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WHEN YOUR FAVORITE FLAVOR IS CRUNCH

by Hipolito Torres

They're big, and they're spectacular. "The squashes love the Texas heat!" says Chef Nic Yanes of East Austin's Juniper. The pattypan on which he builds a celebratory springtime dish are six inches in diameter, and they dominate the plate with their playful curves. Yanes slices the gratuitous pattypan in half horizontally and treats them as steaks. But it's not succulence he's after. Yanes is pursuing a resounding crunch. "Summer squashes are tricky to cook, due to their water content. We set out to do a simple technique with curing the squash to remove some of its moisture and gain a very desirable final texture."

Rolling in from Tecolote Farms, this impressive, scallop-edged pattypan squash is sliced and scored before luxuriating overnight in a sugar-salt cure decked out with lemon, thyme, fennel seeds, and red pepper flakes.

Adding classic Italian technique and some much-needed carbs, the garlicky tomato emulsion is thickened with focaccia, spiked with rich, nutty Sherry vinegar, and plated in Rubenesque orbs.

Precise without being fussy, Yanes adds beet scraps to his brine, giving precious pickled pearl onion petals an electric magenta hue and bringing an earthy-sweet dimension to lighten up the entire dish.

Raw, rolled zucchini ribbons accentuate freshness and crunch.

Grilled over post oak until tender, a pleasant char offers up a bitter smokiness that offsets the unrelenting freshness of the squash.

A sucker punch of dill in a creamy swoosh of mascarpone is addictive.



Yuca dumplings, Oaxaca cheese, radish escabeche, coconut oil

*Chef Max Snyder of Pitchfork Pretty | Austin
Adapted by StarChefs
Yield: 40 servings*

INGREDIENTS

Fermented Radishes

Red radishes, halved
3 percent salt brine

Yuca Dumplings

1 kilogram yuca root,
peeled and split lengthwise
Butter
8 egg yolks
15 grams cotija cheese,
microplaned
22 grams salt
Whole nutmeg
275 grams all-purpose flour

Roasted Vegetables

Red onion
Carnot
Small potatoes
Okra
Coconut oil
Salt
Black pepper

To Assemble and Serve

Coconut oil
Lamb's quarters
Queen Anne's lace
Okra flowers
Mallow leaves
Wild oregano, dried over fire

METHOD

For the Fermented Radishes

In a nonreactive container, combine radishes and brine; cover. Lacto-ferment at room temperature for 5 to 10 days.

For the Yuca Dumplings

Heat the water bath of an immersion circulator to 85°C. In a vacuum bag, seal yuca and a knob of butter and cook sous vide for 1½ hours. Remove from circulator and cool slightly. While yuca is still warm, transfer to a food processor and pulse until shredded. Transfer 1 kilogram shredded mixture to a cutting board. Cut in 200 grams butter. Add yolks, cotija, salt, and use a microplane to season with nutmeg; mix into a homogenous mass. Gradually, gently add flour until combined, working the dough as little as possible to avoid gluten development. Using your hands, roll dough into small dumplings. Transfer to a parchment-lined sheet tray. Cover and refrigerate.

For the Roasted Vegetables

Heat oven to 350°F. Leaving the vegetables as whole as possible, cut them into bite-size pieces. Transfer to a sheet tray and toss with oil to coat. Season with salt and pepper. Roast until tender. Keep warm.

To Assemble and Serve

In a small pot, heat coconut oil. Fry 5 Yuca Dumplings until golden brown all around. Drain and transfer to a bowl with several pieces of each Roasted Vegetable and 5 Fermented Radish halves. Pour a shallow layer of the Fermented Radish brine into the bowl. Garnish with lamb's quarters, Queen Anne's lace, okra flowers, and mallow leaves. Sprinkle oregano over top. Finish with some coconut oil.



