

ChefTM

MAGAZINE

CELEBRATING
59
years

The Magazine for Foodservice Professionals

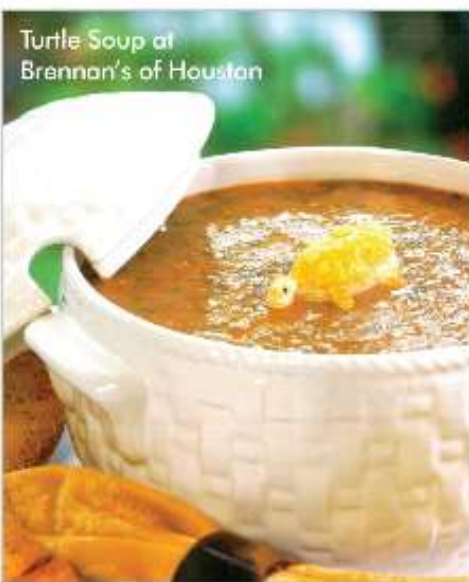
chefmagazine.com



Chef Imran Ali, Tamarind of London, Newport Beach, Calif.



Ahi Tuna Tacos at Mesa Lounge in Costa Mesa, Calif.



Turtle Soup at Brennan's of Houston



Alto-Shaam

Inside this issue:

- A Crush on the South**
What's the reality of Southern cuisine today? *pg. 8*
- Sensational Seafood**
The oceans' bounties are thriving. *pg. 11*
- A Taste of the Trends**
Which trends will 2015 bring to the table? *pg. 17*

Chef
EDUCATOR
INSTITUTIONAL NEWS & VIEWS TODAY

Keeping it Fresh *pg. 20*
Eastern Antiquities *pg. 22*

EQUIPMENT & TECHNOLOGY FOR SUCCESSFUL FOODSERVICE OPERATIONS
EQUIPMENT SOLUTIONS

Grills and Smokers *pg. 24*
Refrigeration *pg. 28*

SENSATIONAL SEAFOOD

Chefs are exploring new species, and likewise new preparations for the ocean's bounty.

By Jessica Harlan

When Chef and Partner Michael Serpa began planning the concept for a new Boston restaurant, all signs pointed to the ocean.

"Boston is obviously well known for its seafood—it's right on the coast, and New England coasts are an hour [away in] each direction," says Serpa. "But there aren't as many mom and pop seafood places as there should be."

Well, this spring, one more can

be added to the list as SELECT Oyster Bar opens with Serpa in the kitchen.

Seafood occupies a special place in his culinary heart. "It's something I'm really passionate about cooking," says Serpa. "I think it's more versatile and more challenging [than other proteins]."

He's not alone in this thinking. Many chefs share Serpa's passion for all things sea-related—the freshness, quality and variety of

seafood gives them the chance to truly get creative on their menus.

Chef Ivan Flowers of Top of the Market in San Diego says the seafood at his restaurant comes straight from the boats to the restaurant's back docks. In his experience, the seafood industry is so different from the cattle industry in which he worked in his early days as a butcher. "There, we're talking about everything that goes into raising cattle and



Wild Alaska Halibut from The Oceanaire Seafood Room



SENSATIONAL SEAFOOD

aging the cuts of beef," he says. "But with seafood, it's completely different. It's about what's presented to us from the sea. We're not modifying or manufacturing anything."

As for his diners, they're just

as passionate. The restaurant maintains a call list when certain rare fish come in with the day's catch. "When people are eating seafood, they get involved in a primal way—cracking open mussels, slurping oysters, pass-

ing around the different seafood types. It's really an event. And with our restaurant sitting right on the water, it clicks on every level," says Flowers.

Consumers are somewhat mystified when it comes to preparing seafood at home, which helps boost sales in restaurants, says Wade Wiestling, corporate concept chef at The Oceanaire Seafood Room. What's more is that seafood has a reputation of being a healthy protein and a healthy menu option. "People generally feel good about eating seafood," he says.

Jamie Leeds of Hank's Oyster Bar in Washington, D.C. echoes this. "Seafood has a high protein content, a lot of nutritional value, and low caloric intake. It takes on herbs and spices really well and can add a huge punch of flavor to healthy eating that you don't get with other meats," she says.

Today's chefs are focusing on unusual species, using the whole fish, and minimalistic preparations that truly let the quality of the fish shine. Chef Magazine took a sampling from chefs across the country to find out how they're getting creative with seafood menus.

