to serve the salad.

4. Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil over high heat. Prepare an ice bath by filling a large bowl halfway with water and adding a tray of ice cubes. Set a colander or mesh strainer inside the bowl of ice water and set aside.
5. Blanch the green beans until tender when pierced with a knife, about 2 minutes.
6. Use a slotted spoon or tongs to remove the green beans from the boiling water and plunge them into the colander to "shock" them (this stops the cooking process, cools them down right away, and locks in the bright green color). Once completely cool, pull out the colander or strainer to drain. Pat the green beans dry with paper towels, cut into thirds, and set aside. The green beans can easily be prepared in advance, covered, and refrigerated for up to 1 day before you plan to serve the salad.
7. Heat a 10-inch sauté pan over medium heat and add the bacon pieces. Cook, stirring, until the bacon is fried and crispy, about 5 minutes. Transfer the bacon to a paper towel-lined plate to drain.
8. To serve, place the romaine and iceberg lettuce in a large salad bowl. Chop the grilled vegetables into small uniform pieces and add to the salad bowl. Add the green beans, bacon, tomatoes, Havarti, and olives. Toss well to distribute the ingredients evenly. Pour in the vinaigrette and lemon juice and toss again until well coated. Season with 6 turns of a peppermill.

Jo-Jo's Vinaigrette

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

This French-style vinaigrette should always be in your refrigerator door. Thankfully, you will have plenty left over when you make this for the grilled chopped salad. Good on just about everything from sliced avocado to any variety of greens, this vinaigrette has just the right amount of acidity to complement the earthy depth of vegetables. For fun, I named this vinaigrette "Jo-Jo's"—it's a clever mashup of my name and Charcoal's Chef de Cuisine Joe Johnson.

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| 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard | 1 teaspoon fine sea salt |
| 1 garlic clove, smashed with a back of a knife into a paste after removing the germ (see Note, page 31) | $\frac{1}{4}$ cup balsamic vinegar |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ small shallot, finely chopped | $\frac{1}{4}$ cup apple cider vinegar |
| Freshly ground black pepper | 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar |
| | 1 cup grapeseed oil |
| | $\frac{1}{2}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil |
| | Juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon |

In a large jar or container with a tight-fitting lid, combine the mustard, garlic, shallot, 6 turns of a peppermill, and salt (adding salt to the base of the vinaigrette before the oil is key so it dissolves). Pour in the vinegars and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water. Pour in the grapeseed oil. Secure the lid and shake until the oil is incorporated. Add the olive oil and lemon juice. Shake again until the vinaigrette is fully emulsified. The vinaigrette keeps, covered, in the refrigerator for 6 weeks.

Grilled Lamb Chops with Charred Eggplant Puree

SERVES 4

Succulent lamb and velvety eggplant is a classic Mediterranean pairing prominent in Greek, Italian, and French cuisines. Rosy in the center and charred on the outside, these little chops grill up in a flash and make a satisfying starter when friends walk in the door, a springtime appetizer for Easter dinner, or a light weeknight, casual dinner. You can easily double the recipe if you are serving more than four people. The coffee rub adds a caramel sweetness and nutty undertone to the delicious gamy flavor of the lamb. I often serve the lamb gyro-style, with the eggplant puree smeared on pita or charcoal flatbread (page 185) and lamb sliced on top. If serving with charcoal flatbread, it is best to omit the activated charcoal from the recipe so that the final presentation has a bit of color contrast.

8 lamb chops
(14 to 16 ounces total),
excess fat trimmed,
bones cleaned

¼ cup Coffee Rub
(page 53)

Vegetable oil, for greasing
the grill

Fine sea salt

Freshly ground black
pepper

Charred Eggplant Puree
(recipe follows), warm

4 pieces Charcoal
Flatbread (page 185)
or pita (optional)

1. Put the lamb chops in a large baking dish and pat dry with paper towels. Sprinkle the coffee rub on both sides of the lamb chops. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or up to 2 hours to marinate so that the flavors sink in. Take the lamb out of the refrigerator about 30 minutes before grilling so that it comes up to room temperature.

