

**Edmonton Gentlemen's Dinner Club
December 12, 2016 Christmas Event
Chefs Notes re Preparation and Serving**

First Course - Hors d'Oeuvres

Chorizo Madeleines

Sucrine Lettuce with King Crab

Almond Tuiles with Horseradish Mousse

With Ian Bradley as a most willing and excellent partner we each embarked upon putting together the appetizer course consisting of Chorizo madeleines; King crab with an assortment of gels; and almond toiles with horseradish mouse.

The challenges we faced were, with a couple of exceptions, more in the nature of logistics of completion; plating, and like some others, ingredient sourcing.

We could not source sucrine lettuce for love nor money - so found an acceptable substitute in baby romaine - though Ian and I agreed that the presumed greater sweetness of sucrine would have enhanced the dish. A further change to the dish was substitution of shrimp for king crab. The crab may well have provided a more pleasing taste - but the cost was simply prohibitive for in a trial run it became apparent that at best one might obtain three, and more likely only two, pieces of crab that would meet the aesthetic requirements of the dish per king crab leg so, a cost effective and I believe satisfactory solution was chosen. Dill blossoms as well were likewise not souceable in the winter - though likely in the summer, and we found Reclaim Urban Farms to be a wonderful source of microgreens and highly recommend it to all.

The almond tuilles and horseradish mousse proved to be the most complex in terms of technique and plating. Ian prepared the mousse and claimed that it was not overly complicated and the result was simply terrific. The tuilles took practice and I found that I had to prepare the tuille mixture four times before I got it right. The key was to lay the tuille mixture on the parchment paper very, very (did I mention very?) thinly - and not, as suggested by the recipe – somewhat heavy and once nearly baked flatten to the desired thickness using a heavy pan then finish baking. Second - mix by hand. The use of sucrose (a most challenging substance to work with being a cross between thick liquid honey and crazy glue) does not lend itself to

a blender. Preparation of the dish - being essentially a tuille sandwich with a horseradish center, was best accomplished manually one at a time and Ian - who prepared the bulk of these appetizers - did a superb job.

The chorizo madeleine the dish was simple to prepare – though a bit time consuming to reduce the chorizo. One enhancement that we had considered and which I put into effect on a subsequent batch was to add some Hungarian sweet paprika to vegetable oil and to lightly brush same on as the madeleines were cooling.

All in all, a wonderful experience made even more enjoyable by the quality of my partner and which I believe assisted us both in raising our culinary game.

Steve Rose

For me it was one of those events where you have to perform and therefore you do. I liken it to a final exam in university where there is a deadline and there is no way around it. That type of pressure, if you like, brings out the best in everyone (something that is lost on a large portion of our educators).

When Stewart first presented the idea to us I thought it was just as likely not to happen. There was (seemingly) not enough information to go on and our schedules were not allowing for a lot of practice time etc. Privately many of us were skeptical of our collective abilities to pull it off. But guess what, through sheer force of will Stewart dragged our asses into the process and we never got off the train till the mission was accomplished. I was blessed with a well-organized partner that was determined to get it right through several setbacks (mainly ingredient availability and practical issues with the cost of crab legs etc). We learned several new techniques and practiced diligently, but we found that no matter how much prep you do, the final 30 minutes is where you “make it or break it”. I could see it in everyone’s faces in the kitchen. The determination not to fail, and the tremendous joy once delivered. I thought the teamwork displayed by the club members and creativity in the face of hardship (at times) was exemplary.

There are several milestones in one’s life including graduation, marriage, parenthood, great friendships and business accomplishments. For me December 12, 2016 at Ernest’s was one of them. Cheers

Ian Bradley

The Second Course - Appetizer Course

Tomato Served Three Ways

There were a number of provisioning challenges to this recipe. The starting point should have been to sort out the serving plates/bowls earlier. NAIT did not have enough of anything really suitable and we had to eventually buy 40 ramekins (Dollarama 3 for 2 bucks). Next, we couldn't get ring molds for the Tomato Clouds. Problem solved by Darren buying PVC pipe and cutting it into suitable pieces (suggestion of Vinod). The small ramekins were far from ideal for the gelee. They should have been a larger surface area to allow for more decoration with different herbs as in the photos in the cookbook.

