

EATING L.A.

LUDO LEFEBVRE - MEDIA REVIEWS

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top toque

ludovic lefebvre



The Luminous Ludo

If you're afraid of the unknown, don't step into Ludovic Lefebvre's kitchen. Some critics call it avant-garde, but his cooking leans more toward the international influence of modern French cooking. At Bastide, there are items never before seen on Los Angeles menus (think Foie Gras Piña Colada and White Chocolate Potato Purée). But amidst the odd comparisons to the venerable Ferran Adrià and Heston Blumenthal, keep in mind that there's no laboratory in the alley behind Bastide. Ludo is neither a chemist, nor a nuclear gastronomist studying in the footsteps of these scientist-chefs. His focus for the past months has been on a different approach to the Los Angeles restaurant. In his eyes, he's putting life into his food. "I'm French, and I like to cook with French technique," he quips, "and what I'm doing is helping diners come for an experience, to discover, to find that there is no safe food here." For jaded Angelenos, is this mission impossible? Quite the contrary. We'd say, mission accomplished.

Bastide, 8475 Melrose Place
(La Cienega Boulevard), 323.651.5950

This clever take on simple poultry with mac and cheese requires a giant leap of faith, but it's well worth the risk.

Using an Asian and French approach to traditional roasted poularde, keep in mind the well-conceived interplay of flavor and texture. "The idea for this dish was cooking what people like, but I take a more flexible approach. People like macaroni and cheese, but instead of Cheddar or something American, I use an aged Cantal from the Auvergne, much sharper and elegant. I use almond essence, pink grapefruit, and mango to give my design to creamy noodles." An earthy, velvety blanket of black truffle sauce pairs well with the fresh Japanese udon noodles smothered in the Cantal mixture.

If you cannot find poularde at the local butcher, a simple chicken is quite suitable. The roasted breast is covered with crust of cacao nibs and Pondicherry peppers. The nibs are roasted cocoa beans, hulled and separated so they aren't sweet, but rather a more concentrated flavor like the smell of fresh roasted coffee beans. They are available at your better grocery stores and add a nice touch to many baked goods. The Pondicherry peppers, dried red lovelies from India, are available for purchase at Le Sanctuaire on Santa Monica's Main Street.

editorial by alison clare steingold
photographs by karen harley



Yields 4 Servings

Ingredients

4 poularde breasts

Crust

½ cup ground cacao nibs

½ cup ground Pondicherry pepper

Black Truffle Sauce

2 shallots, sliced

10 black peppercorns, cracked

1 cup white port wine

1 cup black truffle juice

1 tablespoon black truffle paste

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

2 tablespoons cocoa powder

Noodles and Cheese

1 pack fresh udon noodles

1 cup chicken stock

1 cup grapefruit juice

½ cup milk

½ cup cream

½ cup almond flour

1 cup Cantal cheese (shredded)

¼ cup mango (diced)

Method

- 1) For the sauce, reduce the shallots and peppercorns together in the white port wine. Reduce by half, add the truffle juice, then reduce by half again. Add the truffle paste, cocoa powder and slowly whisk in the butter until emulsified. Check the seasoning and reserve in a warm spot.
- 2) To prepare the noodles, bring the grapefruit juice, milk, cream, and almond flour to a boil. Allow it to sit for 5 minutes, then strain the mixture. Return the liquid to a boil and slowly add the shredded cheese until the sauce thickens. Adjust the seasoning with salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Prepare the noodles as directed, then heat them in seasoned chicken stock. Strain them and coat in the cream sauce. Add the raw diced mango just before serving.
- 3) To prepare the chicken, purchase 2 whole poulardes and fillet them yourself. Try to leave extra skin attached to the breast and the first part of the wing. Roll each breast in its own skin, and tie it in a uniform pattern to ensure a perfect circle shape for cooking. Season the breasts with salt and pepper, then roast slowly on all sides in hot sauté pan in oil. Cook in the oven until skin is crispy and chicken is cooked through. Remove from pan and allow to rest 3 minutes.
- 4) For assembly, remove strings from the breast and reheat in warm butter with herbs. Then remove the breast and roll in cacao nibs and pepper. Slice each breast gently in half. Reheat the truffle sauce and generously serve it around the meat with the creamy noodles.



roasted poularde breast with cacao nibs and pondicherry pepper, creamy cantal noodles and black truffle sauce