Wade Wiestling, Corporate Concept Executive Chef, The Oceanaire Seafood Room 13 Locations Nationwide

"The Oceanaire is working on incorporating more high-end seafood species, more oyster varieties and some better selections of small plates on which guests can graze," says Wiestling. The menu is printed daily to incorporate the in-season fish that come to the market. Alaska Halibut always stars in the spring. Other menu hits include

Alaska Weathervane Scallops with foie gras, marsala, blueberries, toasted sourdough and a micro green salad; Costa Rican Wahoo Tiradito with truffle pearls, choco cancha and aji amarillo; and Blackened Montauk Swordfish with chestnut rigatoni, kale, and roasted oyster mushrooms.

Wiestling says that in the interest of being healthier, the bar menu is moving away from fried seafood and toward healthier, lighter preparations.

To strike a good balance between familiar and unusual varieties, Wiestling follows an innovative formula: familiar species get exotic preparations, and exotic species get familiar preparations.

"The best advice I ever [received]," says Wiestling, "was to combine the more familiar fish species like salmon, cod, and mahi-mahi with creative expressions. Save the less familiar species for straightforward and approachable preparations to let the fish have the spotlight."

Ben Pollinger, Executive Chef, Oceana New York City

Pollinger describes Oceana as a temple to seafood. As a chef, he enjoys preparing fresh bounty—it provides so many options for techniques, flavors, styles and cuisines.

One of the more creative dishes currently on his menu is the Seafood Schlachtplatte, a riff on a German sausage platter. It features seafood weisswurst, smoked salmon bratwurst, swordfish bacon and pickled mackerel, served with house-made sauerkraut, apples, caraway, crispy potatoes and mustard sauce. "I also offer The Big Bass Dinner, which is stuffed with mushrooms, spinach and olives and finished with a chili-fennel



Scallop and Pork
Soup from Wash-
ington, D.C.-based
Hank's Oyster Bar

Seafood Trends

- "We are seeing more raw fish—like crudo, tiradito, ceviche and sashimi—being utilized in more restaurants," says Wiestling of The Oceanaire. These types of preparations resonate because they're healthier.
- Chef Andrew Gruel in southern California says that poke, a Hawaiian raw food preparation, is poised to be a sought-after way of serving raw seafood.
- Chefs are adding versatility to their cooking techniques, notes Pollinger of Oceana. "It's not just searing and grilling anymore. Chefs are getting into poaching, steaming, and braising."
- Pickling fish or seafood is gaining momentum, notes Leeds of Hank's Oyster Bar. She also sees a growth in the popularity of more exotic sea life.
- Using the whole fish will continue to shine. Collars are showing up on menus everywhere, as are bellies and cheeks. Bones can be used for stock, and trim can be smoked or used to make seafood sausage.
- Trout is in, wild salmon is out, according to Gruel. "The constant bickering over farmed versus wild salmon is tiring to the point that people will avoid salmon altogether." What's more, he thinks that salmon has become ubiquitous, and lesser-utilized species will now have their time in the spotlight.

vinaigrette," he says.

Like Wiestling, Pollinger is careful not to intimidate his guests with too much emphasis on exotic seafood or preparations. "Don't make a seafood dish that's really strange, because it will scare guests," he advises. "Make a dish with a comforting ingredient or element, and it will help to break through the guest's reluctance."

Like all chefs who focus on seafood, he makes sure to stay on top of sustainability issues and to obtain fish from reputable sources. "We have a responsibility to put forth sustainable options and educate our guests," he says. "It's important that I get my news from a variety of reputable sources, like the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute."

Jamie Leeds, Chef and Owner, Hank's Oyster Bar Washington, D.C.

For Jamie Leeds, fish and shellfish are everything to her restaurant, where the menu is about 95 percent seafood and changes daily. "The daily menu allows us to source locally and sustainably, and we purchase whatever is available and fresh," she says. "It gives us the freedom to get the best of the best for our guests."

One dish she's particularly proud of is Hank's Surf & Turf, which is comprised of Nantucket Bay scallops in smoked pork broth with a pork cheek fritter, pickled kumquats, mustard seeds and purple shiso. It's a creation she recently made at the James Beard House as a participant in the Women Chef's & Restaurateurs Pioneers & Legends Dinner, and it's now on the menu at the restaurant's Dupont location.

Out-of-the-box preparations are something Leeds incorporates



PAUL JOHNSON

Alaskan Cod
Piquillo Pepper and
Fennel Chowder
at Oceano in New
York City

into everyday menu items, like the Hog Island style BBQ Oysters. Topped with housemade Tabasco butter, shallots, garlic, parmesan cheese and Panko breadcrumbs, the oysters are broiled until bubbly and brown.

