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Posted: October 27

Updated: Today at 11:37 AM

'Lobster Chef' finalists share their fabulous recipes

From staff reports

Last Friday, three local chefs battled it out at Harvest on the Harbor for the title of Maine Lobster Chef of the Year. All three recipes won raves, but only one dish could win. Here are the recipes from the three finalists so you can try them at home.

The winning dish from Kelly Patrick Farrin will be served at Azure Cafe in Freeport during Maine Restaurant Week, which began Sunday and runs through Halloween.

Watch the Maine Lobster Chef of the Year contest on TV at

7:30 p.m. this Friday on the New England Sports Network.

HERB-GRILLED MAINE LOBSTER TAIL ON ARUGULA WITH CHIVE RICOTTA GNOCCHI & CORN MILK

Kelly Patrick Farrin, Azure Cafe, 123 Main St., Freeport. 865-1237; dine@azurecafe.com




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Serving size: 4 portions/dinner entree

MAIN COMPONENTS:

4 Maine lobster tails

4 oz. herb-infused butter

4 cups packed wilted arugula

1/2 cup grape tomatoes

32 chive ricotta gnocchi

6 oz. corn milk puree

GRILLED MAINE LOBSTER TAIL:

4 Maine lobster tails, split and deveined

4 oz. unsalted butter

1/2 teaspoon thyme

1/2 teaspoon chive, minced

1/2 teaspoon rosemary, minced

Salt and pepper to taste

Maine sea salt, pinch per tail



The winning dish by Kelly Patrick Farrin [click image to enlarge](#)
of Azure Cafe in Freeport, Herb-Grilled Maine Lobster Tail.

Photos by Gordon Chibroski/Staff Photographer



Steamed Maine Lobster and Sweet
Corn Tamale by Clifford Pickett of DiMillo's Floating Restaurant
in Portland.

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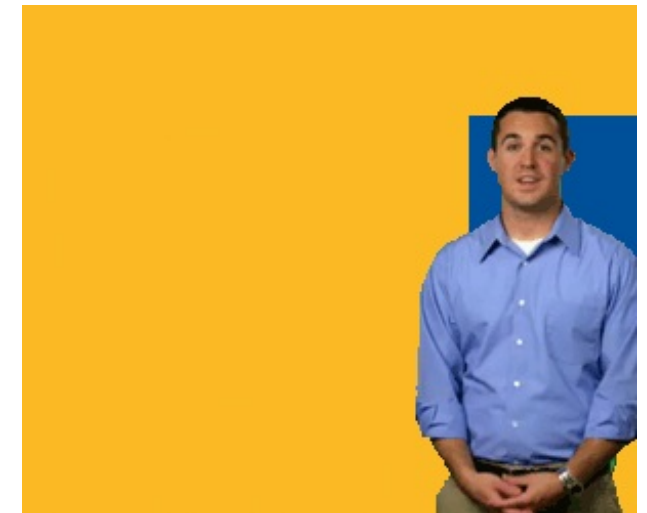
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WILTED ARUGULA:

4 cups packed fresh arugula

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

1/2 cup grape tomatoes, quartered

1 teaspoon garlic

2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

Salt and pepper to taste

CHIVE RICOTTA GNOCCHI:

1 cup ricotta cheese

2 egg yolks

1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, shredded

Pinch nutmeg

2 teaspoons lemon zest

2 tablespoons chives, minced

3/4 cup all-purpose flour

1/2 tablespoon salt

2 oz. butter

CORN MILK PUREE:

2 ears corn on cob

Salt to taste


LOBSTER TAILS: To remove lobster tails from live lobsters, twist tail back and forth until it breaks free.

Cut with sharp knife down the middle underside of each tail lengthwise, and remove intestinal debris. Leave lobster meat in halved shell.

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Remove all small "feeler legs" from underside of each tail.

Place head and claws in a small pot of boiling water for 8 minutes. Then remove and cool. Set aside.

In a small sauce pan, add butter, thyme, chives, rosemary, and salt and pepper to taste. Bring to simmer, and reserve.

Rub lobster tail with Maine Sea Salt and grill, meat side down first, for 2 1/2 minutes.

Flip lobster tails, and brush meat with herb-infused butter. Cook for 2 to 2 1/2 more minutes. Reserve excess herb-infused butter.

WILTED ARUGULA: Wash arugula in cold water, and place in salad spinner to remove excess water.

Cut grape tomatoes into quarters, length and width cut.

Bring saute pan to medium heat.

