



July 30, 2010

# Food / Dining

## Simple Art of Cooking Silvia Lehrer

## Honoring Martha Stewart

"They're all sold out", said of friend of mine prior to the event. And indeed it was. Martha Stewart, the lifestyle connoisseur, was the honored guest at The James Beard Foundation's Chefs & Champagne annual gala held at Wolffer Estate Vineyards in Sagaponack on July 24.

Susan Ungaro, president of the James Beard Foundation, welcomed Martha to the podium to congratulate her for her contributions to the culinary arts. Martha graciously acknowledged everyone's warm welcome, and recalled working with Beard. "He was a man bigger than life with an unusual physiognomy and always leading the way in terms of food and wine in America." She acknowledged the importance of the Foundation's Christian Wolffer Culinary Scholarship. Each year the scholarships are awarded to talented young people who go on to the best culinary school in the United States.

Guests sipped champagne, Wolffer Estate wines, Belgian beers, soft drinks and thrilled at the delectable tastings offered from the more than 35 talented chefs under the great tent, many of whom are James Beard award winning chefs.

Spectacular tastings overflowed at every station such as Todd English's pastrami spiced kobe steak, lobster sauce and polenta fries, Pomme Café Brasserie's smoked salmon cheesecake with red onion crème fraîche, Michael Ginor's Hudson

Valley Foie gras, duck prosciutto and peach chutney, Recette's peaches 'n cream', raspberry coulis, panna cotta and champagne gelatin, De Bragga's wet and dry aged wagyu beef and Robbin Haas' butter poached lobster. These were just a few of the outstanding treats. Local chefs, Jason Weiner of Almonds favored us with savory smoked bluefish and Michael Gerlach of Nick & Toni's cooled us with his refreshing lemon gelato with blackberry compote.

The VIP after party menu, catered by Citarella, wowed the participants with an extraordinary 5-course buffet. The sun had set, the moon was high in the pale blue sky and all was pleasant in the cool of the evening.

### ALMOND'S HOUSE SMOKED BLUEFISH

*Jason Wiener, executive chef and proprietor of Almond in Bridgehampton and Manhattan was inspired early on by locally grown, farm fresh cooking. Here is his savory smoked bluefish with dressed micro-greens and Greek yogurt dill.*

- 2 pound skin-on, boneless bluefish fillet
- 3 red onions, thinly sliced
- 1 bunch each dill, parsley and thyme, roughly chopped
- 5 crushed bay leaves
- 1/2 cup brined green peppercorns, rinsed and

crushed

- 1 cup kosher salt
- 3/4 cup sugar
- Apple wood chips for smoking
- 1/4 cup Canola oil

1. Rinse fish fillet and dry with paper towel. Score the skin at 3-inch intervals and place in a non-reactive pan such as a Pyrex lasagna pan large enough to hold the fish in one layer. Mix the onions, herbs, bay leaves, peppercorns, kosher salt and sugar in a bowl. Spread half the mixture in the pan and place the fish, skin-side down, over the mixture. Spread the remaining mixture evenly over the top of the fish. Cover pan with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 24 hours. Remove the cured fish from pan, rinse thoroughly and dry with paper towels. Rinse and dry the pan; put the fish back in the pan and refrigerate, uncovered, for 24 hours longer to dry.

2. Smoke the fish with the apple wood chips for two hours at 150°F. The fish should have a pleasing firmness and an amber color. If it doesn't continue to smoke the fish until it does. Refrigerate the fish immediately. After an hour coat the fish with the oil and wrap in plastic wrap until ready to serve.

### LEMON GELATO WITH BLACKBERRY

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## Silvia (continued from previous page)

### COMPOTE AND AMARETTI

*Mark Gerlach, pastry chef at Nick & Toni's, cooled us with his luscious house-made lemon gelato with blackberry compote and crushed amaretti. Mark, a graduate of the French Culinary Institute in New York City, holds a Grand Diploma in both pastry arts and International Bread Baking.*

#### For the Blackberry Compote

- 1 pint blackberries
- About 1/4 cup sugar, according to the sweetness of the berries
- 2 teaspoons crystallized ginger, chopped fine
- 1 vanilla bean scraped or 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch salt

#### To serve

- 1 pint lemon gelato or sorbet
- 1/4 cup Chambord
- 1/3 cup crushed amaretti

1. Place the ingredients for the blackberry compote in a bowl and allow to macerate for a minimum of one hour. Taste to correct for sweetness as necessary and chill until ready to serve.

2. To serve: Scoop a large ball of gelato or sorbet into a wine or martini glass. Divide the compote evenly over the gelato, drizzle a bit of Chambord over each serving and top with crushed amaretti.