There were, next, ingredient challenges but mostly concerning the various herb garnishes. It is not the right season to find basil or dill flowers and herbs like purslane and burnet but we did the best we could with substitutions. Fortunately, there are some good herb vendors in Edmonton at the Strathcona Market and elsewhere who we were able to rendezvous with to get cress and basil of various sizes and colours. We also found basil seeds at a gardening shop.

We elected to go with a smaller serving because the dinner was 8 courses and because that fit the triple serving plate we had to work with. We were therefore somewhat oversupplied with a number of ingredients and elements. My family is getting used to tomatoes many different ways, saffron oil, provencal granola, etc.

We bought a ton of tomatoes: about 40 pounds of heirloom to make tomato water (which is just drained through 10 layers of cheese cloth over night after blending with a bit of basil), about 400 cherry tomatoes which we peeled every one of, and about 30 large beefsteaks for the tomato cylinders (extracted with an apple corer). Fortunately, greenhouses in Edmonton have a fantastic variety of different fresh tomatoes for a few weeks yet.

Don't buy fresh cherry tomatoes if you hope to skin them and don't buy thin-skinned varieties (like most yellow) because they are a bugger to peel.

The Provencal Granola used to dabble on the recipe is great on its own (mostly pine nuts, puffed rice, pimiento d'espelette, deep-fried basil leaves, basil seeds, parmesan, etc.).

We bought out all of the Italian Centre's buffalo mozzarella which was used as a base for the middle element and topped with Buffalo Mozzarella Ice Cream which Darren made. (In fact, he had to make it twice because his freezer broke down and

the first rendition melted.) Next time, it would be better to find a pac-o-jet for the ice cream or so we are told. We should have got more help with plating so that none of the ice cream was melting when it was served but it still worked out because we started with very hard ice cream (that was very difficult to scoop).

There is one mistake in the recipe (which we also noticed in another recipe in the cookbook): it calls for way too much salt in the Tomato Cloud! We cut from 5 tablespoons to 3 and there was still too much. When it says tablespoon, it must mean teaspoon or this supports the conspiracy theory that cookbooks from restaurants include a fatal flaw to make sure no one can really copy them.

This is a manageable recipe as long as you plan well ahead:

We made tomato water in the weeks before and froze it. Worked out fine. Darren made little pickled red onion rings and the ice cream which of course keep. Confit tomatoes keep in oil for a long time even at room temperature. Provençal granola will keep for several weeks in the fridge, as of course will the white balsamic vinaigrette, and saffron oil.

The recipe called for 25 year old balsamic vinegar. We had a choice of 15 year old and the 35 year old which is used at Corso 32 (which is 150 dollars for a small bottle). We went for the cheap although there is a significant difference in quality I expect. Please forgive us.

The restaurant also serves this dish with a 4th element which is a tomato tea made with lemon verbena, lemon thyme, Tomato Water, star anise, etc. It is served with a large thyme flower dipped into it which is tied with raffia. That is a nice touch but we couldn't get thyme flowers or lemon thyme this time of year and so the presentation was impossible. We also thought it was quite sufficient to have 3 elements since we were serving 8 courses. Please forgive us.

An interesting, challenging and delicious course.

Hugh McPhail

"I think Verbena is a hallucinogen, Hugh"

"It's not, but its bloody hard to find, do you know anyone who owns a greenhouse?"

"Not really, but my sister's a cop in narcotics, she's taken down a few grow operations."

At this point Hugh was seriously considering doing everything by himself. It was really my mechanical skill, and the fact I owned a radial mitre saw that kept me in the game, as we needed to make forty perfectly cylindrical moulds from three inch PVC piping to hold the tomato water clouds as they set up, perfectly mated to the ceramic ramekins we had found after rummaging our third dollar store. Under the

cloud would be a tomato salad with basal, with every single tomato peeled.

