

Relevant Times

Fresh Ideas for Sustainable & Healthy Living

MAY WE SUGGEST



Chakra

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by Megan McWilliams

Paramus isn't a quick or convenient trip for me, but I can say that I will crave not only the exquisite food, but the entire dining experience far more often than may be good for my carbon footprint (or my bank account)!

So, when we were ushered to our beautiful private dining environment – no way else to explain these spacious and texturally luscious booths – I felt as though we were being treated like royalty in order to improve our attitude towards the review. We were 3/4s of the way through the dinner before I realized that the opposite wall was lined up with these fabulous eating areas and we weren't so special after all!

This is no cheap date, but it is quite reasonable for the level of quality that permeates every aspect of the restaurant. The gorgeous fabrics and textiles that adorn the place, thriving large plants, extraordinary lighting, eastern sculptures, and space all collaborate to create a relaxing and nurturing atmosphere.

Now for the food . . . from the initial bread assortment presented with sweet butter and separate dish of Atlantic sea salt, to the extravagant flatbread special, which involved caramelized onions, roasted garlic and extraordinary cheese among other unusual ingredients that have escaped me. We knew we were indeed special when Chef Lake came out to talk to us about some of the food. We talked extensively about the day-boat fish from Australia that Wayne was oohing and ahhing over and to what lengths they go to in their food preparation and menu selections.

Dessert was of course the most notable, which may insult Chef Lake, but for me the true test of a restaurant is its salads and desserts – both of which scored extremely high in my estimation. One of the first questions I asked Chef Lake was about who came up with the butternut squash cheesecake idea. It was served with garam masala ice cream. I was full at this point, but forced myself (can you see them twisting my arm?). As a cheesecake connoisseur, this quickly shot to the top 3 on my all-time BEST CHEESECAKE EVER category. As I write this, I'm trying to decide if I have time to ride up to Paramus tonight . . .

RELEVANT DELIGHTS

Luscious Recipes

Chakra Restaurant's Executive Chef Edward Lake's Recipe for Caramelized Golden Pineapple Tart



INTRODUCTION

As pineapple season reaches its peak, nothing says spring more than caramelized golden pineapple, served in a puff pastry tart surrounded by a pool of smooth, creamy pineapple anglaise. Not only is this impressive dessert easy to prepare, it will fill your home with sweet, mouth-watering aromas. Use only fresh, ripe pineapple, free of bruises for maximum flavor and presentation.

Take time and care while going through each step of this recipe, particularly when it comes to preparing the custard. Using sugar in the raw will give the caramelization a deeper, richer color and more intense flavor. Your guests will love this decadent dessert, and you for taking the time to prepare it – the ultimate goal for cooks and foodies. Accent the flavors of this tart by pairing it with any good sauterne.

TIPS

- Fresh pineapple will have a fragrant scent and lush green leaves. The fruit is available year-round and should feel heavy for its size with a dark green, yellow or red colored rind.
- The type of "raw sugar" that is available in your neighborhood grocery store has already had impurities removed and will have a deeper color, flavor and aroma than ordinary granulated sugar.

METHOD

Peel and cut pineapple in four divisions from the top, which will give you four long quarters. Remove the core lengthwise and reserve to flavor the pineapple anglaise. Open the package of puff pastry and roll it out to about a 16th of an inch in thickness. Cut two circular tarts 6 inches in diameter and place them on a non-stick cookie sheet. Take the four wedges of pineapple and slice them across on a bias to give you 1 1/2 inch slices. Keep the slices in order and place them in succession around the pastry form, overlapping each other in a spiral pattern. The entire surface of each pastry form should be covered. Melt the butter in a small sauce pan and brush liberally over the pineapple, ensuring good coverage. Coat the pineapple with a good sprinkle of sugar in the raw. Bake the tarts for approximately 50 minutes in a 300 degree convection oven. While the tarts are cooking, place the egg yolks and granulated sugar in a stainless steel bowl. Whisk together yolks and sugar until pale and thick; reserve. In a non-reactive sauce pan, heat the cream with the vanilla bean and pineapple core. Bring to a boil, shut off heat, and cover. Allow 20 minutes for the flavor of pineapple and vanilla to bloom into the cream. Put the cream back on the heat and bring to a simmer. WHISKING SLOWLY, gradually add hot cream to the bowl 2 ounces at a time. When cream and sugar yolks are combined, pour back into sauce pan and return to high heat, stirring constantly with a heat-proof rubber spatula. Make sure you skim the bottom constantly to avoid burning the custard mix. It is imperative that this mixture not boil. When the consistency gets thick and the custard coats the back of a spoon, strain and cool in a bowl on an ice bath, stirring frequently. The tarts should be a beautiful golden brown and cooked underneath on the bottom. Serve tarts warm with crème anglaise.

