

MENU NOTES

ICED L'ABEILLE GARDEN RATATOUILLE

In 2015, I started working a patch of land at RdV Vineyards that would ultimately become l'Abeille Garden. I was harvesting late one morning, and as I do when I'm picking vegetables that have already taken on some heat from the sun, I was picking them into a bucket of cool water. The colors were bright and crisp in the morning sun, the smell was... the garden. I do not take food photos very often, but I was inspired enough to pull out my iPhone and capture the moment, and this dish draws inspiration from that moment.

L'ABEILLE GARDEN LA RATTE POTATO FONDANT

La Ratte Potatoes are that variety of fingerling potato that Chef Joël Robuchon made famous with his Potato Purée. They're something we've planted every year at l'Abeille Garden. They have a unique ability to be cooked for a long time without overcooking. After blanching and peeling them, we make a braising liquid with vegetable stock, garlic, thyme and butter to finish cooking them. As a foil for the rich, buttery, earthiness of the potato, we are adding a sauce of reduced lobster stock enriched with lobster coral and minced lobster meat and finishing it with grated Australian black truffles.

MADRAS CURRY POACHED HALIBUT

The tropical flavors of South India are captured in our Halibut dish. Deep and vibrant flavors of Madras curry and cilantro are balanced with aromatic coconut milk-poached corn, which we are featuring here in lieu of the traditional rice or tapioca pearl garnish. We add mango for an additional touch of brightness to this summer dish.

SAUTÉED MOULARD DUCK FOIE GRAS

In general, I veer away from overly sweet preparations of Foie Gras. But because it is bar-b-que season, we thought that we would dress it up, for the summer tasting menu, with a small packet of cabbage and shredded duck confit and then serve it with a spiced peach bar-b-que sauce.

MARTIN FARMS MINUTE STEAK

It's summertime, so putting a steak salad on the menu seemed to be fitting. I always joke with my French in-laws that a salad for them is lettuce getting in the way of protein, so we decided to go ahead and remove it. Steak with blue cheese is traditionally from the greater Southwest region of France. Being from Iowa, where Maytag is made, including a blue cheese as the dressing was a must. We made our "croutons" with fried okra and a vinaigrette with some herbs from our garden to evoke that summer freshness.

KEY LIME MERINGUE...CAKE

When I decided to feature tomatoes in the second dessert course, I was in a quandary about what flavors and ingredients would be best served before. In the end, I opted for the fresh, slightly vegetal flavors of shiso, cucumber and granny smith in this course, which serve as an appropriate bridge between a savory meat course and a more savory dessert and also refresh the palate for the richness of the peanuts. Lime curd provides the appropriately bright boost to allow the flavors to shine.

NUT 'N' HONEY

There are few dishes that stick with me. I mean...*really* stick with me. For years. The tomato dessert I had as a young pastry cook at Montreal's Le Club Chasse et Pêche is one of them. Before vegetables became the new 'it' ingredient in trendy restaurants. It was a tomato jam with almond cookies and a honey ice cream. Bright, acidic tomatoes roasted into a caramely, bright sweetness; warmth from the baked almond cookies and sweetness from the honey. I thought it was a beautiful combination, if not one that could be improved upon with something a little less classically European and a bit more American: the peanut. Peanuts have a more robust flavor and saltiness that stands up to the tomato's assertive acidity. Looking back, I think what I really appreciated about that dessert is that it was a dessert, as opposed to a sweet version of a savory tomato dish. Here is my effort to do the same.

— ERIC ZIEBOLD, Chef

— ANNE SPECKER, Pastry Chef