“What about basil flowers?”

“In December? I don’t know about you, but most things are up to mating this time of year.”

Hugh just smiled wryly, as Yolanda, his wife walked into the kitchen, “How’s it going boys?” Hugh’s smile only broadened.

“Well, I’m on my second batch of buffalo ice cream. My damn freezer went on the fritz and it melted, along with countless other provisions. Apparently, someone has purchased all the remaining buffalo mozzarella in the city.” Hugh blushed, “there’s some extra in my fridge if you need it. Never can be too prepared.”

Hugh added, “We’ve decided to omit the tomato tea. We simply can’t replicate the bouquet garnee.”

We had spent the day scalding heirloom tomatoes and peeling them for the salad. All 500. It gave us time to reflect on the finer points of the task. Red tomatoes peel much easier than yellow ones. We ended up throwing away the purple veiny ones to preserve our sanity. We planned how to core the beefsteak tomatoes for the gelee plating and had sourced numerous alternatives to the fine herbs that were supposed to top it. We were rather impressed with how pretty the saffron was as it embedded in the gelee and bled red orange from its stigma. Purple basil flowers would have been a lovely counter point, but that would have to wait for spring, and the appropriate mood. It became clear that we had given up too much in compromising our plating. The gelee was really a canvas for the herbs and we had lost significant real estate when we went with the ramekins. I silently made a mental note that next time I would be firing my own glassware.

Hugh had made a forest granola that was like nothing I had ever experienced. It had pine nuts in it, which through me off the breakfast trail immediately. Yolanda loved the fact that Hugh had stored it in an air tight container she had just purchased during a midnight shopping spree on Amazon.

“Did you have any trouble finding your ingredients?” Yolanda was preoccupied with showing Hugh how to evacuate air from the container, while being simultaneously annoyed at his lack of interest in the task.

“I was down at Provisions looking for Xanthum gum, but the clerks were rather unhelpful. Apparently have of our cooking club had been in that Saturday looking for things they didn’t have and it had drained them emotionally. Hugh had spent some time at the Italian centre that morning deciding on what quality of balsamic vinegar we would be using to dress the tomato salad. We went for something mid grade, as spending \$200 for 4 oz of the stuff would not have pleased Tom.

We spent the afternoon test plating, and organizing a game plan for the dinner. I was impressed how organized and meticulous Hugh was, but also how he was unafraid to improvise if we came to such a branch point. By the end of the evening we had plated as much as we could, and had a plan for what we needed to do at the restaurant.

In the end it was probably the most intricate recipe I have ever reproduced, and I was glad I had Hugh on my team. I felt we executed well, with the exception of over salting the tomato cloud and not chilling the plates to keep the ice cream from melting. I would love to try the dish as prepared by its creators, but can honestly say that both Hugh and I feel that we gave it a fair representation at trial.

Darren Markland

The Third Course – The Soup Course

Prairie Corn Lobster Bisque with Corn Bavarois, Quails Egg and Lobster Claw

The soup was called “Corn Chilled Soup with Lobster”. This dish was prepared by Feizal Chatur and Peter Daly.

The dish can be viewed in two parts. Firstly the plating elements which were prepared in advance and at the time of service were artistically placed on each plate. This plated arrangement was placed on the table. The second component was the bisque which was poured by the servers at the table. Only enough of the bisque to coat the bottom of the bowls was poured. The result was a soup dish that showed the plated elements surrounded by the bisque. The result was quite attractive.

Plating Elements

To discuss the various elements used in the plating (Corn Bavarois, Quails Egg Yolk, Bread Tuiles, Lobster knuckle & Claw)

The Corn Bavarois was prepared in advance by Feizal. The main components were shallots, whipping cream, gelatin and corn juice. The mixture when combined produced a product with a consistency of mashed potatoes. At the time of time of serving two quesnels of the mixture were placed on the plate.

