

# The Boston Globe

TUESDAY, MAY 17, 2011

## Cotton candy getting a gourmet spin

Carnival treat adds flair to dessert menus

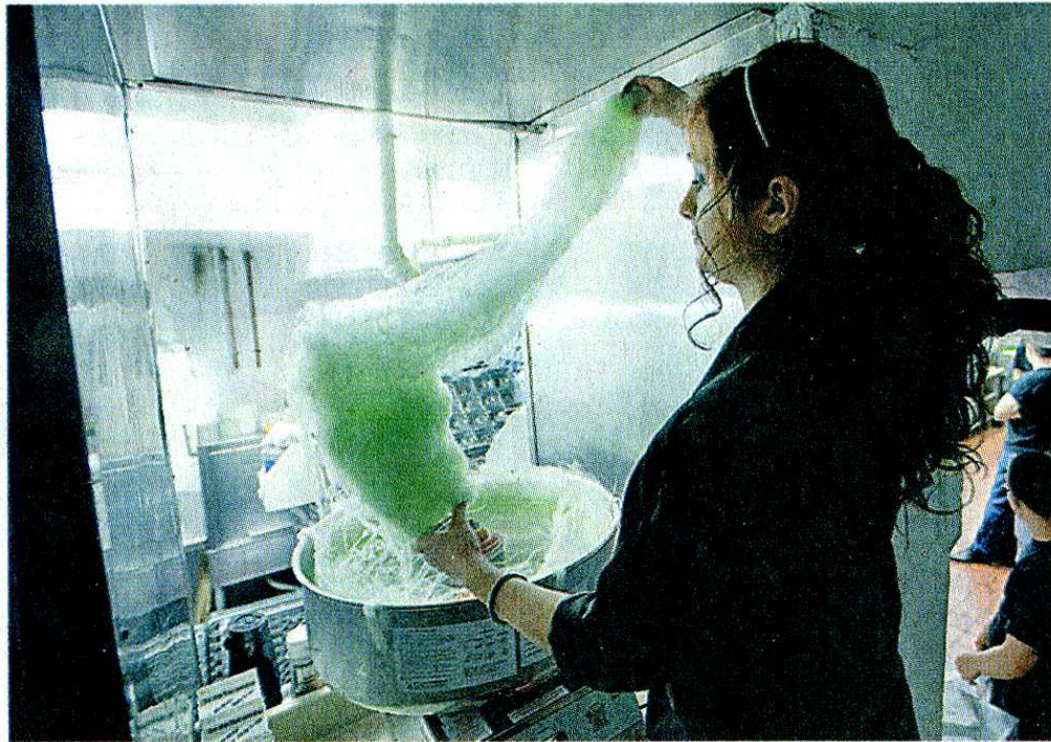
By Meredith Goldstein  
GLOBE STAFF

**L**ydia Shire, one of Boston's most respected chefs, made lobster pizza famous at Biba, took on tradition at Locke-Ober, and won prestigious awards from the James Beard Foundation. But long before Shire became a foodie goddess, she sold candy at the Strand Theatre in Dorchester. Cotton candy, to be specific.

Shire's history with spun sugar is what caused her to put cotton candy on the menu at her newest Boston restaurant, Towne. Since the Back Bay restaurant opened last summer, the most popular dessert on the list of sweets has been brown sugar angel food cake with caramel ice cream and maple cotton candy for \$11. While some dishes have come on and off the menu, the cotton candy treat — which looks something like a tinted Mozart wig — has been a staple.

"It's not like you grow up and grow out of cotton candy," Shire said.

Shire is just one member of a crew of sweet-tooth chefs in Boston and across the country who have decided that cotton candy is appropriate not just at carnivals and



YOON S. BYUN/GLOBE STAFF

**Kiley Danchise-Curtis prepared cotton candy for dessert at Lolita in Boston.**

amusement parks but on restaurant menus.

The sweet treat that traces its roots to 1900 or so is now passed out on cones for free at the MET Bar at Legacy Place in Dedham. BOKX 109 at Hotel Indigo in Newton serves blue raspberry and strawberry cotton

candy for free to diners after every meal.

Elsewhere, internationally known conceptual chef Jose Andres has a \$16 cotton candy drink called a "magic mojito" at his SLS Hotel Los Angeles restaurant Bazaar.

**COTTON CANDY, Page A8**

# Restaurants give cotton candy a gourmet spin

## ► COTTON CANDY *Continued from Page A1*

The puff of pink in the drink replaces simple syrup. Andres has also served other cotton candy concoctions — such as cotton-candy-covered foie gras and cotton candy eel — in his restaurants around the country. The restaurant at the Four Seasons in New York also has a history of serving cotton candy to patrons who request it.