2. Preheat a charcoal or gas grill to medium-high heat (400°F).

3. Take a few paper towels and fold them several times to make a thick square. Blot a small amount of vegetable oil on the paper towel, then carefully and quickly wipe the hot grates of the grill. This will create a nonstick grilling surface. Season the lamb chops on both sides generously with salt.

4. Lay the chops on the grill and sear for 3 to 4 minutes per side for medium-rare, turning them halfway through cooking to “mark” them. An instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the meat should read 130°F. Transfer the chops from the grill to a wire rack and let rest for 5 minutes to allow the juices to recirculate. Season with 6 turns of a peppermill. Serve with warm eggplant puree and charcoal flatbread on the side. Guests can build their own gyro at the table.

recipe continues

OVER THE COALS

Charred Eggplant Puree

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

You can make this lava-colored eggplant puree ahead of time. It's similar to baba ganoush, so you can use any leftovers as a dip with vegetable crudité. For a smoky flavor that will add depth to the finished dish, grill the eggplants on a very hot charcoal grill until they are completely black on both sides.

3 Chinese eggplants,
2 eggplants with
ends trimmed and
sliced lengthwise into
½-inch-thick slices, and
1 eggplant diced into
½-inch pieces

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 sweet onion,
halved and sliced
Fine sea salt

1. Preheat a charcoal or gas grill to high heat (500°F).

2. Grill the eggplant slices until completely black and charred on both sides; turning every 5 minutes, for about 20 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, coat a medium saucepan with the vegetable oil and place over medium heat. Add the onion and salt. Cook and stir until completely tender, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the diced eggplant and season with another pinch of salt to release the natural moisture. Cook, stirring, until any liquid from the eggplant and onion has evaporated, 4 to 5 minutes. Add the charred eggplant, reduce to medium-low heat, and mix well to incorporate. Pour in ¾ cup water. Cook and stir until the liquid is reduced by half, about 5 minutes.

4. Working in batches if necessary, spoon the eggplant mixture into a blender, preferably a Vitamix, filling it no more than halfway. Puree on low speed for a few seconds, and then increase to medium-high speed until the sauce is completely smooth. Be sure to hold down the lid with a kitchen towel for safety. Add 1 tablespoon water at a time if the eggplant mixture is too thick to blend properly. Repeat with the remaining sauce until completely blended. Season again with a pinch of salt. Serve warm.



Cabbage Baked in Embers with Yogurt, Sumac, and Lemon Zest

SERVES 4

Who would have thought that the most popular dish on the Charcoal menu would be cabbage?! We bury a whole head of plain ol' green cabbage and cook it in blistering coals until the outer leaves are caramelized and give way to a soft, steamed interior. Because of its size and density, cabbage lends itself well to the smoldering embers of the fire, where it transforms and emerges juicy, smoky, and meaty. Trust me, even people who think they don't like cabbage—they've only had watery coleslaw or bland cabbage soup—go nuts for this addictive starter dish. Served warm, the charred cabbage leaves play off the coolness of the yogurt dipping sauce, which is fragrant with citrusy sumac and lemon. It's simple enough to add another head or two of cabbage for a gathering, and any leftovers you can slice into ribbons to top tacos. Be sure to try the yogurt sauce over any of your favorite grilled vegetables, such as eggplant, or use it as a dressing spooned over fresh tomato salad.

1 large head green
cabbage (about
2 pounds)

Extra-virgin olive oil

Fine sea salt

1 cup plain whole-milk
Greek yogurt

2 tablespoons finely
chopped fresh chives

Finely grated zest
of 1 lemon

Juice of ½ lemon

1 teaspoon sumac

maintain the temperature at about 400°F by
adjusting the vents.

