

# Sum of its parts

The story behind every element on a restaurant plate

## Cypress' Tropical Baked Alaska

Pastry chef Andrea Upchurch, Cypress

Key lime chiffon cake, kiwi ice cream, toasted coconut meringue, roasted pineapple, Malibu anglaise / \$8

The local inspiration for the dessert was a robust crop of kiwis, which flavor the **ice cream** between the cake layers. The outer layer is **Italian meringue**, which is made with heated sugar syrup instead of dry sugar.

The toasted coconut atop the meringue adds crunch. Asked whether the baked Alaska is **finished table-side**, Upchurch says, "Oh no, girl. I'd rather it be consistent and my girls do it."

The **cake** is key lime chiffon, which freezes better than buttery pastry.

After decades of being classified as unfashionable, **baked Alaska** has "resurfaced," Upchurch says. "Ice cream and meringue are two of my favorite dessert things. I just think it's amazing what egg whites can become."

To give the **roasted pineapple** a deep flavor that contrasts with the lightness of the cake, Upchurch soaks the fruit in Myers's dark rum.

Upchurch has noticed that diners tend to eat one isolated bite at a time. But when she eats the baked Alaska, she spears a roasted pineapple and a bit of cake, then drags her fork through the custard.

For flavoring the meringue, Upchurch uses Malibu rum. "I personally hate fake coconut," she says of her coconut extract avoidance. The **creme Anglaise** dotting the plate also gets a hit of Malibu.

