Meet our

Celebrity chefs

Curtis Aikens
Chef, Cookbook Author
Novato, California, and Conyers, Georgia

A native Georgian, **Curtis Aikens's** attraction to produce began as a small boy, as he followed his grandfather Curtis through the garden. His interest grew during high school, when he worked at the Conyers, Georgia, A&P Market. "I was supposed to be in the grocery department," he recalls, "but I hung out in produce because that's where all the action was." His enthusiasm soon became a career. After attending Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Aikens vacationed in California and was drawn to relocate there. During his seven years in California, Aikens opened his first produce company, called Peaches. Next, Aikens moved to New York to head the produce departments at Dom's Wholesale Market and at Balducci's. Aikens's television career began as a consultant and food stylist on commercials for Pizza Hut, Pillsbury, and McDonald's.

In 1988, he returned to Georgia to begin Aikens's Family Produce, a wholesale and retail supplier of produce for clients ranging from the Rockdale County School System to the TV series *In the Heat of the Night* and the feature film *Glory*.

Today, Curtis is a popular television and radio personality, a celebrated chef and culinary consultant, and the published author of four books: *Garden Grocer's Guide to the Harvest, Curtis Aikens' Guide to the Harvest, Curtis Cooks with Heart and Soul,* and *Recipes to Weight Loss and Its Control,* published in the fall of 1997.

Currently he resides in Novato, California, and Conyers, Georgia, and is the father of two young sons, Curtis Jr. and Cole. ✹

Pasta with Love

Pasta with carrot, sweet onion, and shiitake mushrooms

1 stick, plus 2 tbsp. butter, divided
2 tbsp. oil, divided
1 medium to large Vidalia onion, peeled and sliced
6 shiitake mushrooms, sliced
2 carrots, grated
4 tomatoes, diced
3 tbsp. herbes de Provence
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 lb. cooked pasta

In a large sauté pan over medium heat sauté half stick butter and 1 tbsp. oil. Add onion and sauté 3 to 4 minutes or until onions start to brown.

In a small sauté pan add the 6 sliced shiitake mushrooms and 2 tbsp. butter, sauté for about 4 minutes. Remove from heat when done.

Back to the large pan, add carrots and half the remaining butter. Cook for 5 to 7 minutes, allowing carrots to release all their sweetness. Add tomatoes, rest of butter, and oil. Cover and cook about 4 minutes. Season with herbs and taste. Add salt and pepper along with the cooked mushrooms. Allow to simmer about 3 minutes.

You can add pasta to the pan or add pasta and sauce to serving platter. Toss and serve. ✹

NOTES:

COOKING & ENTERTAINING