Makes 2 servings.

Ingredients:

- 1 package puff pastry
- 1 golden pineapple (each), peeled and core reserved
- 1 cup sugar in the raw
- 1 pound whole butter
- For Pineapple Crème Anglaise:
 - 16 ounces heavy cream
 - 1 cup sugar
 - 1 vanilla bean, split
 - 1 core from the pineapple (each)
 - 4 egg yolks (each)

Chakra Restaurant's Executive Chef Edward Lake's Recipe for Napoleon of Goat Cheese and Raspberries



INTRODUCTION

Fresh raspberries, available year round, add elegance to any dessert. Their gentle fragrance, delicate shape, sensuous texture and incomparable taste lend a sweet sophistication when paired with complementary flavors and presented in a playful pattern attractive to the eye and palette.

This recipe combines the lovely berry with the delightful tanginess of sweetened goat cheese, fashioned into a delicate mousse, sandwiched between crispy tuille cookies, a decadent vehicle perfectly suited to deliver crunchy and smooth textures in a feminine, inviting presentation. Men will love this dessert as well, with its creamy filling and deep red raspberry puree, an intensified sauce of crushed, strained berries. Serve with a Moët Rose Imperial Brut, and a plenty of love.

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TIPS

- Look for French Montrachet or Vermont goat cheese for this recipe. Use fresh, plain, moist-looking goat cheese and be sure not to overwork (over blend) or the mousse will liquefy.
- When selecting raspberries, look for berries that are plump, slightly soft, with a deep color, and good aroma. Be sure containers are not stained or leaking juice, which indicates overripe, bruised berries.
- Be sure to use raspberries the same day they are purchased, and if washing, use very little water and dry immediately with great care on paper towel or a dish cloth.

METHOD

For the goat cheese mousse:

Combine lemon zest, confectioners' sugar, vanilla extract, and heavy cream in a non reactive bowl and whip to just below soft peaks. In a separate bowl, soften goat cheese lightly with a whisk and slowly add whipped cream mixture. Soften just until pliable enough to fold-in whipped cream mixture. Reserve goat cheese mixture in a refrigerator until ready to use.

For the tuille cookies:

Combine all ingredients (butter, confectioners' sugar, egg whites, vanilla extract, and cake flour) until smooth and refrigerate until firm (approximately 1 hour). Using a plastic lid to a yogurt or cottage cheese container, cut a manageable circle 3 inches in diameter, with a tab sticking out 2 inches for you to handle this stencil. Using a non-stick bake sheet pan and a small spatula found at most kitchen supply stores (Williams-Sonoma, Lechters, etc.), fill the stencil evenly with the tuille cookie batter on the sheet pan, repeating the process until you have filled the sheet pan, providing 3 inches of spacing in every direction.

Bake the cookies in a 350 degree oven until golden brown. Remove from oven and allow to cool in a dry place. You will need two cookies for each napoleon. Fill a pastry bag, equipped with a straight tip, with the mousse and pipe out small cornets of the mousse in a circle a 1/2 inch apart on each cookie and place a raspberry between the cornets. Stack the cookies on top of each other and finish the top of the napoleon with one large floret in the center. Place raspberries around the outer edge of the top cookie and dust with confectioners' sugar. Finish the dish with strained raspberry puree.

For tuille cookie mix:

- 8 ounces butter (softened)
- 8 ounces confectioners' sugar
- 8 egg whites
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 8 ounces cake flour

Makes 6 servings.