

# Comforting seasonal cuisine offered at The Park Bistro & Bar

By Susie Iventosch

There's something fresh and exciting going on at the Lafayette Park Hotel and it involves the trio of Jason Reiplinger, director of food and beverage, Executive Chef Frank Macias and Pastry Chef Francisco Cabrera. These three gentlemen have teamed up to create a new approach to the dining atmosphere at The Park Bistro & Bar.

"Where the Duck Club was more of a special occasion type restaurant, the bistro is one where we want people to feel comfortable dining with us more often during the week," Reiplinger said. "We don't believe that guests should have to work to understand the menu, so we've evolved the menu to one that is comfortable and understandable with lots of new seasonal favorites. We're the opposite of most every other hotel restaurant, in that our regular patrons are not just traveling through, but are local community members."

While Reiplinger recruited both Macias and Cabrera from The Wynn Hotel in Las Vegas, both are originally from the East Bay and they are delighted to be back home, close to friends and family.

"I'm so happy to be back home, and it's also so much easier to create a seasonal menu being so close and accessible to local farmers," Macias noted. "This allows us to offer seasonal and approachable, recognizable fare." To these fellows this not only means menu

items that are familiar, but also foods prepared as they were meant to be.

"I trained in classic French cuisine while working at Alain Ducasse's Benoit New York in Manhattan and those classical techniques continue to be the driving force behind good food," Macias mentioned. "Among the important lessons learned there is how to prepare seasonal vegetables as they should be prepared and cooked. Vegetables should be treated with respect."

Macias said that roasting with olive oil is a very good way to cook green beans, for example, which maintains the integrity and flavor of the vegetable.

Cabrera, a self-taught chef who ventured to Las Vegas when he was 19 years old to learn the trade, developed skills in chocolatier, Danish and banquet before ultimately becoming a chef de partie in chocolates. He enjoys making what he calls "comfort desserts."

"The best thing about comfort desserts is that they bring back great memories and take you back to a certain place in time," he said. "When I make them for guests, I get great feedback."

Currently, Chef Cabrera is making "cereal milk" frozen panna cotta. The milk for the panna cotta is infused with toasted cereals, strained and then combined with brown sugar and gelatin. He serves this dessert with caramel-

ized bananas and strawberries or other seasonal fruits.

The Park Bistro & Bar menu changes seasonally. Chef Macias has generously shared his recipe for Braised Short Ribs and Crushed Okinawan Yams, which I

made last week to my guests' delight. It was perfect comfort food and the colors of the crushed yams and carrots made a beautiful autumn plate. Because I did not have access to Okinawan yams, I used regular orange yams, which turned

out to be delicious with his short rib recipe. Chef Cabrera has also shared a recipe for one of his "cereal milk" desserts. Unfortunately, I did not have the chance to try the dessert recipe, but hope to soon!



Braised short rib, crushed Okinawan yam, Tokyo turnip and dandelion greens

Photo provided

## Braised Short Rib, Crushed Okinawan Yam, Tokyo Turnip, Dandelion Greens

(4 servings)

### Short Ribs

#### INGREDIENTS

5 lbs. boneless short rib  
Olive oil to sear  
Salt and pepper to taste  
4 each white onions julienned  
4 each carrots, peeled and cut thin  
750 ml. Cabernet Sauvignon  
16 oz. Balsamic Vinegar  
4 quarts beef bouillon

#### DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Season and sear the beef short ribs with the oil. Remove the meat from the hot pan. Sweat the carrots and onion in the same pan until translucent. Deglaze with the red wine, add the ribs back in with the vegetables. Once the alcohol has burned off, add the balsamic vinegar and bouillon to the ribs. Cover with a lid and simmer for 2 ½ hours, or until fork tender. Remove meat from the liquid and reduce the liquid until it coats the back of a spoon. To serve: Add the ribs to the reduced braise and glaze.

## Crushed Okinawan Yam

Susie's note: I could not find the Okinawan yam, so I used regular yams, prepared according to Chef Macias' recipe and they were beautiful and tasty with the short ribs!

#### INGREDIENTS

2 lbs. Okinawan yam  
1 half-sheet pan filled with kosher salt for baking  
¾ cup of fruity olive oil  
Sea salt

#### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 F and bake the yam on the salt. Once cooked and fork tender, pull out of the oven and let cool slightly. Peel the yams while still warm. Slightly crush the yams with a fork and drizzle in the olive oil. Season with sea salt and chives.

