

## **Family Chef: Acclaimed chef adores beef**

By Amy Blum

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Most people don't check into a hospital for the gourmet food. However, thanks to Amanda Viau (pronounced *View*) and her team of 70 chefs, healthy, wholesome foods fill the menus at Avera McKennan's main, cancer center and behavioral health campuses in Sioux Falls.

"About 20% of the food service I do on a daily basis is actually for patients," the executive chef said. "I work really closely with dietitians to make sure our patients have wholesome, tasty food to eat while they're with us."

Viau and her team feed about 3,400 people each day through the Avera system. With only a fifth of the meals served to patients, Viau finds many opportunities to spread her creative wings.

Whether catering a large corporate event or feeding surgeons, Viau – who has earned acclaim as South Dakota's only female recipient of the American Culinary Federation Chef of the Year honor – wants to make sure everyone enjoys tasty food.

Serving up culinary delights wasn't always her passion though.

"I started my culinary career as a dishwasher at the Quarry Steakhouse in Yankton, SD," Viau recalled. "There was no passion in it; it was pure motivation. I wanted a car, and I had to have a job to get one!"

After four years at the Quarry, it was time for college. Viau strongly considered art school.

"Dad said, 'Well, maybe we should think about something that makes money?' I decided moving into the role of a chef would be an easy transition because of the experience I'd already gained. I headed off to Mankato where I earned my associate's degree in culinary arts from South Central Technical College, and the rest is history."

Viau built an impressive resume in her six years near the Twin Cities. However, it was a fateful phone chat with her then-two-year-old niece that brought her home.

"I'd been working at an upscale bed and breakfast. The owner announced the doors were closing because his children weren't interested in joining the family business, and like that, I was out of a job," the 30-year-old chef said. "I called my sister in Sioux Falls, and my niece Kylie got on the phone. She said, 'Aunt Amanda, you could just come here and live with us.' I missed my family like crazy, and I knew even if the move was temporary, I could make it work."

The move happened about six years ago, and Viau hasn't looked back. She put in years of 85-90 hour weeks as a banquet, then executive, chef at Westward Ho Country Club. When the opportunity came along to join Avera, she welcomed it.

“Family is everything to me, and I’d spent years not really getting to share time with my family because I was working weekends, holidays and everything in between. I’m at a great place now,” Viau said.

In her new position, Viau has been a featured guest on local Sioux Falls radio programs. Once a month, Viau puts on a cooking demo for the public at the Hy-Vee on Minnesota Avenue in Sioux Falls. She tries to showcase her French techniques with modern styles in ways that challenge her. From vegetarian and vegan to meat and potatoes, Viau proves any food can taste good.

But, if she were preparing a last meal, you can bet it would include a healthy dose of beef.

“I challenge myself not to have favorites or specialties because I don’t want to get stuck in a rut,” Viau said. “But, I adore cooking beef ribeye. The roast and the eye are my favorite and would absolutely be part of my last meal. I’d cover the ribeye in butter and slow roast it in the oven with fingerling potatoes and a bunch of other yummy accoutrements!”

Today, she keeps her eye on the future and works to continually reach new goals.

“I’m a pretty goal-oriented person,” she said. “For me, cooking is a lot like cleaning; I can always see where I’ve been and what I’ve accomplished.”

Attaining certified executive chef status – a status reached by only 10% of the chefs who attempt it – is next on Viau’s list. After that, she plans to earn her bachelor’s degree in food science.

Until then, she’ll continue turning out fabulous food for Avera patients, guests and staff while sharing her passion for cooking with others.

Viau shared the following recipes from her Hy-Vee presentation with South Dakota Beef Council’s Holly Swee in December.

### **Smoky Paprika Rubbed Beef Tenderloin with Roasted Root Vegetables**

Total recipe time: 1 to 1-1/4 hours ... Makes 6-8 servings

#### *Ingredients:*

- 1 well-trimmed center-cut beef tenderloin roast (2-3 pounds)
- 1-1/2 pounds baby red potatoes cut in half
- 1-1/2 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled, cut into 1-1/2 x 1 inch pieces
- 1 pound cipollini onions, trimmed, blanched, and peeled
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- Salt (preferably Kosher salt for the more intense flavor)

#### *Seasoning:*

- 1 cup tightly packed parsley leaves
- 4 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon ground red pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

