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## Artisan Bistro - Putting Fresh, Local Ingredients on the Table

By Susie Iventosch



From left: Artisan Bistro's Jessica Unruh, Gloria Morales, Chef John Marquez, and Juan Carlos Magana Photo Susie Iventosch

Artisan Bistro in Lafayette is a family affair, owned and operated by Elizabeth and Bill Marquez and their son, John, who is also the chef. Marquez, who grew up in Danville and attended San Ramon Valley High School, signed up for a catering class at nearby Monte Vista High School during his junior and senior years and fell in love with cooking right then and there. He's never looked back.

"We cooked for the students as well as the faculty," he remembers. "For the students we cooked simple foods, but for the staff we were allowed to cook more refined dishes."

He then went on to attend the Diablo Valley College culinary program and has been in the business ever since.

"Over the years, I've worked for chef/owners and saw the headaches they experienced and I thought the idea of owning a restaurant didn't look so good at the time," Marquez remarked. "But the time finally came to do my own thing, partially because an owner has more control over everything, especially the food!"

Artisan Bistro offers a menu of California Cuisine with French influences. Everything is made by hand, except the bread.

"We have only one oven so it's difficult to bake bread,

but we do churn our own butter."

Though he likes to mingle with patrons when he can break away from the kitchen, Marquez says his favorite part of the restaurant business is working on the line.

"It's like every order is a test," he related. "I need to sear the fish to perfection and have the sauce tasting just right. I love the adrenaline rush you get when you're on the line and the control you have over the outcome."

Artisan uses all fresh seasonal ingredients, making use of locally-grown produce whenever possible.

"I'd like for our customers to come away from a dining experience at Artisan Bistro having enjoyed the best fresh, local in-season ingredients available."

His dishes are certainly innovative. Marquez shared this recipe for bacon-wrapped duck breast with Asian pear-pine nut stuffing, caramelized turnips and black garlic sauce, which we made at home for my son's 20th birthday. I must confess, it was divine! We adjusted his recipe for the turnip puree, because after caramelizing the turnips a little too long, we loved them just the way they were, a bit crispy on the edges. So we served them un-pureed. Also, since we did not have black garlic (garlic fermented for a month) we used roasted garlic, and it was delicious. For information on how to make fermented black garlic, please visit:

<http://blackgarlic.com/>

how-its-made.

Artisan Bistro

1005 Brown Avenue

Lafayette, CA 94549

(925) 962-0882

<http://www.artisanlafayette.com>

Hours:

Lunch: 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Tuesday to Friday

Dinner: 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Tuesday to Thursday

5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday

5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Sunday

Brunch: 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday



Artisan Bistro's Bacon-wrapped Duck Breast with Caramelized Turnip and Black Garlic Sauce Photo Susie Iventosch

### **Bacon-wrapped, Pear-pine nut stuffed Duck Breast with Caramelized Turnip and Black Garlic Sauce**

(serves 4)

#### **INGREDIENTS**

- 2 one-pound duck breasts, skin removed and butter-fried, keeping one side attached
- 10 thin slices bacon
- 4-6 turnips
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 recipe Asian pear stuffing (recipe below)
- 1 recipe black garlic sauce (recipe below)
- Bitter greens (such as arugula) for garnish

#### **DIRECTIONS**

Remove skin and fat from duck breast. Butterfly breast in half, keeping one side intact.

Add Asian pear stuffing mixture in center of duck breast and roll breast into a cylinder.

Place 5 pieces of bacon on cutting board, overlapping each other by 1/8 inch. Place rolled duck breast on top and roll up, rolling away from you. You may need to secure with kitchen string or toothpicks, but the bacon should hold the roll together.

Sear bacon-wrapped duck breasts on all sides in skillet. Then discard rendered bacon fat and roast in 375-degree oven for 6-8 minutes, rotating every 2-3 minutes. (We grilled on the barbecue for 8 minutes, rotating every 2 minutes, cooking 2 minutes per side.)

Remove from oven and let rest for a few minutes. Slice into 1/2-3/4 inch slices. Serve over a bed of arugula and drizzle black garlic sauce over all.

#### Asian Pear and Pine Nut Stuffing

#### **INGREDIENTS**

- 1/2 Asian pear, julienned
- 1/8 cup pine nuts
- 2 tablespoons simple syrup (1 part sugar dissolved in 1 part hot water)
- 1 shallot, finely chopped (Susie's addition)
- 1 tablespoon chopped thyme
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley

#### **DIRECTIONS**

Toss together first three (or four if you add shallots) ingredients, then roast on parchment or on Silpat (non-stick baking mat) in 400 degree oven for 10-12 minutes. Remove from oven, add parsley and thyme, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Set aside until ready to stuff duck breast.

#### Black Garlic Sauce

#### **INGREDIENTS**

- 1 cup reduced chicken stock
- 1-2 heads fermented garlic (Marquez suggests using roasted garlic instead if you don't happen to have fermented garlic. To make fermented garlic visit: <http://blackgarlic.com/how-its-made>)

Salt to taste

#### **DIRECTIONS**

Heat stock until boiling. Place liquid in blender, add garlic and salt. \*I actually reduced the stock over the stove and the squeezed the roasted garlic into the broth, discarding all skin. Then I put the sauce in the processor before reheating to serve.

#### Caramelized Turnips

Instead of making the caramelized turnip puree, we stopped right at the point in Marquez's recipe, where the turnips

were caramelized. They were so delicious this way, with soft insides and crispy edges. But Marquez adds milk to the turnips after the caramelizing process and cooks until turnips are soft. Then he removes the turnips from the milk and processes the turnips along with extra butter, seasoning to taste with salt and pepper. This is what we did:

**INGREDIENTS**

4-6 turnips, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch thin wedges (you'll want at least one per person)

1/2 cube butter

Salt and pepper to taste

**DIRECTIONS**

In a large frying pan, cook butter over medium-high heat until browned and bubbly. Add turnips and continue to cook until caramelized and beginning to get crispy on the edges. To keep warm until serving, keep pan on very low heat and just before serving crank up the heat to re-crisp. I am sure the pureed turnips are delicious, but we just had to stop here, because they were so great this way!

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