MAYAN INSPIRED MEAT SPREAD AT CURED

BY SEAN KENNIFF



Chef Steve McHugh of Cured in San Antonio was inspired by a trip to the Yucatán before he ever stepped foot in Mexico. After receiving an invitation to join Chef Hugo Ortega to cook for the Lonestar Chef Series in the Riviera Maya, McHugh hit the books. "I did a lot of studying because I didn't want to just do food from Cured. I wanted to make it local," he says. "I came across a recipe for chile-pineapple lechón and it stuck in my brain. I thought, 'How can we play around with this process and ingredients and add Cured's style?'" Answer: pineapple-chile pork rillettes. (Recipe p. 102)

FIRE-UP THE GRILL. McHugh chars pineapple, habaneros, poblanos, and serranos. "Twice a week, there's a farmers market right in front of Cured. We're that restaurant that'll take anything when farmers don't sell it. We get a crazy abundance of chiles. [For this preparation], we use twice as many poblanos because they're milder, and we want chile flavor. Sweetness comes from the habaneros. And the serranos grill well because their water content is low."

GO FOR A JOYRIDE IN A VITAMIX. The charred chiles and fruit are pureed with agave syrup and banana vinegar sourced from Rancho Gordo. "The vinegar, ferment-y and sweet, adds this extra umami quality and roundness to the rillettes, but without actually adding something that's fermented," says McHugh.

TAKE A FAT BATH. The pork is confited in its own fat for about three hours at 300°F. "Food cost on the rillettes is like nothing. We only process whole animals, so we collect trim from hams and scrape bones. But we love the beautiful shoulders for this. About 80 percent of the meat is pork butt. Watch the temperature and time because when pork starts to get crispy-crunchy or dark, it's impossible to emulsify, and a good rilette is a good emulsification."

YA GOTTA KEEP 'EM SEPARATED. Drain the pork confit, reserving meat and fat separately. "You've confited the pork right when, after the fat congeals, a layer of pork jus forms underneath."

MAKE IT SMOOTH. Using a stand mixer, slowly combine one-third of the reserved fat/jus with 3 cups salsa and pork. "Make sure everything is room temperature or it will break. This emulsification uses meat as a binder for fat and jus. If you overcook the pork, it won't bind and you have a mess, a broken emulsification. You want a meat spread."

LEAVE ROOM AT THE TOP. Transfer 3 to 4 ounces of cooled rillettes to small jars. Top with a little salsa. Rillettes are a no. 1 best seller for McHugh. He's programmed the menu so parties of any size can customize their charcuterie order: three items for \$18, six for \$26, and nine for \$34. Each item rings up individually, so it's easy to track costs.

IN YOUR FACE. Serve rillettes with, say, garlic sausage, duck ham, 90-day coppa, pickles, mustards, jams, and crackers. "We're not dabbling in charcuterie. We don't have a 'charcuterie program,'" says McHugh. "We're an in-your-face charcuterie restaurant. We don't have some refrigerator in the back. It's all right here on the dining room floor."

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PHOTO: BEKKA BALDUCCI

Tavel Bristol-Joseph

EMMER & RYE

Tavel Bristol-Joseph's aunt used baking as a form of "punishment" if he missed his curfew. After a few weekends covered in flour, the Guyana native discovered that he was falling in love with his aunt's disciplinary measures. Moving to New York at 17, he attended the New York Restaurant School and landed a pastry cook job at The River Café before ever finishing his pastry arts degree.

Bristol-Joseph moved on to become pastry sous chef at Blue Fin at the W Hotel in Times Square before relocating to Tucson, Arizona. While working as corporate executive pastry chef at Hacienda Del Sol resort, he met Kevin Fink. The two developed a productive working relationship and fast friendship. When Fink moved to Austin, Bristol-

Joseph followed to help his friend open a restaurant called Emmer & Rye.

Alongside co-Chef Page Pressley, the trio is developing a hyper-originalist pantry expressing flavors of South Central Texas that the region didn't even know it had. As pastry chef and partner, Bristol-Joseph leads a program aligned with the restaurant's mission to eliminate and transform waste, featuring desserts that tell complex stories from an emotional, personal perspective. The only ingredient Bristol-Joseph sources from outside Texas is cacao. By the end of this year, he will take over Emmer & Rye's second, more casual concept, and soon after an ice cream trailer named HoneyBit.

tavel19 emmerandrye

- Favorite tool: Quenelle spoon
- Tool you wish you had: Brix refractometer
- Favorite cookbook: *About Professional Baking*, 1st Edition, by Gail D. Sokol
- Most important kitchen rule: Be aware of yourself.
- Favorite off-the-beaten-path restaurant: Thai Kun
- Favorite dish you've ever made: Guava-glazed tres leches cheesecake with coconut milk and fresh mango
- Place you most want to visit for culinary travel: Jamaica
- Advice you'd give your younger self: Learn how to be more financially prudent.

