

MAY 2007

FOOD ARTS

AT THE RESTAURANT AND HOTEL FRONT



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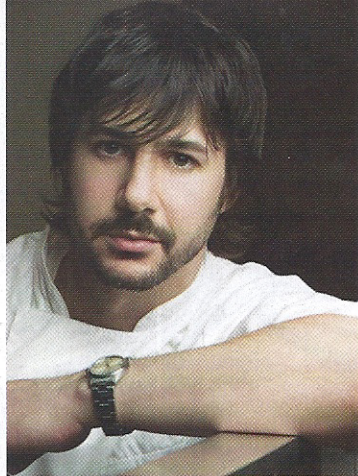
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Techniques

FRENCH PASTRY DEMO BY JOHNNY IUZZINI. JUDIAANN WOO REPORTS. PHOTOS BY SAM YOCUM.

So what happened to France? For the last few years, technologically manipulated food as spearheaded by the iconoclastic Spanish brothers Ferran and Albert Adrià and their compatriots seems to have elbowed aside the nation most associated with culinary verve. But all's not as it appears. For example, pastry chef Johnny Iuzzini (Jean Georges, NYC) showcases French tradition cloaked with modern ingenuity. "An understanding of new technology and industrial ingredients provides me with additional tools for experimentation," he says. "Without them, I couldn't achieve some of the textures that are possible these days. But you can only go so far without a foundation." It's that grounding that enables him to successfully reinvent a classic like *blanc-manger*, which in its medieval incarnation included shredded chicken as an ingredient but is more commonly known as a molded custard made with milk and/or cream thickened with gelatin or cornstarch and flavored with almonds. In Iuzzini's version, he places snow-white cubes atop delicate *petite beurre* cookies—also classically French—and covers it all with a whisper-thin wafer of dark chocolate. Underneath, he streaks a layer of strawberry fluid gel whose texture could only be achieved by the use of the hydrocolloid agar-agar in a decidedly more modern application.

BLANC-MANGER, PETITE BEURRE, STRAWBERRY, BASIL

EXECUTIVE PASTRY CHEF JOHNNY IUZZINI, JEAN GEORGES, NEW YORK CITY

For 15 servings (requires advance preparation)

Chocolate sheets:

6 oz. dark chocolate (72 percent), tempered

1. Spread chocolate very thinly on acetate. 2. Using rulers, cut into 4" by 1" rectangles; cover with parchment paper; flip; weigh down with sheet tray overnight in cool, dry area.

Blanc-manger:

7 oz. almonds, blanched 5 minutes and skins removed (A)

7 Tbsps. granulated sugar

3 cups plus 2 Tbsps. whole milk

7 gelatin sheets, bloomed in cold water and strained

1 Tbsp. light rum

1/4 tsp. natural almond extract

2 cups heavy cream, whipped into medium peaks

1. Line the bottom and sides of sheet pan with plastic wrap.

2. Place almonds, sugar, and milk in a blender; blend into fine

puree; strain through fine chinois (B). 3. Heat 1/4 almond liquid in small saucepan set over low heat; stir in gelatin until dissolved (C); stir into remaining almond liquid; stir in rum and extract; place in ice water bath until chilled. 4. Fold in whipped cream; pour onto prepared sheet pan (D); refrigerate to set. 5. Cut *blanc-manger* into 1" cubes; reserve in refrigerator.

Basil oil:

1/2 cup basil leaves

1/4 cup spinach leaves

1/4 cup grapeseed oil

1. Blanch basil and spinach together 30 seconds; shock; drain, squeezing out any excess liquid. 2. Place leaves and oil in a blender; puree; place in a bowl set in ice water bath; cool 20 minutes; strain through cheesecloth-lined fine chinois; reserve in refrigerator.

Petite beurre:

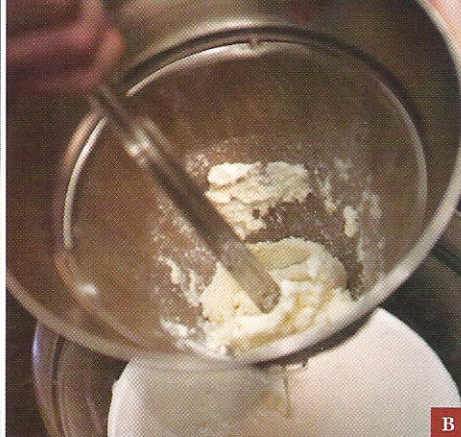
24 Tbsps. unsalted butter, at room temperature

2 cups all-purpose flour

3/4 cup confectioners' sugar

1 1/4 cups almond flour





1 vanilla bean, seeds only

1. Heat oven to 325°F. 2. Place all ingredients except 7 Tbsps. butter in the bowl of electric mixer fitted with paddle attachment; mix at medium speed until just combined. 3. Sprinkle mixture on parchment paper lined sheet pan; bake until golden brown; remove from oven; cool to room temperature. 4. Place in the bowl of a processor; process into coarse powder. 5. Place in the bowl of electric mixer fitted with paddle attachment; add remaining 7 Tbsps. butter (E); mix until just combined; refrigerate at least 1 hour. 6. Place 4" by 1" cookie cutter (or desired shape and size) on sheet pan lined with parchment paper; press dough into cookie cutter to 1/4" thickness (F); remove cookie cutter; repeat 14 times. 7. Bake until golden (about 8 to 10 minutes); remove from oven; trim edges; cool to room temperature; reserve.

Basil seeds:

3/4 cup water

1 Tbsp. basil seeds

Bring water to a boil in small saucepan; remove from heat; add seeds; allow seeds to rehydrate (about 5 minutes); remove from water; reserve seeds in refrigerator.

Strawberry fluid gel:

2 tsps. agar-agar

1 Tbsp. plus 1/2 tsp. granulated sugar

17 oz. strawberry puree, strained

1. Mix agar-agar and sugar in a bowl; reserve. 2. Place puree in a blender; blend at medium/low speed to create a vortex; sift the

sugar/agar mixture into the vortex; blend 1 minute. 3. Place mixture in small nonreactive saucepan set over high heat; bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium-low; simmer 5 minutes; pour into wide hotel pan; refrigerate until set. 4. Place set mixture in a blender; blend until very smooth; pass through fine mesh strainer; reserve in the refrigerator.

Assembly:

17 oz. strawberry puree

3 1/2 Tbsps. Kummel liqueur

1/8 tsp. lemon oil

1/8 tsp. orange oil

2 vanilla beans, split and scraped

30 sm. strawberries, hulled and stemmed

micro basil (for garnish)

sliced almonds, toasted (for garnish)

1. Mix puree, liqueur, oils, and vanilla seeds in nonreactive bowl; fold in strawberries 30 minutes before plating; reserve. 2. To serve, smear a streak of strawberry fluid gel on each plate; angle 1 *petite beurre* over the gel; arrange 3 cubes *blanc-manger* on the *petite beurre*; top with chocolate sheet; place 2 strawberries alongside the *petite beurre*; garnish the plate with basil seeds mixed with basil oil, micro basil, and almonds.

What to drink: Urban Basil Julep: Muddle very well 8 medium basil leaves, 1 wedge lemon, 2 1/2 tsps. superfine sugar, and a splash of soda water in a glass until the sugar dissolves; add 1 3/4 oz. Bourbon, 1/4 oz. Amaretto basil, and ice; shake vigorously; strain over cracked ice in a high-ball glass; top with soda water; garnish with 1 basil sprig.

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