

MASTERING THE FUNDAMENTALS IN THE LOWCOUNTRY

Craig Deihl, Executive Chef,
CYPRESS, Charleston, South Carolina

Gathering around a table for a meal has always been an integral ritual in Craig Deihl's life. "Every dinner growing up, whether we played sports or not, was sitting down as a family, even if it was after a baseball game, you would still sit down as a family and have that evening meal together." Growing food was just as fundamental. "My grandfather had a 90-acre farm and at the end of the harvest there would be these massive pickings. I remember pictures of when we were kids standing around on the tomato slicers doing tomato pieces for canning. Blanching corn in these great big wood fires out-back."

Deihl's childhood gives him a unique perspective on the current farm-to-table movement. "I took for granted the fact that we did things that way. And then all of a sudden, when it started becoming more of a farm-to-table type thing, and restaurants were buying from the back door, I grew up with this and because we were growing this stuff, it never seemed like a fancy posh way of doing things."

Deihl, a native of Danville, Pennsylvania, who attended Johnson and Wales University in Charleston and has worked in the city ever since, has witnessed many changes over the past several years. "I've seen the culinary scene evolve over the past 15 years in Charleston and every year it's becoming more and more farm-to-table." And while this new awareness is commendable, Deihl also expresses some frustration. "I'm hearing that the local clientele is becoming more sophisticated, but yet they will say, 'Oh here is this beautiful grass-fed steak.' But then they ask, 'Why is it chewy? Why does it taste gamey?'" Deihl continues, "Do you sacrifice a little amount of tenderness in a product for it being raised the right way? You know you're dead certain you're buying a better product, but when the clientele says otherwise, you have to please them."

One thing Deihl doesn't question is his commitment to not only Cypress, the restaurant he has overseen as Executive Chef since 2001, but to its meat program. Deihl started the Artisan Meat Share, essentially a quarterly CSA for such delicacies as pork butter, headcheese, salamis and bacon, and has also developed an impressive in-house charcuterie program.

Deihl, who worked at Cypress' parent company's restaurant Magnolias Uptown/Down South before helping to open Cypress, describes his cuisine as "food driven by your senses. The flavor profile of layering hot, sour, salty, sweet and then



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upon that it becomes what ingredients do we have here in our region? Beyond that it's what foods do I like to eat? What foods go with those regional ingredients?"

Deihl, who maintains the blog www.therealdiehlchef.com and penned the cookbook in 2007 *Cypress: A Lowcountry Grille*, places great importance on mastering one skill before moving onto the next. Recently, he has witnessed an unfortunate change in younger cooks: "All of a sudden everything sped up so fast and that's why I ask, 'Why do we want to teach chefs newer techniques when they

don't even understand roasting, resting, the purpose of blanching and shocking? They look at it as old school. We don't need to do things that way. If you don't understand that, why would I want to teach you an advanced technique?"

If his young charges are willing to make the commitment to train with Deihl, he will reward their initiative. "Chances are, if you show up, I'm going to ask you to come back again." And what is the reward of showing up to work for Craig Deihl? "I can tell you over 100 ways of screwing stuff up, but I can really only tell you one way to do it right, and that's what I'm going to teach you."

For the coffee oil:

- 4 ounces freshly ground coffee beans
- ¼ cup canola oil
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

For the vinaigrette:

- Zest of ½ orange
- ¼ cup freshly squeezed orange juice
- ¼ cup sherry vinegar

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

For the beets:

- Zest and juice of 1 orange
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 4 baby red beets
- 4 baby champagne beets
- 4 baby chloga beets
- 4 baby golden beets
- 4 sprigs rosemary

Vinaigrette, from above

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

To serve:

- 16 slices coppa
- 3 ounces of cured black olives, pitted and coarsely chopped

For the garnish:

- Citrus coriander blooms
- Micro fennel
- Micro caraway
- Micro parsley

Maldon salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the coffee oil: In blender, place coffee beans and canola oil and purée until smooth. In bowl, place coffee mixture and olive oil and whisk to combine. Cover and set aside at room temperature 12 hours. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve.

For the vinaigrette: In bowl, whisk together orange zest and juice and vinegar. Cover and set aside in refrigerator 12 hours. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve and season with salt and pepper.

For the beets: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In bowl, whisk together orange zest and juice and oil. Add beets and rosemary and toss until everything is well coated. Season with salt. Wrap beets in aluminum foil, separated by color, and roast one hour. Set aside at room temperature 10 minutes. Discard foil and remove peelings with paper towels. Cut beets into desired shapes. In bowl, toss together beets and vinaigrette until beets are well coated. Season with salt and pepper.

To serve: Plate as shown. Drizzle with coffee oil and garnish with coppa, olives, coriander blooms, fennel, caraway and parsley. Sprinkle with Maldon salt and pepper.

Beet Salad with Coffee Oil and Orange Sherry Vinaigrette

(Serves 6)



Poulty-Rume
Herve Seguin
Loire-Valley, France



For the coffee broth:

- 1/2 cup flounder stock
- 2 1/2 ounces finely ground coffee beans

For the garlic almond pistou:

- 1 1/2 ounces blanched whole almonds
- 1 clove garlic, peeled
- 2 sprigs basil, blanched
- 2 sprigs chervil, blanched
- 4 sprigs parsley, blanched
- 1/4 teaspoon fennel seed
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

For the peas:

- 1 1/2 ounces butter
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
- 1/2 leek, thinly sliced
- 1/4 bulb baby fennel, thinly sliced
- Fronks of 1/4 bulb fennel, coarsely chopped
- 3 ounces English peas, blanched
- Coffee broth, from above
- Garlic almond pistou, from above

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

For the flounder:

- 4 3-ounce flounder filets
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 2 ounces butter

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

To serve:

4 slices prosciutto, torn into small pieces, fried

in oil until crispy

For the coffee broth in saucepan, place stock and coffee and bring to a simmer. Remove from heat and set aside at room temperature one hour. Strain through a cheesecloth-lined fine-mesh sieve.

For the garlic almond pistou in blender, place all ingredients except salt and pepper and blend until incorporated. Season with salt and pepper.

For the peas in frying pan, melt butter and sauté garlic until golden brown. Add leek, fennel fronds and peas and sauté three minutes. Add coffee broth, from above, and bring to a simmer. Add garlic almond pistou, from above and remove from heat. Season with salt and pepper.

For the flounder. Season flounder with salt and pepper in frying pan, heat oil and sear flounder, skin-side-up, two minutes. Melt butter, flip flounder over and cook through, basting with butter throughout the cooking process. Drain on paper towels.

To serve. Plate as shown. Garnish with prosciutto.

Flounder and Garlic Almond Pistou with Peas and Coffee Broth

(Serves 4)



Puligny-Montrachet
Louis Carillon
Burgundy, France 2005

