

November • December 2013

plote

Take food further.

sugar high



UNWRAPPING
creative candy bars

sweet meets
salt, bitter, acid & herbs

ASIAN DESSERTS
make a comeback



chefs

in this issue



I like to look for any iconic dessert and 'shakify' it. The shake has to smack you over the head with flavor. If I can't taste the blueberries or the fruit, I'm not interested. This shake is like mom's pie in shake form.

— *Eddie Lakin, Edzo's*

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Meigan Carrifield



I wanted a little savory influence. I wanted to prove that beets didn't have to taste like dirt, that you can use them to create a really balanced yet classic dessert. — *Kate Jennings, Farmstead*

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The things that we work with in pastry tend to be sweet. When you're adding more sweet fruit on top of that, it's very limiting. You can create a wider array of dessert by incorporating vegetables. — *Bill Corbett, The Absinthe Group*



sweeter WITH AGE

Classic desserts get a
much-deserved makeover

by Peter Gianopulos

The Gripper grail, \$26,
Pastry Chef Joshua Gripper,
The Dutch, Miami. RECIPE,
plateonline.com.

Let's face it: There's only so much room on a typical dessert menu for bold forays into the unknown. For every diner who swoons over the chance to spoon up a bit of chocolate-wasabi panna cotta, there's likely to be a dozen others who prefer to stick to what they know best, and a slice or two of Americana will often do just fine. Something sweet and familiar, preferably with a crust, topped with meringue or, better yet, ladled with an extra dose of chocolate sauce.

Some all-American dessert classics never go out of fashion. They've stood the test of time in part because they're so adaptable, able to be reinvented generation after generation by chefs armed with new cooking techniques and their own unique set of childhood memo-

ries. And thus, what's old becomes new again, one spoonful of marshmallow fluff and spray of whip cream at a time.

"People really do yearn for the kinds of desserts they had in their grandmother's kitchen," says Kate Jennings of the Farmstead in Providence, R.I., "But when they go out to eat I think they also want something a little more elegant, something that will intrigue and impress them."

Jennings' pound cake, for example, doesn't stray from convention, blending a familiar mix of butter, sugar and vanilla. But by topping the classic with rhubarb, beet ice cream and a blue cheese-hazelnut shortbread crumble, she turns a normally one-dimension cake into an earthy-sweet surprise (\$8, recipe, plateonline.com).



Tangerine dream, \$10, Chef/
Owner Jason Bond, Bondir,
Cambridge, Mass. RECIPE,
plateonline.com.

In order to transform crumbly, savory bits of blue cheese into something sweet and crunchy, she combines the cheese with sugar, flour and cornstarch and then folds in ground toasted hazelnuts. Once formed into a log, it's baked and crumbled, becoming a perfect foil to the tart rhubarb and earthy beet ice cream.

"I wanted a little savory influence," says Jennings. "I wanted to prove that beets didn't have to taste like dirt, that you can use them to create a really balanced yet classic dessert."

A TASTE OF HISTORY

At Bondir in Cambridge, Mass., Chef/Owner Jason Bond was interested in creating a pastry menu that mirrored the philosophies of his farmhouse-style restaurant. So he did some homework, paging through old Boston cookbooks to better understand late-19th-century summer puddings, trifles and brandied fruits.

His signature tangerine dream dessert borrows from all three, layering thyme-buttermilk ice cream, vermouth-soaked tangerines and a slice of *génoise* cake into an old-fashioned shrimp cocktail glass, then topping the whole creation with a meringue that is *brûlée* (\$10, recipe, plateonline.com).

Bond uses a classic brown-butter *génoise* recipe to establish a nutty caramelized milk flavor at its base, but soaks his segmented tangerines in an herbaceous, extra-bitter vermouth that cuts through the sweetness of the *brûlée* and bridges the thyme in the ice cream.

"The ice cream melts into the cake giving it moisture and the tangerines give it a bit of acidity," says Bond, who recommends making a sweet Italian *brûlée* merigüe with sugar, syrup and whipped eggs. "We wanted it to look familiar but taste complex. It's a symbol of the restaurant; a modern interpretation of classical ideals."

Elissa Narow, pastry chef at Vie in





PEOPLE REALLY DO

YEARN FOR THE KINDS OF
DESSERTS THEY HAD
IN THEIR GRANDMOTHER'S

KITCHEN.

—Kate Jennings,
The Farmstead, Providence, R.I.

Western Springs, Ill., also had to do her share of research in developing her St. Louis gooey butter cake, a rich cross between coffee cake and cheesecake (\$10, recipe, p. 92). Every bakery in St. Louis seems to have its own

recipe—with many using a yeasted sweet dough—but Narrow found greater complexity by creating a shortbread crust and mixing cream cheese and powdered sugar for its filling.