Add olive oil and garlic to saute pan. Cook just until it begins to change color.

Immediately, add grape tomatoes. Cook for 1 minute.

Add arugula to saute pan, and toss with tongs for 1 minute.

Finish with fresh lemon juice and salt and pepper to taste. Remove from pan, leaving behind excess liquid.

CHIVE RICOTTA GNOCCHI: Mix ricotta cheese, egg yolks, parmesan cheese, nutmeg, lemon zest, chives and salt together in mixing bowl with rubber spatula. Fully combine.

Slowly add sifted all-purpose flour to ricotta mix. Fold small amounts of flour into wet ingredients until it forms and becomes a soft dough. Reserve excess flour.

Once soft dough is formed, let sit in covered bowl for 5 minutes to rest. Place dough on clean, floured countertop to reduce sticking. Knead dough until smooth and elastic.

Cut dough into 4 equal parts and roll with fingers to form long and round 1/2-inch-thick ropes. Cut dough into 3/4-inch segments and reserve on floured baking sheet, making sure gnocchi are not touching each other.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Place gnocchi in water and, with a wooden spoon, carefully stir to separate. Then, boil for 5 minutes.

Remove gnocchi from heat and pour into colander. Lightly coat with olive oil. Pour onto sheet pan and cool in refrigerator. Heat saute pan over medium-high heat. Add butter, and gently place gnocchi in pan.

Brown each side for a crispy outer shell. Finish with salt and pepper to taste.

CORN MILK: Shuck and clean corn. Remove kernels from cob with knife, cutting downwards into the pith of the cob. Place kernels in food processor and pulse until macerated. Pass corn puree through a fine-mesh strainer (chinois). Use the bottom of a ladle and press until puree is almost dry. Reserve liquid; discard pulp.

Heat double boiler and place corn liquid in bowl. Heat until it thickens. Place in a small squirt bottle or use a teaspoon to sauce plates.

PRODUCTION: Place butter-seared gnocchis in center of plate.

Next, use tongs to place wilted arugula on top of gnocchi.

Arrange 2 grilled half-lobster tails together and place on top of arugula.

Spoon extra herb-infused butter over grilled lobster tails and shell.

Finish with circular pours of corn milk around plate.

Garnish with fresh rosemary. Serve and enjoy.

STEAMED MAINE LOBSTER AND SWEET CORN TAMALES WITH CREAMY CHILIES AND LEEKS

Clifford Pickett, DiMillo's Floating Restaurant, 25 Long Wharf, Portland. 772-2216

SWEET CORN TAMALES:

1 1/4 cup fine yellow corn meal

2 cups fresh corn kernels

1 medium shallot

3/4 cup chicken stock

1/4 cup buttermilk

1 1/2 tablespoons white sugar

1/2 cup unsalted butter melted

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon pepper

15 dried corn husks, soaked in warm water for 1 to 2 hours.

Fully submerge corn husks in a large bowl or pot using hot tap water. Let soak 1 to 2 hours, or until pliable.

In a food processor or blender combine corn, shallot, melted butter, buttermilk and chicken stock. Blend for 30 seconds or until there are no large pieces of shallot or corn. Transfer the mixture into a large mixing bowl. Add corn meal, sugar, salt and pepper. Mix well until there are no large lumps.

After corn husks have soaked 1 to 2 hours, remove them from water and pat dry. Set aside the largest, best-looking husks. With the remaining husks make ties by tearing the husks lengthwise into 1/4-inch strips. Place one of your large husks on a flat surface and spoon about 1/3 cup of your corn-meal mixture in the middle of the husk. Fold each of the long sides of the corn husks tightly over each other, then tie each end of the tamale with one of the strips.

Do this until you have used up all your filling; you will most likely have a few extra husks. Once you are done wrapping your tamales, place them in a steamer pot on a rack and steam for one hour. Let tamales rest for 10 minutes before plating.

STEAMED LOBSTER:

4 1 1/8-pound lobsters

Fill pot so that water comes up the sides about 2 inches. Add 1 teaspoon of salt for each quart of water. Bring water to a rolling boil over high heat. Place lobsters in the pot on a steamer rack, cover tightly and start counting the time. Steam lobster for 7 minutes. Remove claw, knuckle and tail meat from the shells. Leave claw and knuckle meat whole, and chop tail into bite-size pieces. Set aside until sauce is made.

