

Chemical Reactions? Periodic Charts? Techno Cooking... Is This The Future?



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THROW OUT YOUR COMPUTERS AND PULL OUT THE ALGINATE, CaCl, LIQUID N, CO2 AND DON'T FORGET YOUR ILUX BOX! THIS TECHNO COOKING STUFF ISN'T ON YOUR COMPUTER UNLESS YOU'RE BROWSING THE INTERNET FOR FERRAN ADRIÁ'S NEWEST "TECHNO COOKING" TECHNIQUES OR ORDERING HOMARO CANTU'S PATENTED FISH COOKING BOX FOR YOUR LATEST AND GREATEST SPECIAL, "BASS COOKED TABLESIDE."

You may however need to turn on your computer to print (with edible ink and soy paper) the alphabets for your alphabet soup!

THE REVOLUTION

There is a revolution in our midst. A man who said to himself, "Should we still be cooking in the same manner as Escoffier over 100 years later" has started it? He decided to change the way we see food. From caviar made of apple juice to skinless ravioli made of a green pea filling...he definitely has re-invented the wheel.

Adriá Ferran, chef/owner of elbouli has 50 cooks, 50 dinner guests per night and closes for months on end to create his post-modern creations. One of his most famous creations uses a substance cultivated from giant kelp called alginate.

Once the alginate is mixed in the proper concentration with the

desired liquid it is dropped into water mixed with the proper concentration of CaCl or calcium chloride. The CaCl reacts with the alginate to form a skin similar to a gelatin capsule that when added to a dish creates bursts of flavored liquid in your mouth when chomped on!

The interesting thing is that, unlike a gel cap, it resists melting under heat. So although it's usually served room temperature or cold these "salmon caviar size" balls may be suspended in a hot broth or sauce for bursts of flavor without dissipating. For example, I serve wild mushroom bisque with floating truffle pearls and an olive oil poached black cod dish that sits in a cepe consommé with caviar made of yuzu.

The other name that stands out as a leader of the revolution is Homaro Cantu. He has a poaching technique for scallops that creates a perfect medium rare without the guesswork. This preparation also uses calcium chloride and water that's only 110 degrees! In a matter of minutes a perfect medium rare scallop emerges from the scientific solution.

Homaro has also patented a box made of ilux that he uses to cook fish tableside. He heats the box to 350

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degrees, pours in a cup of boiling water, lemon zest and salt and a fish filet. Then he brings it to the table and in 20 minutes it is ready for the diner to enjoy.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS TECHNO STUFF MEAN TO YOU?

It's the same 'ol story...stay on your game...keep your menu fresh...keep 'em guessing, important stuff, not only for the members but for your chef. If you're not going forward you're going backward. There is no stand still in this or any business. While your chef is staying in the same place others are racing ahead! If you expect to compete with your member's favorite restaurants your chef must be armed with what it takes.

However, let's face it, when a diner enters elboulis for a meal they are not only expecting to enjoy delicious food but to experience the unexpected or unfamiliar. Certainly not the case in what most of the Beach clubbers are looking for when they're down for dinner and I'm sure the same is true with your members. Often members go to the simple comfort items but there are ways to help them branch out. Seek out all new info even if unclear of the applications or usefulness.

You never know when something super far out might be useful. Recently a member requested a salad that was on the menu the week prior. It was an heirloom tomato salad with tomato sorbet and a cheese crisp. I mentioned that I was out of the sorbet. When she looked disappointed I realized there was still some liquid N! I cooked up the mixture of sorbet ingredients in around five minutes, told the kitchen to create the plates, all but the sorbet, and send them to the dining room ASAP. I grabbed my canis-

ter of liquid N and a bowl and rushed to the dining room. By the time the sorbet was ready to scoop, out came the plates. The member received her request and I was a star!

USE CLUB EVENTS TO SHOWCASE YOUR CHEF'S NEW TALENTS

Make sure to push the envelope for the wine dinners and events with captured audiences. Show them they can enjoy goat cheese ice cream on a beet salad or truffle pearls of alginate floating in their soup.

WORK ITEMS INTO THE MENU WHEN POSSIBLE

You might argue the usefulness of liquid N if you have a sorbet machine, however one of my member's favorite desserts is the warm flourless cake with a shooter of "Dip n' Dot-like" ice cream pellets (a commercial product for kids found at carnivals and amusement parks). Using any ice cream mix you can drop it into the liquid N from a squeeze bottle and the freeze into hard little "bb" like pellets. The nitrogen also once saved my _____ when the freezer went out and a party of 150 had a dessert with a scoop of ice cream.

Dip n' Dots for kids, tomato sorbet for the foodies, apple caviar for the most adventurous...that's why a club chef must be a Super Chef! **BR**

Chef Whitney Werner, CEC, is executive chef at The Beach Club in Santa Monica, Calif. and president and co-founder of Club Culinary. He is president of the American Culinary Federation's "Chefs de Cuisine of Ca Los Angeles" chapter and president of Les Amis de Escoffier Society of California. Chef Whitney can be reached at: chefwhitney@clubculinary.com

From Coast to Coast Board Members are saying...

"You took the time to really get to know the culture, members and employees of our club and you were always accessible to the members of the selection committee. Your extensive knowledge of not only the club business but the current pool of potential applicants was invaluable."

*Club President
Seattle, Washington*

"As promised, your process was professional, targeted and thorough, helping us to identify the candidate whom we are confident is the perfect fit for our club. I came to value and rely upon your experience and advice, Dick, which were so instrumental in leading us to our final choice."

*Search Committee Chairman
Columbus, Ohio*

"What impressed us most were the active and timely communications and the fact that you delivered what you promised. You kept us focused and provided keen guidance on how we should conduct the interviews."

*Search Committee Chairman
Board Member
Estero, Florida*

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