Bread Tuiles are thin rounds of Brioche with a smaller circle cut in the middle. The Tuiles were created by partially freezing the Brioche so that thin slicing was possible. The rounds were cut from the slices and toasted between two cookie sheets.

The Lobster Knuckle and Claw were obtained by buying freshly cooked and frozen Lobster Meat from Finns in Sherwood Park. This method was chosen because if we had used whole lobster the tails (the biggest part of the Lobster) would have been surplus.

For the Quails egg yolks we simply broke all of the Quails eggs into a bowl and then pulled out the yolks. This can be done by hand but we also used an olive spoon.

The Bisque

The bisque was the one thing that had to be prepared on the day of the event.

Major components of the bisque were Fennel, Ginger, Garlic, Tomato juice, Lobster Stock and Corn Juice.

The Garlic, Fennel and Giner were sweated in the butter until translucent. The pan was then deglazed with some cognac. Vermouth and Tomato Juice and Saffron were added. The mixture was reduced by half and then the Corn Juice and Lobster Stock were added. A sachet consisting of Star Anise, Cardamom and Tarragon was introduced for 10 minutes. The mixture was pureed in a blender and then strained through a Chinois. The bisque was served warm not Hot.

Although we could have made the Lobster stock from Scratch we instead purchase Lobster Base from Finn's in a frozen container. Very powerful stuff – a one pound container is sufficient to make 12 liters of stock. We made the stock from this base and added the seasoning recommended in The Eleven Madison Park book.

Corn juice was a component that neither one of us had heard of before. But, relying on Google soon discovered that it is made by juicing corn kernels. We were able to obtain the load of a fairly heavy duty juicer (Champion juicer) and found that a 2 Kg bag of frozen corn kernels makes about 40 oz on a delicious thick and creamy corn juice. This juice was used both in the Bisque and the Corn Bavarois.

Peter Daly

Corn Bavarois:

- When whipping the cream into soft peaks, it is important make sure that the cream is whipped enough to have quite a bit of structure. I think soft peaks is a bit misleading as the texture tends to weaken when left alone, even in the fridge.
- We used half the amount of salt specified in the whipping cream, because in the first go-around the salt content was extremely high.

The gelatine used was the powdered gelatine, as i couldn't find the sheets that were specified. The ratio of the powdered gelatine (knox brand) in comparison to the sheets was 1 tablespoon powdered- 3 sheets of gelatin. The gelatine was bloomed as per the instruction on the carton (using hot water). I would suggest using a quarter tablespoon less of gelatin as we felt the final product could have been better by using slightly less gelatin.

The shallots cook very quickly in the pan, and one must be careful not to overcook as they will have a slight burnt taste (just before they get translucent as instructed in the recipe).

The corn juice that we used in our ingredients was from an actual juicer that juiced actual corn kernels.

***important. When cooling the strained cooked ingredients, do not chill over ice but rather let cool to room temperature. Cooling over ice quickly solidifies the gelatine which ultimately prevents you from folding this mixture into the reserved whipped cream (almost like making mousse). Having said that, it is important to cool the cooked, stained mixture down to room temp or below. If you don't, you run the risk of melting the reserved whipping cream and losing the texture of the bavarois.

Instead of chilling the last mixture over ice for 4 hours as specified, We put in the fridge.

For presentation, as mentioned before, we felt the gelatin content was a little high which ultimately affected the presentation of the scooped bavarois. (We used 2 teaspoons to shape the quenelles). The high gelatin content caused the texture to stick and not be as smooth as we would have liked.

Feizal Chatur

The Fourth Course – Savory Course

Foie Gras Terrine with Green Asparagus, Miners Lettuce, and Black Truffles

As with the Tomato course there were a number of ingredient challenges but these were largely solved by Stewart who with help of our mentor chef was able to obtain very high grade Foie Gras imported from France and the most aromatic perigord black truffles. We were unable to find a suitable supplier of miner's lettuce or the miner's lettuce flowers which were to garnish the plate and instead used pea shoots.