## Glazed Tokyo Turnip

#### INGREDIENTS

15 Tokyo turnips with greens still attached  
1 Tbsp. olive oil  
1 Tbsp. butter  
¼ cup chicken broth  
Salt and pepper to taste

#### DIRECTIONS

Boil water for blanching, and season the water heavily with salt. With a pair of tongs blanch just the turnip while holding the greens above the water for 2 minutes. Drop the rest of the turnip into the water for a quick 30 seconds. In a sauté pan add the butter, olive oil and chicken stock and apply medium heat. Add the turnip and season with salt and pepper. To plate the meal: Dandelion leaves, lemon vinaigrette, Maldon salt, olive oil. Place a spoonful of the yam on the side of the plate and place the glazed rib next to the yam. Lay the turnips around the ribs. Finish with Maldon salt. Dress the dandelion leaves in lemon vinaigrette and lay a couple of the long leaves gently on the meat and yam. Drizzle with olive oil.

## Cereal Milk Panna Cotta, Cornflake Clusters, Macerated Strawberries, Caramelized Banana

(8 servings)

### Panna Cotta

#### INGREDIENTS

Susie's note: Most food scales have both gram and ounce options, but in case you do not have a gram measurement device, I have put close conversions in parenthesis.

256 grams cornflakes (8.9 oz. or 5 cups)  
710 grams milk (25 oz. or 3 cups)  
470 grams heavy cream (22 oz. or 2 cups)  
30 grams brown sugar (1.1 oz. or 3 Tbsp.)  
2 grams salt (.1 oz. or 1 tsp.)  
4 sheets of gelatin

#### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 F. Bloom gelatin. (Bloom means to soften according to directions.) Toast cornflakes for about 5-7 minutes. In a bowl scale out the milk and heavy cream. Add the corn flakes and steep for at least 40 minutes. Strain through a fine mesh sieve, add sugar and salt. Heat the mixture until it is warm and add the gelatin sheets. Remove from heat and pour into silicon mold and freeze. Unmold when completely set.

## Cornflake clusters

#### INGREDIENTS

55 grams (1/4 cup) gianduja chocolate—a paste made from 70% dark, sweet chocolate and 30% hazelnut paste  
2 grams vegetable oil (1/2 tsp.)  
1 gram salt (1/2 tsp.)  
75 grams 70% dark chocolate (2.5 oz.)  
5 grams corn syrup (1/2 tsp.)  
100 grams cornflakes (3.57 oz. or 2 cups)

#### DIRECTIONS

Melt 70% chocolate over double boiler. Add oil, corn syrup, salt, gianduja and corn flakes. Fold until evenly coated and spread on a sheet tray lined with parchment paper. Place in cooler and break into pieces when set.

## Macerated strawberries

1 lb. strawberries  
3 Tbsp. sugar

## Caramelized banana

1 banana  
3 Tbsp. sugar

Slice the banana coat one side in sugar and torch until caramel is light amber color

To plate: Crushed corn flakes. Center the panna cotta on the plate. Quarter cut the strawberries and place in staggering pattern with the caramelized banana. Break off pieces of cornflake clusters on top of the panna cotta. And sprinkle crushed corn flakes around the plate.

## Cooking Term of the Week

### Quenelle

A quenelle is a French term for an oval-shaped dumpling made from finely chopped and seasoned fish, meat or vegetables, and poached in water or stock. It is usually served with a sauce.

## Local residents rally in response to North Bay fires

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Aegis of Moraga General Manager Candice Moses said Moraga is ready to offer shelter for seniors who have been displaced by the firestorm. The Moraga location could easily house 10 to 15 displaced seniors, keeping them "for as long as necessary." The company has even been asked if they have common space available suitable for cots.

"There is so much need," Moses said, "and we've just started this search." She said displaced seniors often arrive with no extra clothing and no personal items. Lamorindans can call Aegis of Moraga at (925) 478-7327 to inquire about helping.

Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, along with six other Bay Area food banks, have deployed resources to affected North Bay areas and issued requests for federal assistance, said Communications Director Lisa Sherrill. The best way to help is to donate directly to food banks in the affected areas, she says. Donations can be made online, with credit, debit cards or PayPal, at <https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/foodbanknews>.

Local Moraga fourth-grader at Camino Pablo Elementary School, Olivia Metz, has launched a non-profit, Costumes4Kids.org. She is collecting brand new and gently used costumes (sizes 0 to 16) between now and Oct. 22 for a local family shelter and hospital pediatric unit, and hopes to collect over 200 costumes.

In light of the devastating fires and to help spread a little joy to the kids who may have lost everything, Costumes4Kids is planning to also make a delivery to one of the shelters in the North Bay this week. You may bring your costumes to Loard's Ice Cream and Candies (Orinda or Moraga locations), Rheem Theater, Orchard Nursery, or Camino Pablo Elementary, all of which have generously agreed to house the nonprofit's decorated containers.

There are many more throughout Lamorinda demonstrating very generous acts of kindness.

As Burks put it, they are "exercising acute awareness of the enormity of the tragedy and genuinely yearning to help those in need."

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Susie can be reached at [suziventosch@gmail.com](mailto:suziventosch@gmail.com). This recipe can be found on our website: [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com). If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.