- 1/4 cup olive oil

#### Instructions

1. Heat oven to 425°F. Place seasoning ingredients except olive oil in food processor; cover and process until parsley is chopped, stopping and scraping side of container as needed. With the motor running, slowly add oil through the opening in cover, processing just until combined.
2. Press 3 tablespoons seasoning mixture evenly onto all surfaces of beef roast. Reserve remaining seasoning mixture.
3. Place roast on rack in shallow roasting pan. Insert ovenproof meat thermometer so tip is centered in thickest part of beef, not resting in fat. Do not add water or cover. Roast in 425°F oven 35 to 40 minutes for medium rare; 45 to 50 minutes for medium doneness.
4. Meanwhile combine remaining seasoning mixture, red potatoes, sweet potatoes and cipollini in large bowl; toss to coat. Transfer vegetables to metal baking pan. Place in oven with beef roast. Roast 35 to 45 minutes or until vegetables are tender and lightly browned. Sprinkle with 1 tablespoon of parsley and salt, as desired.
5. Remove roast when meat thermometer registers 135°F for medium rare; 150°F for medium. Transfer roast to carving board and immediately sprinkle with remaining 1 tablespoon parsley. Tent loosely with aluminum foil. Let stand 15 to 20 minutes. (Temperature will continue to rise 10°F to reach 145°F for medium rare; 160°F for medium.)

#### **Grilled Beef Bruschetta with Feta Cheese**

Total recipe time: 1 hour ... Makes approximately 32 servings

#### *Ingredients*

- 1 boneless beef top sirloin steak, cut 3/4 inch thick (1 pound)
- 1 package (4 ounce) crumbled feta cheese
- 3 tablespoons reduced fat sour cream
- 1 medium red bell pepper, cut lengthwise in half, seeded, stemmed
- 1 small yellow onion, cut into 1/4-inch thick slices
- 1 loaf French baguette bread (about 20 inches long), cut into thirty-two 1/2 inch thick slices
- 1 cup chopped seeded plum tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh basil
- 2 tablespoons minced Kalamata olives
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1-1/2 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 large clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

#### *Instructions*

1. Place cheese and sour cream in food processor container. Cover; process until smooth. Transfer to small bowl. Cover and refrigerate.
2. Place bell pepper and onion grid over medium, ash-covered coals. Grill, uncovered, 10 to 12 minutes

or until bell pepper is slightly blackened and onion is tender, turning once. Place bell pepper in food-safe plastic bag; close bag. Let stand until skin is loosened. Set onion aside.

3. Place bread slices on grid over medium, ash-covered coals. Grill uncovered, about 3 minutes, turning once. Set aside.
4. Place beef steak on grid over medium, ash-covered coals. Grill, uncovered, 13 to 16 minutes for medium rare to medium doneness, turning occasionally. Season with salt and black pepper, as desired. Keep warm.
5. Meanwhile remove skin from bell pepper. Coarsely chop bell pepper and onion; place in medium bowl. Add tomatoes, basil, olives, oil, vinegar, garlic, salt and black pepper; mix well.
6. Carve steak into 32 thin slices. Divide cheese mixture equally among bread slices; spread evenly. Top each bread slice with 1 steak slice and 1 tablespoon tomato mixture.

### **Dried Beef Ice Cream**

#### *Ingredients*

- 2 cups milk (whole, 2%, or 1%)
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 6 egg yolks, beaten
- ½ cup minced dried beef
- 2 tablespoons vanilla extract
- 4 cups chilled whipping cream

#### *Directions*

1. Scald milk in a double boiler or heavy saucepan. (Scald by simmering the milk over medium heat until the milk reaches approximately 175° F. Then remove from the heat.)
2. Combine sugar, salt, and egg yolks in a separate bowl and whip them together with a wire whisk or a hand mixer until the mixture thickens enough to leave a trailing on the surface, approximately 3 minutes.
3. Gradually add the scalded milk to the thickened egg mixture. Beat on low or whisk while slowly pouring in 3/4 to 1 cup of milk at a time. Do not over beat; beat just until the milk is evenly mixed into the egg mixture.
4. Once all the milk has been added into the egg mixture, pour the combined ingredients back into the double boiler or saucepan. Cook over medium-low heat until the mixture almost reaches boiling point, approximately 180° F. Stir constantly and do not allow mixture to boil (boiling may cause it to curdle).
5. When the custard has thickened properly, remove it from the heat and allow it to cool before placing it in the refrigerator to chill. Pour the custard into a glass bowl and cover the surface with plastic wrap to prevent a film from forming on the surface.
6. After the custard has cooled, place it in the refrigerator for at least 4 hours, but ideally for 24 hours. This aging process will give the mixture better whipping qualities and produce ice cream with more body and a smoother texture.
7. After the mixture has chilled in the refrigerator, stir in the cream, beef and vanilla. Stir just until mixture is well combined. The ice cream is now ready for the freezing process.
8. Follow the ice cream maker's instruction manual for the freezing process.