We strictly followed the recipe which was easy to follow, especially after the practice session that we had the weekend before the event. There are however several observations that I have that I believe would be useful for anyone who attempts to recreate this dish – especially if they are looking to increase the recipe as a result of having more than eight dinner guests or are considering smaller serving sizes. In our case we were preparing 40 servings so we tripled the recipe and served thinner slices as there were seven other courses and we felt it was better to leave our guests comfortably contented but perhaps “wanting slightly more”.

One suggestion that would have produced better results would have been to divide the re-emulsified foie gras into three equal sized batches. This would have eliminated some of the waste we would have had at the end of the recipe and would have resulted in a slightly thicker terrine that would have been easier to cut and plate. This of course is only needed if you are making more than the eight servings that is called for in the recipe.

Another little trick was to take care in getting a proper seal on the second foie gras triangle. After a little bit of experimenting we found a sharp knife worked the best as it allowed for the most control. Before plating I would highly suggest tossing the asparagus in some olive oil and hitting them with a pinch or two of salt.

The most difficult part was cutting the terrine and getting it on the plate. We tried a wire cake cutter which was a massive fail and actually just used a sharp thin knife. If I was to prepare this again I would use the same knife but also dip it into hot water after each slice. Our brioche was purchased from a local baker (Arno 780-246-6028)

Fifth Course – Primary Main Course

Rib Eye with Bordelaise Sause, marrow and parmesan crusted asparagus

When our team was selected to prepare the Rib-Eye dish I thought how hard can this be? I've barbequed steak a thousand times, this will be easy.

Then I read the recipe. It was a fairly big undertaking. However my partner (Gunther) and I broke down each component of the dish and pieced it together again to create the desired end result. And in striving to achieve this we prepared a trial dish once for our wives and then again at Sorrentino's for the club, each time learning how to improve on it.

Our mentor chef, Alberto (from the Sorrentino's downtown), was inspirational in his passion for the culinary arts and very generous in his donation of time in helping make our dish a success. What I learnt most from him was that presentation of the dish is as important as the preparation of the food.

As the date of the event loomed closer a certain anxiety started to creep in – will this come together? It is one thing to prepare a hot dish for four, but another for 40. Planning every step in the creation of the meal was key and we were prepared. It was very rewarding to see our meal enjoyed by a very discerning group of individuals who appreciate the culinary arts. Certainly it was my biggest adventure into this field.

Richard Banasch

Sixth Course – Secondary Main Course

Tangleridge Lamb Loin

Our dish was---Tangleridge lamb loin glazed with curried apple lamb jus, lamb-apple crumble, and blackened lady apples—from ELEVEN MADISON PARK.

FIRST:

-before I left for Phoenix, I made 4 gallons of veal stock –later to be used as a base for the lamb jus, which ended up as the curried apple lamb jus.

CHALLENGES:

-source—Punterella---an Italian vegetable from the chicory family---other family members are endive, chicory, dandelion—we found the best sub for the leafy top was endive—and celery root worked very well as a sub for the puntarella core---Stewart, and I experimented on the best way to prepare

-source—Vaudovan curry---I found out after visiting several phoenix area Asian, and Indian grocery stores that Vaudovan curry was a French version of curry that added garlic, chives, and onion.

I found this curry on-line at the Spice Shop—it arrived in two days.

-source—Lady Apples---Steward imported a box of these apples from somewhere in BC---they turned out to be lovely little apples, but not sweet enough---I soaked them overnight in simple syrup, and after baking them, sprinkled brown sugar over them, and heated for a few minutes in a very hot oven---they turned out to be tender, juicy, and sweet.

WHAT DID WE LEARN:

-an over the top challenge like this—as we all found out –can be a great experience, and we all “hit it out of the park”, and became better chefs in the process.

