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## Fabulous Food & Fast Cars

by Joanna Prisco

This past weekend may have been book-ended by downpours here in the Northeast, but nothing could dampen my spirits. Not when I had the pleasure of attending one [of the](#) ritzier food events of my life: [The James Beard Foundation's annual Chefs & Champagne celebration](#). It's a massive tasting party held at the [Wölffer Estate Vineyard](#) in Sagaponack, Long Island, featuring flowing Champagnes, wines, and creatively conceived small plates by more than 30 skilled chefs from around the country. In addition to awarding a Christian Wölffer [scholarship](#) to a promising young chef, the event was also honoring domestic doyenne [Martha Stewart](#) for her considerable contributions to the food world, or as JBF President Susan Ungaro put it in her introduction, "getting people interested in living the good life."

Well, I certainly felt like I was living the good life that day. To spend a few hours under a tent full of well-heeled Hamptons types asking myself, "Should I try the blancs de blancs next? Or the rosé? Chef Jason's Weiner's House-Smoked Bluefish with Greek [Yogurt](#) and Dill? Or Damon Wise and Shane McBride's Barbecued Pork Belly with Marinated Tomatoes and Sweet-and-Sour Cane Syrup?" Oh, the decisions of the rich and foodie. It was sweltering hot, but I hardly felt it. I was wearing a flowy [silk dress](#), stuffing my face and...I loved every minute! Following are snapshots of some of the fabulous food I consumed (in some cases multiple times...um, wouldn't you?), as well as a couple of celebrity-chef encounters, and some insanely fast pieces of machinery built by Mercedes-Benz, which sponsored the gorgeous gala. I couldn't capture everything and everyone on my iPhone camera, unfortunately. But this should give you a taste. Cheers!



1. I began with House-Smoked Bluefish with Greek Yogurt and Dill by [Jason Weiner](#) of nearby [Almond](#) restaurant in Bridghampton, N.Y.. I'm such a sucker for smoked fish and these morsels didn't disappoint. In fact, the saltiness was intoxicating and seconds later the plate was scraped clean. I made a mental note to try to pace myself moving forward.



2. **George Faison and Marc John Sarrazin** of [DeBragga.com](http://DeBragga.com) (an online butcher with a premium meat selection) offered up Naturally Raised 40-Day Dry-Aged Beef Strip Loin and Naturally Raised 40-Day Wet-Aged Beef Strip Loin served with a Tomato and Corn Chutney at their station a few steps away. My friend Sarah, who was joining me on this culinary adventure, nearly fell over after she took her first bite, saying something like "Oh my GOD, you have to try this!" between blissful mouthfuls.



3. A plantain chip acted as a half scooper/half side nibble to **Nicolas Cantrel**'s *Tartare de Thon* (Tuna Tartare) which rested on a small bed of avocado puree. It was fresh, bright, and cheery. I could have eaten about 12 more, if there hadn't been so many other plates summoning my senses. The guests at his restaurant, [Bistrot Bagatelle](http://BistrotBagatelle.com) in New York, N.Y., are definitely spoiled.



4. **Harold Moore** of [Commerce](http://CommerceRestaurant.com) restaurant in New York, N.Y. was originally meant to prepare a Marinated Yellowtail with Chilies, Yuzu, and Lime (according to the event [program](#) and website). But for whatever reason, we ended up shooting a sort of BLT Soup that included chopped tomatoes, a crunchy crouton, and bacon, poured over with a creamy, cooling puree. Ok, the truth is after I had my first shooter, I asked chef Moore to take this action shot and decided it was a good excuse to have a second one. Such a great idea for an appetizer!



5. I was thrilled to see James Beard Award-winning Pastry Chef **Karen DeMasco** of [Locanda Verde](#) in NYC was on hand to serve up her Sweet Corn Budino with Blueberries and [Polenta Shortbread cookie](#). The genius of DeMasco's desserts are that they are experimental in an entirely comforting format...



6. For instance, sweet corn is flying off of farm stands at the moment. But most people probably aren't bringing them home to use in a *budino* (an Italian variation of pudding) then pairing it with blueberry sauce and a polenta shortbread cookie. But once you've tried it, you realize how natural sweet corn is as an after-dinner flavor, and you start thinking about sweet-corn ice cream and sweet-corn ice pops. For more of Karen DeMasco's impressive-yet-approachable creations, check out her cookbook [The Craft of Baking](#).



7. Whenever anyone asked us what our favorite bites of the event were, my friend Sarah (who hails from Boston) would excitedly declare "Oh, the Butter-Poached Lobster!" which was prepared by **Robbin Haas** from Gulf Coast Kitchen at [Montauk Yacht Club in Montauk, N.Y.](#) I can personally attest that she's a bit of a lobster snob (which isn't a bad thing, it's good to be discerning). I think what put the combination of BUTTER and LOBSTER over the edge were the additions of beets and potatoes. Just yum. Totally yum.