1. Transfer the grill grate from a charcoal grill and build a hot fire with lump charcoal until red-hot. Rub the cabbage lightly with olive oil and season generously with salt, ensuring that all sides are well coated. Put on your fireproof gloves. Make a well in the center of the coals using a rake or shovel, and carefully add the cabbage. Use the rake or shovel to bury the cabbage completely by covering it with the surrounding hot coals. You may grill something on top at the same time if desired. Close the lid to keep the heat in and to prevent the charcoal from burning out too quickly. You want to

2. The cabbage should be completely charred and black on all sides and tender in the center in about 1 hour; check by piercing with a cake tester or paring knife. If it's not done, continue roasting in the coals for 5 more minutes. If you are preparing the cabbage ahead, wrap tightly in aluminum foil and keep it warm in a low oven.
3. In a small mixing bowl, combine the yogurt, chives, lemon zest, lemon juice, and sumac until smooth.
4. Cut the cabbage through the core into quarters. Cut the core out of each piece. Arrange the cabbage wedges on a serving platter and season lightly with salt. Rip off the cabbage leaves with your fingers and dip into the sauce.

Coal-Roasted Carrots with Ricotta, Herbs, and Black Pepper Honey

SERVES 4 TO 6

Few cooking methods do more to bring out a vegetable's natural sweetness than fire does to carrots. The high, dry heat caramelizes the natural sugars and the charring imparts a pleasantly bitter flavor to counteract the carrots' sweetness. Black pepper and honey is one of my favorite duos and the perfect foil for fire-kissed carrots. Tangy and sweet, a final toss shellacs the carrots in a glistening glaze that ties it all together. To move the carrots in and out of the fire easily, you'll need a vegetable grill basket. The carrots will blacken in spots, so if you are using purple carrots, take care not to peel off too much of the dark flesh along with the charred bits.

CHARCOAL

2 pounds small rainbow carrots (about 24), tops trimmed

Extra-virgin olive oil

Fine sea salt

½ cup honey

1 tablespoon whole black peppercorns, coarsely cracked with the back of a heavy skillet or mallet

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

▶ ½ cup whole-milk ricotta, preferably sheep's milk

1 tablespoon whole milk

1 tablespoon Basque Vinegar (page 34) or apple cider vinegar

4 small fresh basil leaves, cut into small pieces with scissors

2 fresh flat-leaf parsley sprigs, leaves picked from the stems

2 fresh chives, cut into ½-inch pieces with scissors

2 small fresh opal basil leaves, cut into small pieces with scissors (optional)

Fleur de sel

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Remove the grill grate from a charcoal grill and build a hot fire with lump charcoal until red-hot. Put the carrots in a large mixing bowl and coat lightly with olive oil and season generously with salt, tossing to coat. Arrange the carrots in a grill basket in an even layer. Put on your fireproof gloves. Lay the grill basket with the carrots on top of the coals and, using a rake or shovel, carefully cover them with the surrounding hot coals so they are completely buried. The carrots should be charred and black in spots and slightly tender in the center in 5 to 6 minutes; check by piercing with a cake tester or paring knife.

2. Using tongs, carefully transfer the carrots to a bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and let them sweat for about 10 minutes to loosen their skins. Once the carrots are cool enough to handle, rub off the charred skins with paper towels. They don't have to be perfect; if a few burned bits are left on the carrots, don't sweat it. Set aside at room temperature while preparing the rest of the dish.

recipe continues

3. Place the honey and cracked pepper in a small saucepan and heat over medium-low heat until the mixture begins to bubble and turn a dark amber color, about 4 minutes. Add 2 teaspoons water and mix until well combined and the honey thins out slightly. Whisk in the butter until melted and continue to cook and whisk until the honey mixture is emulsified, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and cover to keep warm.

4. In a small mixing bowl, mix the ricotta and milk to loosen until it resembles small-curd cottage cheese. Set aside at room temperature.

5. Coat a large sauté pan with olive oil and heat over medium heat. Lay the carrots in the pan and toss until heated through, about 2 minutes. Once the carrots are hot, pour in the pepper honey and continue to cook and toss until the carrots are shiny and glazed, about 5 minutes. Drizzle with the vinegar and toss to coat.

6. To serve, mound the ricotta in the center of a serving bowl and arrange the glazed carrots around it. Sprinkle with the basil, parsley, chives, and opal basil, if using. Season with fleur de sel and 3 turns of a peppermill. Finish with a drizzle of olive oil over the top.