GENERATION SMOKE



NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND VOICES IN TEXAS BARBECUE

BY CAROLINE HATCHETT



ESTABLISHED LIVES AT THE BARBECUE SMOKEHOUSE WEDNESDAY THROUGH SUNDAY.

alternating overnight shifts with his business partner and childhood friend Joe Melig. There's a small bed next to the smoker and a TV for company. The scent of brisket doesn't leave his bones. 2M is a dream for Ramos. He grew up with South Texas backyard barbecue and a father who, more often than not, burned the meat. Having fallen in love with the craft, Ramos spent two years commuting from San Antonio to Austin to work for John Lewis at La Barbecue and eventually took over as head cook.

With little more than \$5,000 and a lucky break on a lease, Ramos and Melig went from dreamers to small business owners and Texas Monthly-typed pitmasters in barely a year. It turns out, as long as you can smoke meat, there's now a space for you in Texas barbecue. "Aaron [Franklin] made it feel like it was possible," says Ramos.

Franklin opened his first barbecue trailer during the food truck boom of 2009, and a brick and mortar in 2011. The lines, President Obama, journalists, and plaudits followed. Franklin has earned the no. 1 spot on *Texas Monthly's* definitive "Top 50 Barbecue Joints in Texas" list. He won a StarChefs Rising Stars Award, and he is the first-ever pitmaster to win a James Beard Award. All for brisket. Well, mostly for brisket. "He gave barbecue a new lease on life. It tasted a way that it's never tasted before," says Ramos.

Franklin's namesake restaurant shifted meat gravity away from Lockhart, the barbecue capital of Texas, and suddenly a young Mexican-American or a classically trained chef or a curious server felt like he (or she) had a chance to succeed at the craft.

Laura Loomis had never really eaten barbecue when she started as a server at Jason and Jake Dady's Two Bros BBQ Market in San Antonio. Nine months in, Loomis decided she wanted to learn the pits, coming in on her days off and shadowing the crew until a position opened up. She filled it naturally and, over a year and a half, became pitmaster. "I'm a little female, and, at first, going from pit hand to pitmaster, the initial reception wasn't the best," says Loomis. "I had to fight to find a good crew." Two years later, she has refined Two Bros systems and locked down a solid team of pit hands, even if they're "all dudes still."

The Dady's opened Two Bros. in 2009, just as the restaurant community began to discover the potential of chef-driven casual dining. Two years later Jason Dady would close his 10-year-old fine-dining restaurant, The Lodge. He wrote in a statement: "Fine dining is on life support and I don't want to be here when it dies." A few other national trends collided in the surrounding years. Wood-fired cooking became a national fixation, and chefs began moving from traditional kitchens into more focused crafts—butchery, brewing, charcuterie, and barbecue.



Chef training is as good as any other for diving into barbecue. Tim Rattray of The Granary "Cue & Brew" worked in Andrew Weissman's kitchens in San Antonio, first at Le Rev and Il Sogno, and then Sandbar as sous chef. When he saw a gap in the city's barbecue market, he had a friend design and weld a pit. Rattray spent six months smoking meat in his backyard, often five nights a week, to learn the nuances of

cooking with live fires. "All the kitchens I worked in, the cooking was pretty stable and predictable, using a gas burner or an oven. For me, cooking with fire was really the draw."

Unlike Rattray, who spent much of his upbringing in barbecue-barren England, Tom Micklethwait grew up in Austin immersed in barbecue culture. He smoked meats at home for fun while working at Vespaio, one of Austin's pioneering chef-driven restaurants. After 10 years of backyard smoking, Micklethwait left the kitchen, bought a trailer, and opened Micklethwait Craft Meats in 2012.