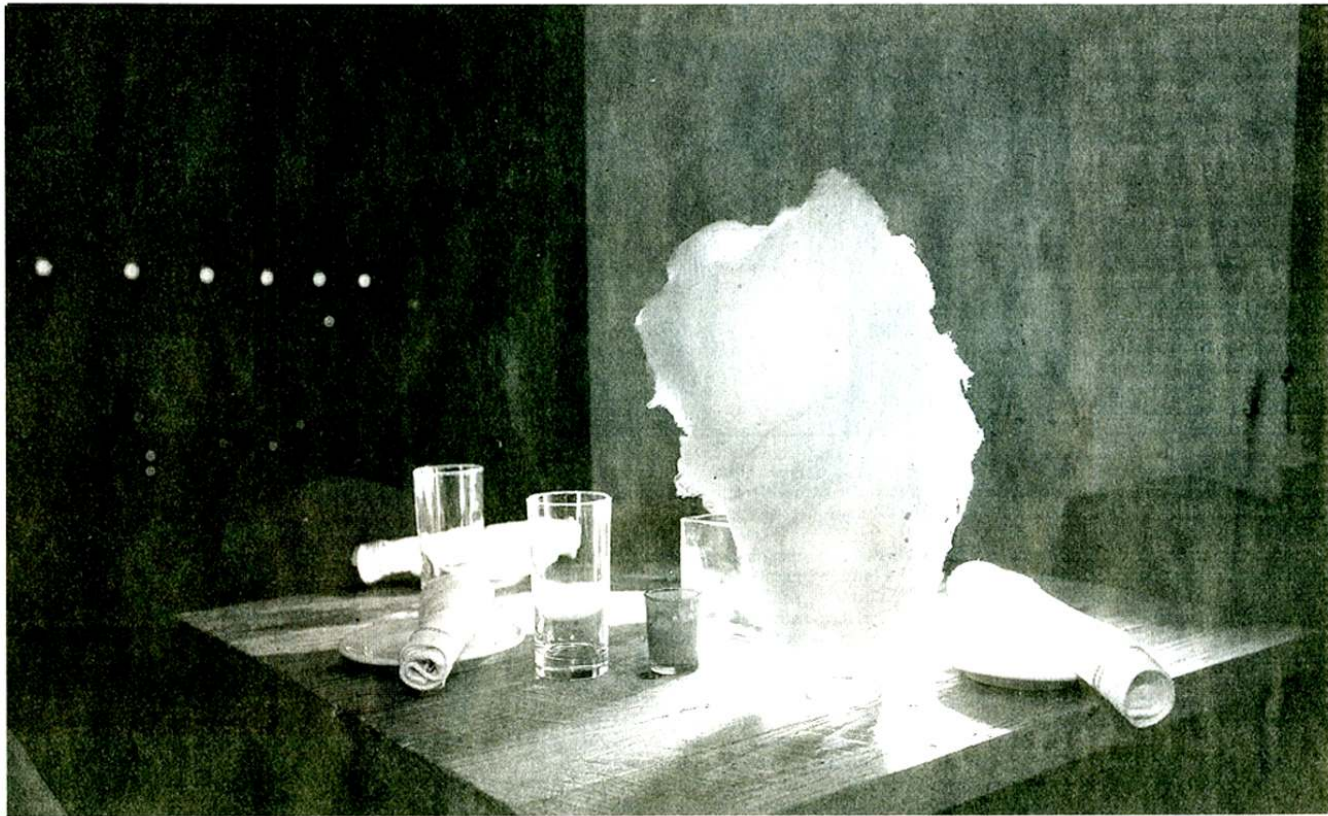
**MORE ONLINE**  
For a video of Lolita Cocina & Tequila's cotton candy, go to [www.boston.com/globe](http://www.boston.com/globe)

Boston's Lolita Cocina & Tequila Bar, which opened late last year on Dartmouth Street, serves a cone of apple cotton candy with every check. There's no culinary strategy to the sugary puff like there is at Shire's place — the restaurant orders basic, Floss Sugar cotton candy mix for its machine and drops Pop Rocks candy on top — but Lolita executive chef Brian Roche said that sometimes the treat is just about the spectacle. Eye candy — literally.

Not every customer wants to eat it, he said, but everyone gets a kick out of the complimentary dessert, which is almost entirely sugar and air, and contains about 100 calories per ounce.

"It gets touched," Roche said. "People make beards, they make moustaches with it. They play around with it making little balls."

Ken Oringer, chef-owner of Clio, Toro, and Coppa, has noticed restaurants getting more playful with cotton candy. He likes to say he was one of the first



YOON S. BYUN/GLOBE STAFF

Sassy apple sugar cotton candy with Pop Rocks is served to clients after meals with every check at Lolita Cocina & Tequila Bar in Boston.

to have the idea. Oringer, who has had a cotton candy machine at Clio for 13 years, has served lychee cotton candy, cognac-and-clove cotton candy, and chocolate mint cotton candy.

"As a chef, I definitely was intrigued to be able to do some-

thing that wasn't just the food coloring," said Oringer, whose espresso cotton candy dessert help him win a competition of Food Network's "Iron Chef America" in 2008. "It's a very tricky science sometimes." Oringer uses a spice grinder to thin

out the ingredients he puts in his spinning machine. It's a guessing game — which powders will melt too fast and which flavors will taste good when spun.

Oringer is taking a small break from using his machine at the moment — he brings it out

only every so often — but he said it'll make another appearance, as soon as his customers seem to miss it. Now that summer's coming, it might be time.

"Again, people are enjoying just something from their childhood," Oringer said. "It's just

people going back to foods that they can relate to."

*Meredith Goldstein can be reached at [mgoldstein@globe.com](mailto:mgoldstein@globe.com). Follow her on Twitter at [@meredithgoldste](https://twitter.com/meredithgoldste).*