Ivan Flowers, Chef, Top of the Market San Diego

The restaurant's swordfish boat occasionally brings in bycatch that ends up a featured special on the daily menu. One of these is Louvar. "It's a fish that most people never get to eat," says Flowers. "It's a cross between tuna and halibut, a remarkable fish. When we have louvar on the menu, it sells out every night, and we even have a list of people who want to be called when it comes in."

Since the fish coming into the restaurant are usually bought whole, Flowers loves the challenge of maximizing the entire fish. He serves cheeks, collars, monkfish liver, and swordfish spine marrow.

And he's a big believer in minimalism in the treatment of seafood—the fish should speak for itself. But this doesn't mean basic

or uninteresting preparation. Oysters might be served in a shooter of lobster bisque topped with champagne sorbet, a drop of Vietnamese chile, a squeeze of meyer lemon and black truffle caviar. The Fijian yellowfin is served with confit pork belly that's been bruleed with brown sugar, topped with a ball of black garlic and boursin that's been fried tempura-style. His version of surf and turf involves New Bedford Scallops and slow-braised prime short rib served on a smoked, curried potato risotto with a finish of lobster garlic cognac sauce.

Ryan Prewitt, Chef and Owner, Peche New Orleans

Prewitt's goal with this New Orleans Warehouse District restaurant is to shine a light on the quality and diversity of seafood in the Gulf of Mexico. By developing relationships with the fishers who supply his restaurant, he can more readily explore interesting Gulf species to add to his menu.

"It's been fascinating to learn about the diversity of what's out there," he says. "Since Peche has opened [2 years ago] I've had the chance to get more involved with

fishermen and scientists, to move in different circles, and it's surprising to me how much is out there and how difficult it can be to get all this diversity into your restaurant."

And he's succeeded. He's particularly proud of his ability to incorporate cobia into his menu. "It's an interesting fish, it's ubiquitous in temperate climates around the world, but it's solitary by nature and doesn't school, so it's bycatch on tuna and snapper boats," he says. The restaurant has found a spear fisherman who dives for the cobia and is able to target certain fish. Prewitt says that the fish's flavor and fat content changes over the course of the year, which makes it a particularly interesting fish to work with.

Like Flowers, some of the bycatch that Prewitt's fishers gather end up as a prized menu item on his menu. Wahoo is one of these. "When they catch wahoo, they'll radio in to let us know," he says.

The restaurant does a lot of whole grilled fish, and Prewitt is partial to the Redfish, which is served with a vinaigrette-based sauce. "We wanted to approach fish the same way a lot of meat is

SENSATIONAL SEAFOOD

approached, cooking things on the bone gets more moisture.”

Prewitt enjoys serving whole fish because he believes that most diners would never venture to prepare it this way at home. “Once they eat it, they realize it’s a great way to cook it, it picks up more flavor and moisture,” he says.

And like Flowers, he maximizes his purchases by using off-cuts like the collar. “It’s the cut of meat that has the most collagen and fatty flavor. It’s this luscious, delicious, lip-smacking bite.”

Michael Serpa, Partner, SELECT Oyster Bar, Boston

While SELECT hasn’t yet opened, Serpa has been working hard on the menu, aiming to differentiate

himself from the traditional seafood restaurants and clam-shack classics. He’s been playing around with smoked sturgeon confit, live sea urchins from Santa Barbara, and baby cuttlefish from the northwest coast of Spain. “When you sear [cuttlefish] at a high temperature, it comes out with a great bite and flavor, sort of a like eating a hybrid of octopus and squid,” he says.

Look for unusual riffs on his menu: a croquet monsieur might be made with brioche, French ham, and sea urchin butter.

Rod Chitikov, Executive Chef, Devon Seafood + Steak, Miami

“The perfection of cooking seafood on its own is much more important than putting a pound

of unnecessary ingredients on top of it,” says Chitikov. “With all the new toys chefs have to experiment with, at the end you still go back to old techniques, which are the same as new in theory. I remember butter poaching a sturgeon on low heat for hours and pairing it with beluga lentils—that process is now called *sous vide*.”

When a chef learns the history behind the catch, the waters, the climate, and the entire process of catching and receiving seafood, Chitikov believes he or she gains a new respect for the process. “It’s very easy to cook seafood, but it does take understanding of the technique and experience.”

Some of the highlights of the menu include pretzel-crusting trout with parmesan-herb roast-



Executive Chef Rod Chitikov of Devon Seafood + Steak.

ed potatoes, bacon, and whole grain mustard vinaigrette; chipotle grilled shrimp enchiladas on sweet corn-jalapeño crepes with corn and black bean relish and jicama-lime salad; and a grilled salmon panzanella with Montrachet goat cheese, balsamic onions, basil oil, and balsamic vinaigrette. 