Miguel Vidal worked in kitchens for 17 years, but barbecue goes even further back. "For every quinceañera, birthday party, or any excuse to get together, this is how my family cooks," says Vidal, owner and pitmaster of Valentina's Tex Mex BBQ in Austin. When he moved to Austin, the San Antonio native was unimpressed with the city's Mexican food. "For Mexican-Americans, we end up in these categories of not being Mexican enough, and not American enough. Austin's Tex Mex food wasn't a real representation of our cuisine. We've always done barbecue, though. The Mexican influence has always been there."

The Mexican influence at Valentina's permeates every meat and dish. There are fresh salsas, chortzo, otherworldly charro beans, guacamole, and warm flour tortillas instead of white bread. On weekends, he often makes barbacoa—the quintessential Mexican-American smoked cow's head or cheeks. "I knew if I were to do them together, the Mexican part had to be as good as Texan," says Vidal. "Our barbecue had to be as good as anyone else's."



PHOTO: BRUNDA SAUTY

Steven Dilley

BUFALINA

Go-to Pairings at Bufalina

Cerignola olives with Manzanilla. When we opened, I put a Manzanilla on the list and anyone who ordered it received a side of olives. While we don't always send our olives these days, we do always have a Manzanilla or Fino by the glass.

Vanilla ice cream and PX Sherry. One of my favorite wine reps brought in a bottle of PX in the early days and poured a slug over his ice cream. It's been on the menu since.

Marinara pizza and a Loose Star. When we opened, you could get a marinara and Loose Star for \$11 and have a satisfying meal. Our overhead has crept up, and so has the price of this combo, but you can still grab a pizza and a beer for \$13.

Fresca pizza with Chardonnay, Pierre-Yves Colin-Morey, En Beaumilly, Saint-Aubin Premier Cru, Burgundy, France. Reductive white Burgundy makes me weak at the knees. It's my go to white when I feel like a splurge.

Ricotta gnocchi with Romorantin, Domaine Philippe Tessier, La Porte Dorée, Cour-Cheveray, Touraine, Loire, France. Not sure if it's related to global warming, but instead of being painfully high toned, this Romorantin is fleshed out and ripe with great acidity. It drinks like a waxy Chenin.

📧 steven_dilley_bufalinapizza

Despite having no connection to the industry and never having worked in a restaurant, Steven Dilley became so obsessed with wine that he pivoted from a decade-long financial trading career to a more rewarding, interactive profession surrounded by Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Grenache.

Dilley got his start in wine as many laymen do, by collecting bottles and exploring—by way of drinking—France's Loire, Jura, and Rhône Valleys, as well as wine regions in other countries. When he moved to Austin from New York City in 2010, he hadn't opened a bottle of wine from California in nearly 10 years. Inspired by an online wine course, Dilley shifted his focus to California, and started a small project making his own Northern California wine. That project took on a larger meaning with the opening of Bufalina in 2013.

Along with a deep affinity for wine, he'd also fallen for Neapolitan pizza, and Dilley knew that he wanted his first spot to be small, manageable, and hyper-focused. As Bufalina's owner and sommelier, he holds no pretense when it comes to pairing Margarita pies with nerdy blends, and thankfully, Bufalina is equipped to have the two cohabit. In 2016, after snagging an Eater "Young Gun" win, Dilley debuted a second outpost, Bufalina Due. One of *Food & Wine's* 2017 "Sommeliers of the Year," Dilley hopes to continue to eschew wine professionals' antiquated paths by opening more "cool places" to buy and drink wine.



BY LISA ELBERT

leasure: the heart of pizza-and-wine dining

Bufalina's formula is simple genius: fresh mozzarella, wood-fired pies, and a wine list printed on copier paper, stapled in the top left corner. It's the work of Sommelier-Restaurateur Steven Dilley, who has created a space that serves as both neighborhood restaurant and wine nerd clubhouse. Dilley moved from finance to restaurants and New York to Austin in 2010, just as the idea for Bufalina began to crystallize.

Three years later, he had a barely renovated space with a wood-burning oven and an imminent soft-opening. Distracted by build-out, Dilley realized he hadn't even printed a menu, so he opened Pages on his MacBook and wrote the wine list (in the default font), and printed it on cheap copier paper in the back corner of the restaurant's office. He could count all the list's bottles using his fingers and toes.