-Tangleridge lamb is hairless, and as such there is no lanolin in the fat or the meat--no mutton taste—I have always stayed away from lamb fat---in this dish we made a component of our crumble out of ground and rendered lamb fat, and we added curried lamb fat to our lamb jus

-apples showed up in several places in our dish, and added a sophisticated dimension to it---simple syrup soaked granny smith apples dehydrated, and chopped as part of our crumble---finely chopped granny smith apples, and sweet onions added to the lamb jus and reduced to half was the next to final step in our curried apple lamb jus---the Lady Apples---so small, and delicate—sautéed in canola oil, soaked in simple syrup, then baked with brown sugar—a lovely side on the plate—apple vinaigrette—soak chopped granny smith apples in white balsamic vinegar overnight—delicious!! –I’ll never think of apples the same way.

-roasted garlic—bring peeled garlic cloves to a boil in water—then simmer in hot canola oil until golden brown—another great side to our dish.

-using the “puntarella” leaves two different ways—flash fried in hot canola oil with kosher salt, and tossed with our apple vinaigrette—great taste contrast, and a nice garnish

We pre-prepped absolutely everything we could---rubbed, and sous vided the loins, sautéed, and baked the lady apples, prepared and reduced the sauces, made the vinaigrette, pre-boiled the garlic cloves, made the crumble, segregated and trimmed the puntarella leaves.

Stewart expertly executed the final saute on the loins in canola oil, butter, crushed garlic, and thyme—then dipping in lamb jus, slice in half—medium rare, and fabulous!!

Alberto oversaw the presentation, and plating---what an artist he is!!! BRAVO!!

Rick Mickleson

Seventh Course – the Cheese Course

It was the best of times...it was the worst of times...on a dark and stormy night...two intrepid amateur chefs set out with guidance from an executive to re-create two dishes from renowned three star Michelin Eleven Madison Park restaurant.

Never has the importance of the sourcing of ingredients been made more clear than by this menu. I have come to appreciate the farm to table trend in cuisine, but when ingredients have been sourced from areas of the world that we do not have access to, the art of imitation becomes paramount.

Cheese was the Achilles heel of our course. How do you try and replicate a texture and a taste without being able to sample the original? The organic qualities of a cheese: texture, moisture content, fat content, age, taste were difficult to get quite right. Fraser spent countless hours trying to find someone in town who even knew what Hobelchas was, let alone where to source it in Canada--nowhere. The replacement cheese, Montvully Rouge, has a history of its own, but what characteristics it shares with Hobelchas are still unknown. The moisture content (or lack thereof) made this cheese difficult to plate. It dried more quickly than expected and did not hold the texture we had hoped. The Granny Smith apples (also a substitute) took on a little more flavour of the lemon water they soaked in, to prevent browning, than anticipated. The chestnuts were obtained both at the Italian Centre Shop and Loblaw's new Central Market. The Central Market ones being much fresher and easier to work with. Celery leaves, a very seemingly simple garnish packed a flavour profile that married nicely with the cheese and apples. Our parsley was flat leaf instead of Italian and it was suggested the latter would have presented better. The wine puree was an experiment conducted solely by Fraser and offered a perfect pairing, although given the amount of cheese on each plate we could have offered more. All in all a very good example of a dish that seemed relatively straight forward but each ingredient having such dynamic individual characteristics to pull off just right.

My favourite of our two dishes was the lemon meringue lollipops. What a whimsical idea packed with such flavour and texture. The process began with a lemon curd created from the zest of Meyer lemons and then their juice. Gelatin sheets were utilized to offer a glossy sheen that gelatin powder cannot recreate (found at Barb's Kitchen or Duchess Provisions). The curd is then brought to temperature before being cooled and then frozen. The orange sucrée crumble was straightforward enough but required a few attempts to get the right degree of doneness before crumbling. The Swiss meringue had to be done just before serving as it had to be warm to be able to twirl the lemon pops in before torching. The lemon pops had to be kept absolutely frozen as well until the last minute else they would melt off the lollipop

stick. The end result was absolutely delicious. A mouthful of the best lemon meringue "pie" I have ever tasted.