NOTE: In general, lobster is steamed for 7 minutes for the first pound and 3 minutes for each additional pound. In this recipe, I cook the 1 1/8-pound lobsters for exactly 7 minutes because they are reheated in the sauce later. If you do not have a steamer rack for your pot, the lobster can be placed directly into the water.

CREAMY CHILIES AND LEEKS:

1 cup leeks

1 1/4 cups heavy cream

1/4 cup coconut milk

2 tablespoons chopped cilantro

2 jalapeno or Fresno peppers (seeded and finely chopped)

2 teaspoons minced garlic

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Salt and pepper to taste

Add vegetable oil to large saute pan and bring to medium heat. Combine leeks, minced garlic and jalapenos. Cook 2 to 3 minutes or until lightly browned. Add coconut milk and cream. Reduce on medium heat, stirring frequently until it is a sauce consistency or thick enough to coat the back of a spoon. Add chopped cilantro, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Add lobster meat to sauce and reheat when you are ready to begin plating.

Remove tamales from corn husks and place on individual serving plates. Spoon equal amounts of lobster and sauce over tamales. Garnish with fresh cilantro sprigs.

NOTES: If fresh corn is not in season, frozen corn works fine. Tamales may be made ahead of time and refrigerated before steaming. If your tamales are not hot when it's time for plating, they can be reheated in the steamer. The tamale mixture may appear looser than it should be, but will firm up after resting. Corn husks may be used for plating presentation.

RUSTIC MAINE LOBSTER AND BUTTERNUT SQUASH RAVIOLI WITH TOASTED WALNUTS, SAGE AND MAPLE BACON

Bill Clifford, Eve's at the Garden, Portland Harbor Hotel, 468 Fore St., Portland. 523-2075

These free-form raviolis are great for holiday gatherings because the filling can be made ahead, store-bought pasta sheets work well, and the topping takes just a few minutes to finish once the ingredients are assembled.

Serves 6 as an entree.

FILLING:

1 pound Maine lobster meat, cut into bite-size pieces

1 pound peeled butternut squash cut into cubes

1/2 pound peeled Russet potato cut into cubes

2 leeks cleaned and cut into 1-inch chunks

5 cloves fresh garlic

2 cups light cream

1 cup water

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon ground coriander

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Salt and pepper to season, about 1 1/2 teaspoons

FOR REST OF THE DISH:

1 package prepared fresh pasta sheets, or 6 squares measuring 10 inches by 10 inches

3/4 cup walnut halves, lightly toasted and seasoned with salt and pepper

1 bunch fresh sage, roughly chopped

6 slices good quality bacon

2 tablespoons real Maine maple syrup

8 tablespoons butter

1/4 cup dry vermouth

1 bunch chives, minced

In a large, shallow pot combine the butternut, potato, leeks, garlic, cream, water and spices. Cover the pot and cook over medium heat for 45 minutes or until the squash and potatoes are tender.

When the mixture is cool enough to handle, ladle the solid part of the mixture in batches into a food processor and blend until smooth, adjusting the consistency with the liquid. We want a smooth paste.

There might be leftover liquid when you are finished; that's OK -- the liquid content of the squash varies wildly.

Make the paste and thin it out as you go with the cooking liquid. Taste for salt and pepper, and set aside.

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees.

Drizzle the maple syrup over the bacon and roast the bacon at 350 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes or until the bacon is crispy and fragrant. Cool, roughly chop and set aside.

Boil a large pot of salted water for your pasta sheets.

Melt 2 tablespoons of butter in a medium-sized saute pan. Add the lobster, season with salt and pepper, and as the meat becomes fragrant, add the squash puree.

Fold the lobster and puree together until the mixture is incorporated, and keep it warm.

Melt the other 6 tablespoons of butter in another medium-sized saute pan. When the butter begins to foam, add the walnuts, the sage and the bacon.

Off the heat, add the vermouth. The alcohol should burn off at this point. Toss the mixture together, season with salt and pepper, and keep warm.

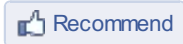
Cook your pasta sheets, draining each one for excess water. As they are complete, rest each one on a dinner plate.

You want to leave some of each sheet resting off the plate; we are going to fold the sheet in half over the filling, creating the ravioli effect.

Carefully spoon 1/6 of the mixture, or about 8 ounces, onto each sheet. Fold the top over the mixture, and press a small dimple into each ravioli.

Spoon 1/6 of the walnut mixture, or about 3 ounces, on top of each one, carefully drizzling some of the pan butter on top of each ravioli.

Garnish each one with minced chives.



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