Four years later, and despite teasing from industry friends, Dilley prints his 200-label list on the same paper, with the same font, two to three days a week. From a \$7-glass of Languedoc-Roussillon Chardonnay to a \$185-bottle of Giuseppe Quintarelli Amarone, Dilley gives pizza lovers (that's everyone) options, good ones, stripping away pretense to get to the heart of pizza-and-wine dining: pleasure.

"Most people look at the menu, place a food order, get something by the glass, and that's it. That works for them. For the geekier set, we have a whole wine list that we drop at every table, so if you want to get involved, you can," says Dilley, who lowers his mark-ups to make wines he loves more accessible. With 40 percent of sales attributed to vino, he closes the gap with volume.

Affordable, approachable, thoughtful hospitality is Dilley's mantra (one he extended to a second location, Bufalina Due, in Allendale). "The restaurant is pretty sneaky. It's not especially fancy or anything, but the attention to detail—whether service or food or wine—is high. The enthusiasm, vibe, and the fact that it's such a laid-back place helps make guests comfortable. You come in and get a pizza and a beer or a glass of wine, but if you want to geek out with it, you can," he says.

In a casual city like Austin and in an industry where wine professionals are expanding their reach, Dilley's model proves you don't need a fancy menu, hell, you don't even need dry-wall, to run a thriving, wine-centric concept.

Chad Carey

EMPTY STOMACH GROUP



PHOTO: CAROLINE MATTHEI

In the wake of the financial collapse of 2008, Chad Carey, then a real estate developer, decided to shift his sights to an industry where he saw opportunity: restaurants. And, oh, what a joyful ascendency into the realm of hospitality it would be.

Since his initiation into food and beverage, Carey has been working to shake up the industry with a laser focus on fun. He brought the idea of the "anti-restaurant" to San Antonio with his first spot, The Monterey, a laid-back clubhouse that featured quirky dishes and an eclectic beverage program. Under his Empty Stomach Group, Carey further flushed out his ideas, introducing more dining and entertainment hangouts: the

pizza-joint-meets-cocktail-bar Barbaro and indie music venue Paper Tiger. Carey's Asia-meets-Americana Hoy Joy was awarded a spot on *Bon Appétit's* "Best New Restaurants" list for 2014. His latest concept, Chisme, is an engaging, queso-for-all Tex-Mex restaurant complete with a Mariachi soundtrack.

While Carey strives to push San Antonio's restaurant scene forward, he's cognizant to create balance for his employees, so they're able to have as much fun as the patrons they're serving. With a wine bar on the way, Carey's continued approach to conviviality is as magnetic as it is necessary.

Favorite dip and what you dip in it: I mean, queso, duh. And Fritos: any size, regular flavor.

Your ultimate queso consists of: Chotizo and rajas

How many tank tops you own: All of them? But seriously, every one of my places has tank tops. They're perfect for our climate.

Favorite decor in your restaurants: We have trumpet vines on a metal awning at Chisme that I've been training since we opened, and I'm sorta of obsessed with them.

Favorite question to ask a prospective employee: We're all going to die pretty soon, so what do you want to do with your life?

Your fantasy concept for a restaurant, in three words: Beef & Wine Bar



The Check Is the New Page Six.

by D. J. Costantino

No one likes getting the check. Chefs and restaurateurs across the country are working to soften that painful drop at a meal's close. Nick Kokonas' Tock ticketing system, adopted by hundreds of restaurants nationwide, allows guests to pre-pay so they can enjoy a meal without reaching for their wallet. At SingleThread in Sonoma, Kyle and Katina Connaughton built an entire hospitality experience that avoids guest-to-staff financial transactions. And at Sasha Petraske's Milk & Honey, the lare bartender insisted on monthly tabs so bills never passed over the bar.

Chad Carey gives guests a welcome distraction from receiving their bills. At his Tex-Mex spot Chisme, the check comes tucked in a small notebook filled with *chisme*, or gossip, and a pen. Inside, it reads like an episode of "Maury." "I'm dating a girl who is dating a married man," writes one guest. "I hope my coworker's chair breaks and she falls," writes another. And while guests still have to dig into their wallets, they can at least read the latest anonymous San Antonio scandal, tell their own dirty secrets, or stick it to their arch enemies.