I learned as much from my partner Fraser as I did from the "cookbook". Troubleshooting was the name of the game for our dishes. I very much appreciate the mentorship that goes on within our club. This exercise in fine dining was no exception!

Jorge Perez-Prada

Eight Course - The Dessert Course

Toffee Pudding Cake

This dessert was a relatively complex, labor-intensive undertaking with many moving parts!

A challenge faced from the start was in finding menu ingredients not necessarily available from your neighborhood grocery store: *iota carrageenan*, *xanthan gum*, and *agar-agar*. In addition although we did not initially think it would be difficult, procuring a *caramel sauce*, *glucose syrup* and *apple cider* added to our trials. Fortunately, our team's mentor chef, Sonny Sung, was able to obtain these items through his restaurant supplier "Chefs Warehouse - Qzina" albeit in quantities that were "restaurant-sized" and far greater than required.

In preparation, Mike Elias, Scott Montgomery and Phil Milroy met several weeks prior to the event to try out the recipes in what proved to be a quasi-successful dry run. Phil then advised that he would be out of the country until just prior to the December 12th event. So with only dubious preparatory success to date, Mike and Scott divided the dish's component recipes into two categories which they self-allocated and practiced together and on their own:

1. Apples and apples dishes derivatives— Mike
2. Cake and ancillary caramel/walnut aesthetic presentations – Scott

Mike and Scott welcomed back Phil on the day of the event who provided preparation and plating assistance.

Granny Smith Apple Ice Cream – Mike worked diligently on several renditions of the Granny Smith Apple Ice Cream using a household size, time-consuming, churning ice cream maker. It was decided too late that easier and faster methods might have been employed (including the NAIT kitchen's expensive ice cream maker). An apple puree was key to various parts of this dish including the ice cream. After determining that initial versions were too tart, the amount of citric acid and lemon juice were reduced. The texture was also found to contain too many ice crystals, eventually eliminated by substituting alcoholic apple cider in place of an apple cider- powder mix which was first used. We made too much ice cream given that the amount required for each dish served was not substantial. Due to consistency problems, a small ice cream scoop was used in place of the suggested "quenelle" serving technique.

Fuji Apple and Granny Smith Apple Balls and Oblongs – Many apples were sacrificed in the artistic pursuit of creating the perfect apple ball and apple oblong. Several melon ballers in different sizes were utilized and most of the results eventually found their way onto the dessert dishes. While the balls and oblongs were poached in a caramel glaze/apple cider bath, in the end, none were coated with the suggested caramel glaze (containing carrageenan and xanthan gum) as this recipe proved too difficult to create and maintain in liquid form.

Toffee Pudding Cake – While time-intensive, the cake did not prove to be a difficult creation. However, the recipe from the 11 Madison Park cookbook called for too much salt so the final version contained only ½ the suggested amount. No recipe was found for the toffee sauce to be used as a topping so a ‘dulce-leche’ was purchased from Qzina with a substantial amount left over. This sauce was heated in a double boiler and thinned out with cream before being spooned on the cake at serving time.

Caramel Liquid – This was an easily-prepared, sugar-apple cider liquid originally intended as an ingredient in the caramel glaze. However, because it was decided not to use the glaze, the liquid was instead used as a topping and as a base on the plates for presentation purposes. (It was decided that the darker color worked better as a contrasting base on a white plate rather than the cream-colored apple puree).

Walnut Chutney – This was a simple preparation process but the constituents of the dish (pureed walnuts, sugar, walnut oil) in the quantities called for were insufficient to keep the mixture together when rolled into ½” balls. As a result, it was decided to add butter to the mixture to act as a binder. In addition, the first walnut balls attempted were too salty so the salt component of the recipe was reduced and then eventually eliminated. Because there were approximately 80-100, ½” balls required for plating, a substantial amount of time was devoted to creating the balls and coating them in almond flour before putting them into cool storage for final plating. In the final analysis, they became an aesthetically-pleasing and tasty addition to the plate.

