

MENU NOTES

BLUEFIN TORO

Last fall I got a care package of aji dulce peppers from The French Laundry Garden. They were amazing and delicious, so we opted to plant several rows this year at l'Abeille Garden. We are currently in full harvest and they are just as amazing as in my memory. Fruity and aromatic, we are using the puréed peppers to go with the fattiness of the tuna belly and avocado, as well as with the toastiness of arepa and the freshness of cilantro.

YUKON GOLD POTATO MOUSSELINE

As luck would have it, I happened into some sea urchins coming off a boat north of San Francisco. We were out touring Mendocino and plans immediately changed as we rushed back to Napa to prepare the just harvested sea urchin. A quick potato purée lightened with whipped cream and meringue, a little beurre monté with Meyer lemons from down the street and one of my favorite memories of living in Northern California was born.

OLIVE OIL POACHED ATLANTIC HALIBUT

In late 2009, Célia and I visited Sidi Bou Said in Tunisia and it was wonderful. We stayed with a friend of hers that was happy to show us around the amphitheaters, the aqueducts, the markets, and of course the restaurants. Even more importantly he was dating a Tunisian woman whose mother made some Harissa for us. Knowing my affinity for it, our manager, Laure had her in-laws send us some of the “real stuff” from Tunis recently. It adds a smokiness and depth of flavor to our North African inspired olive oil poached halibut with eggplant purée and saffron broth.

MÉTIER SURF & TURF

Lobster mushrooms are named so because they're red, but in all honesty that is where their resemblance to a lobster ends. Dense and meaty, they are delightful braised with garlic, thyme and olive oil. Paired with foie gras and celery roots braised in lobster oil, I think they're a great dish to exemplify the early fall we're experiencing.

HERB ROASTED ELYSIAN FIELDS FARM LAMB SADDLE

Coming up with a course to pair with 1982 Latour is a task that brings about a variety of emotions ; excitement, anxiety, good fortune, humility. This is what we're tasked with come October 13th. Pauillac-Lamb, Richness-Pumpkin and Date, Depth-Coriander and Coffee, Weight-Lamb Sausage, Reprieve-Wilted Kale. Wish us luck...

MOROCCAN TEA SERVICE

When I told people I was going to Morocco for vacation, I was invariably asked how I chose the country as a destination. The reasons are numerous but included an interest in Moroccan food and cuisine. A defining characteristic of Moroccan hospitality is steaming glasses of tea – a heavily sweetened brew of gunpowder green tea and fresh mint – accompanied by a small plate of sweets. I loved the ritual of tea service and present here an interpretation including ras el hanout – Morocco's famous 45-spice blend – and figs.

...THE REST OF MY MOROCCAN VACATION

In addition to tea, Morocco was a steady stream of figs, olives, fresh-squeezed orange juice, preserved lemons, and argan oil; pomegranates – just about to ripen; and dates (still a few months off). Then there was semolina, which seemed to be in every small sweet that I sampled. Culinary argan oil was new to me. In Morocco, when the nuts are toasted before grinding to release their oil, the resulting product is 1) heavenly and 2) used for cooking. One common application is to blend it with roasted almonds and argan honey to make a condiment called Amlou, which you'll taste here as part of The Rest of My Moroccan Vacation.

— ERIC ZIEBOLD, Chef

— ANNE SPECKER, Pastry Chef