

MENU NOTES

ROASTED BANANA BAVAROIS

I was working on a truffle dish around the holidays when we happened upon this combination. I wanted something lighter than the traditional garlic or potato that might get paired with the truffles and started thinking about other ingredients that had depth and which make work with the truffles' earthiness. Sea urchin is what came to mind with its unctuousness and that feeling of "breath of ocean". In order not to overpower the sea urchin, we needed a medium that wasn't too savory. I often get chocolate undertones with truffles, and had been joking with my pastry chef about doing a banana-truffle dessert and figured that would be the obvious choice.

BOSTON MACKEREL

As we move into Fall, I wanted to make a fish course that, as the second course would be an early transition, much like summer to fall and lighter into richer. The richness and bigger flavor profile of mackerel is something I think of more in the fall and winter. Needing the garnish to have some intensity but also brightness of flavor, the South of France is used for inspiration. A little sweetness with the carrots and orange, a touch of brine from the olive, and cumin-spiced socca tie the dish together.

GARBURE

Garbure, the classic cabbage and meat stew, is one of the first dishes I ordered when I went to France as a stagiaire in 1998. I always hesitate to explain garbure to people because it's a stew that is more of a knife and fork type dish. In the southwest of France where the duck is king, the more upscale versions generally include duck confit. In order to make our version a little lighter I use slices of duck breast with confit of cabbage and La Ratte potatoes which provide the stewiness, and of course foie gras emulsion for richness and depth.

LOBSTER CASSOULET

I was once tasked with using Japanese adzuki beans to come up with a dish. The American in me said "Pork and Beans", the French in me said "Cassoulet". The fact that it is a Japanese bean drew me to Lobster Cassoulet. The lobster is poached in oil made with the roasted shells and herbs to give off a very savory depth in flavor. The beans are heated in stock flavored with bonito flakes, providing the depth and smokiness of a meat stock but much cleaner in flavor. It has all of the complexity of its western muse, but with a refinement and delicacy that is very Japanese to me.

KUROGE BEEF

Kuroge beef is special. It is one of those foods that you can do so much with and simultaneously need to make sure you don't ruin it. Frequently, with Kuroge I think of the sense of taste - sweet, sour, salty, bitter-fresh (umami) - and decide which accents to use. Moving into Fall, the use of potato, sunchokes, butternut squash, kale and persimmon are highlights for the dish.

CONCORD GRAPE ISPAHAN

Pierre Hermé is a giant in the modern pastry world and, some would say, singularly responsible for the resurgent popularity of macarons which he began to focus on while Pastry Chef at Ladurée in the 90s. One of his signature creations was inspired by the Iranian city of Isfahan, renowned for its gardens and roses. Titled 'Ispahan,' it featured flavors of raspberry, rose and lychee. I've drawn inspiration from Chef Hermé's approach to building flavor and creating pastries and pay homage to his signature creation here. My Ispahan replaces raspberry with autumn's concord grape, whose brightness marries nicely with the floral notes of the rose and lychee. A touch of cardamom nods at Iranian cuisine and accents the grape's tannins.

SAINT HONORÉ

I officially began my pastry career studying classic French technique at The French Culinary Institute in Manhattan. We studied the great canon of French desserts, including Gâteau St. Honoré, a choux-based cream tart named for the patron saint of bakers. In my inexperienced opinion, it was complicated to execute and seemed old-fashioned. I was sure it was the product of another era - the French version of a jello fruit salad. To my chagrin, I was assigned the cake as part of my graduation exam and even had to make them in miniature for display. Months later while apprenticing in France, I discovered the St. Honoré is still highly beloved in its native country. As my skill in and knowledge of pastry has grown, so has my appreciation of this classic gâteau.

— ERIC ZIEBOLD, Chef

— ANNE SPECKER, Pastry Chef