Walnut Toffee Powder – The best part of this recipe was that I learned how to make toffee which tasted exactly like Macintosh’s Toffee! Once cooled and broken into pieces, it was placed in a food processor with toasted walnuts and combined into a ground toffee/walnut mixture which was added as a sweet, sticky garnish to the dish.

Caramel Gel – Whether it was the recipe or our unfamiliarity with agar-agar, we could not get this recipe to remain in liquid form. The plating instructions called for the resulting liquid gel to be “dotted” around the toffee pudding cake on the dessert dish. In the end, because we ended up with a thin but tasty gelatinous sheet of

caramel, we planned to cut it into small diamonds which would have been strategically placed around the dessert dishes - had we remembered to take it out of the fridge!

Plating – This was by far the trickiest part of the whole dish. A couple of swooshes of caramel liquid from a squeeze bottle were placed on each oblong-shaped plate as a base for the dessert. Until it was placed on the plate, the pudding cake had to be kept warm as did its “dulce-leche” caramel sauce topping. Because of this warmth, the quenelles of ice cream (which by this time we had decided should become small scoops of ice cream) which were to be placed on top of the cake and sauce immediately started melting. We then left the ice cream to be one of the last tasks before serving. The poached apple balls, apple oblongs and walnut chutney balls were strategically placed on the plate for maximum presentation effect. Although not called for, we added a few raspberries and blueberries for color to offset the mostly golden and brown colors of the other ingredients. Sprinkles of walnut toffee powder provided a granular effect. For a final touch, we used the squeeze bottles to add a few artistic streams of caramel liquid.

Conclusion – As with any culinary dish, a chef’s previous experiences will always enhance the results of his current creations. Together, we probably invested over 30 hours of time in creating this event’s dessert dish. We were not displeased with the results and certainly enjoyed receiving a number of guests’ accolades.

Scott Montgomery

I was on Group 8 in charge of the last course, along with Mike Elias and Scott Montgomery. We met at Mike’s house for the first attempt. There had been quite a lot of scrambling to source ingredients, none of which were totally successful. It was a bit disheartening, at best. We started at 6, and at 11:30 we looked at each other, and at the mess around us. We realized that if we wanted to finish, we had at least another 2-3 hours of work to do and we packed it in. My next experience was at the dinner itself. The entire course had changed and I did as instructed. We finished on time. The meal itself was extraordinary – a great success. Most courses represented the best I have ever tasted. Our gang certainly came through...

Phil Milroy

Scott has provided a thorough summary of the steps we undertook both in the “test preps” and at the December 12 event. That summary outlines both the complexity of the dessert and the changes we undertook to various components, sometimes with help from our mentor chef, Sonny Sung, and sometimes on our own to deliver the dessert at the December 12 event.

As both Scott and Phil have noted we met at my house for the first “test prep”. With no lack of confidence we started at 6 o’clock to put together a recipe that we expected to finish by 9 or possible 10 if we took our time. As Scott and Phil consumed copious amounts of Scotch our confidence and optimism grew, and grew. At around 11, with only a portion of the dessert components prepared, that confidence like a poorly-treated soufflé fell.

Not being much of a drinker I adopted the view that things would go better without the Scotch as a fourth participant on the team.

Scott adopted the view that meticulous lists and job allocations would overcome the obstacles.

Phil went on a motorcycle trip.

My recollection is that I prepared four different batches of granny smith green apple ice cream in order to reduce the “ice content” of the finished product. I now realize it would have better to drink the apple cider rather than including it in the ice cream as required by the recipe.

The dinner on December 12 was tremendous. Many of the dishes were remarkable. The service was impeccable. The camaraderie was delightful.

The other members of my team, Scott and Phil (when not motor-cycling), were enthusiastic and positive – again that may have been their Scotch consumption.

I have two regrets about the event. Firstly Pat was ill and was unable to attend with me and missed the meal and the company. Secondly I used to like granny smith green apples. I haven't had one since.

Mike Elias