



DISH OF THE WEEK

## Prawn cakes

*Ventana Room, Tucson, Ariz.*



Executive chef Philippe Trosch lightly browns chopped shallot in olive oil. He removes it from the heat and mixes it with chopped

chives, red curry paste, cayenne pepper, salt, cilantro and diced shrimp, places the mixture into three-inch square molds and wraps the cakes in oiled parchment paper.

Then he halves and seeds kabocha squash, sprinkling it with sugar, salt and olive oil. He covers the squash with foil and bakes it at 275 degrees Fahrenheit until tender. Next he scoops out the flesh and mixes it with butter and Beaume de Venise Muscat.

Meanwhile, he sautés sliced porcini mushrooms in olive oil, reserves some slices for garnish and purees the rest with olive oil, vinegar, salt and sugar.

At service he sautés a shrimp cake and one whole, head-on shrimp per order. He tops the cake with the squash purée and whole shrimp, garnishing with basil and celery leaves, chervil and a sautéed porcini slice. He drizzles it with the porcini dressing.

## WHAT'S HOT IN Charleston, S.C.

### Chai's Lounge & Tapas

462 King St., (843) 722-7313. Seats: 87, including 22 in lounge. Cuisine: eclectic tapas. Specialties: tuna sashimi; mini Angus burgers; spicy, Cambodian-style steak tartare, seasoned with lemon grass, basil, mint and thinly sliced chiles. Tapas: \$5 to \$12. Chef: Derek Falta. Owner: Henry Eang.

### Fig

232 Meeting St., (843) 805-5900. Seats: 80. Cuisine: American bistro. Specialties: warm salad of shrimp and radicchio; steak tartare with potatoes, parsley salad and sea salt; roast suckling pig with roasted beets and sautéed greens. Main courses: \$17-\$23. Chef: Mike Lata. Owner: Adam Nemirow.

### Fleet Landing

186 Concord St., (843) 722-8100. Seats: 250, including 100 outside. Cuisine: seafood. Specialties: fried green tomatoes stacked with local blue crab salad; Low-Country fried oysters over grits with bacon and barbecue sauce; Carolina lump crab cake; pimiento cheese-encrusted rib-eye steak. Main courses: \$16.95-\$24.95. Chef: Jim Epper. Owners: Tradd and Weesie Newton.

### Il Cortile del Re

193 King St., (843) 853-1888. Seats: 85. Cuisine: Italian. Specialties: porcini mushroom ravioli; duck breast with lentils, black fig and balsamic vinegar reduction; spaghetti Bolognese. Main courses: \$11.50-\$25. Chef: Ryan Satterwhite. Owners: Kim Green and Massimiliano Sarrocchi.

### Oak Steakhouse

17 Broad St., (843) 722-4220. Seats: 120. Cuisine: classic steakhouse with Italian influences. Specialties: grilled calamari in an olive oil-garlic base with a wedge of Parmesan cheese and toast points; 7-ounce filet; pan-seared tuna with mango salsa and ginger-soy glaze; creamed spinach; Gorgonzola cottage fries. Main courses: \$18-\$41. Chef: Brett McKee. Owners: McKee, Michael Meyer, Andy O'Keefe.

Compiled by Lori Lohmeyer



## Ethnic foods, new products steal spotlight at NRA show

THE KRUSE REPORT

NANCY KRUSE

generously shared their expertise. The Chefs Stage invited leading culinarians from across the industry to demonstrate healthful and flavorful dishes in a TV-cooking-show format, as when Philip

For years I've had a love-hate relationship with the National Restaurant Association's annual Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show, which convenes each May in Chicago.

I love the opportunity to see what's new and sneak a peek at the shape of things to come in the form of inventive products and services. At the same time I hate missing out on an exciting find that may get lost amid more than 2,000 exhibitors who are spread over miles of exhibition area. But I'm happy to report that my anxiety was relieved greatly by savvy innovations that made the 2005 confab more navigable and user friendly than ever before.

There were many special-interest groups. This year's show featured an enhanced number of specialty pavilions that brought together groups of similar exhibitors in easy-to-target locations, like the International Cuisine Pavilion, which was a magnet for showgoers. No passport was necessary to tour a bazaar of authentic foods and beverages from around the world. Attendees could try a true taste of Italy with porchetta originale, succulent roast pork from the town of Ariccia, where meats are prepared according to 2,000-year-old recipes. They could polish off their porchetta with Jarritos, Mexican soft drinks available in exotic flavors like tamarind and guava and sate their sweet tooth with freshly baked, cream-filled pastries from Delimanjoo, a Korean concern that operates more than 300 snack outlets throughout Asia.

The Kitchen Innovations Pavilion housed an interactive showcase of cutting-edge equipment chosen by a panel of industry experts. Emphasis was on productivity: Penguin Rapid Thawers defrost frozen items 13 times faster than conventional sink thawing, while the Tornado from TurboChef combines multiple technologies to cook foods 12 times faster than conventional ovens.

And in an extraordinary new program created in conjunction with the Foodservice Consultants Society International, Ask the Design Experts provided complimentary 30-minute consultations with the best front- and back-of-the-house designers in the business. Appointments could be made ahead of time, but walk-ins also were accommodated in an initiative aimed at assisting restaurateurs of all stripes to create more attractive, efficient and competitive operations.

There was a real emphasis on give and take. It wasn't just design experts who

Costner, vice president, food & beverage of T.G.I. Friday's, teamed up with his executive chef, Sean Murphy, to share tips and techniques in the preparation of bronzed Key West grouper with citrus-lime splash. The chefs not only revealed the tricks of the trade but also responded forthrightly to questions from the audience.

There was an unparalleled new product marketplace. One of the primary appeals and most engaging aspects of the annual show is the chance to sample products, and this year's event did not disappoint. The Chile Guy promoted dozens of varieties of his specialty, including exotics like aji amarillo and chiltepe, while several aisles over, The Ginger People proffered an all-natural beverage that soothed and refreshed weary show warriors.

There were plenty of gourmet products, like Moskavia, a caviar alternative, and Schokinag, a decadent and delicious European drinking chocolate, but there was also ample opportunity to be reacquainted with familiar favorites. The North Carolina Sweet Potato Commission Foundation distributed an array of nifty recipes that give the root vegetable a starring role in everything from gnocchi to crème brûlée, while Egg Innovations tapped into health and environmental concerns with eggs from cage-free hens that are organic, vegetarian and enriched with Omega-3 fatty acids.

Convenience products are always a major draw. The best provide simple answers to vexing problems, like Soup Socks, cotton mesh bags that keep broth clear and unclouded, and Satellite Cooling, a system that maintains cold food temperatures on buffets and chilled food displays without the mess and mush of ice.

There was a touch of show biz. Buzz on the show floor often is sparked by celebrity chef sightings; this year's luminaries included Paul Prudhomme, grand master of Cajun cuisine, and Giada De Laurentiis, breakout star on the Food Network. Arguably the greatest excitement was generated by an unexpected source. SugarVeil dramatically demonstrated product versatility, pliability and creativity by clothing a comely model in its confectionery icing. From head to toe, everything except her shoes was made of icing.

Speaking of shoes, I'm going to put my walkers in mothballs until 2006, when show planners promise an 87th edition that will build on this year's success: They guarantee it will knock our socks off.

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