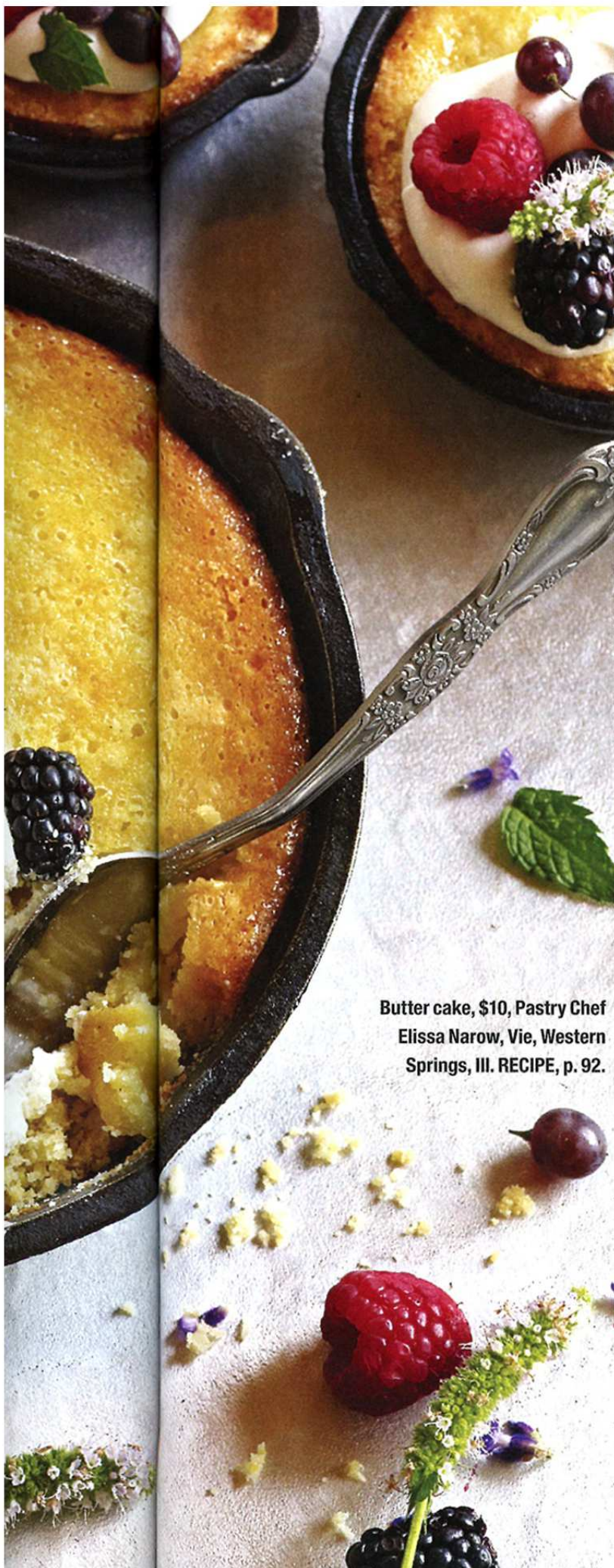
“You don’t want to underbake it,” she says, recommending using a block cream cheese as opposed to a tangier variety. “If you do, it will be too sweet,” she notes. “You want to bake it until it gets color, until you’ve caramelized the sugar in there. The name ‘gooey’ doesn’t translate as well to my version. I wanted it to have a different texture, more soft and supple.” Once finished, the Danish-like dessert is served in 3 1/2-inch tart pans and topped with whatever fruits and spices are in season: blueberry compote, cinnamon apples or an allspice-scented pineapple.

NEW TAKES ON TEXTURE

Tired of the heavy, one-note pumpkin pie offerings that dominate so many Thanksgiving tables, Pastry Chef Monica Glass of Clio in Boston created what she calls an “inside out” pumpkin pie, drizzling a pumpkin pie consommé around squares of black lemon *confit* kuri squash dressed up with fine-dining accents (\$13, recipe, plateonline.com).

By cooking the kuri squash—a pumpkin-like squash with chestnut notes—in a simple syrup made with black lemons (which are completely dried limes used in Middle Eastern cooking as a souring agent), Glass is able to create a bright lemon verbena flavor. From there, she sets about subverting traditional





Butter cake, \$10, Pastry Chef Elissa Narow, Vie, Western Springs, Ill. RECIPE, p. 92.

textures. Sable cookies, for example, are ground up, liquefied, frozen and cut into triangles, which stay frozen on a plate but melt into a “sandy liquidity” on the tongue.

Praline cream, toasted marshmallow ice cream and a pumpkin chip follow, before Glass takes the leftover lemon verbena syrup and adds it to *labneh* cheese that’s been given extra body with the addition of gelatin. Then come sprinkles of cocoa nibs and black Okinawa sugar sponge candies.

“I like the acidity of the *labneh* because it really tames the sweetness of the dish,” says Glass. “I didn’t want it to be overly sweet. I wanted it to be a different kind of pumpkin pie, light instead of heavy.”

Pastry Chef Samantha Navarra had similar aims for her liquid strawberry cheesecake at 75 Main in Southampton, N.Y. Intent on altering the traditionally dense texture of cheesecake, she undercooks a traditional recipe in a 300-degree F oven for an hour, right before it begins to set (\$12, recipe, plateonline.com).

She orders gluten-free ginger cookies from a local bakery, creates a simple strawberry sauce out of local berries and then begins to build layers into the restaurant’s signature “Leaning Tower of Pisa” glasses. The cookies are crumbled, followed by alternating layers of the soft cheesecake and syrup and a whipped cream made from powdered sugar, sour cream and vanilla.

“You can use any kind of cookie or berry to change the flavor profile,” says Navarra. “But for us, it’s important to keep it gluten-free here in the Hamptons.”

CHILD’S PLAY

Over the years, Matt Thompson of the Squeaky Bean in Denver has reinvented his fair share of classic desserts, but when his kitchen staff suggested creating a high-end mud cake, he pulled out all the stops, snaking homemade white-choc-



Oatmeal creme pies, Pastry Chef Stella Parks, Bravetart.com, Lexington, Ky. RECIPE, plateonline.com.

olate worms through a mix of crushed brownies, toffee and gooey chocolate pudding (\$10).

Intent on creating an adult flavor profile for his take on a kiddie classic, Thompson avoids adding sugar to his bitersweet chocolate pudding and tops the creation with crème fraîche ice cream for a jolt of acidity. But it's still the gummy worms that turn heads.

"We caramelize the white chocolate, which gives it a toasted marshmallow flavor," says Thompson. "Then, we bring agar and water to a boil, add in cream, let it come back to a boil and add glucose, salt and gelatin. Then we pour the boiling liquid over the white chocolate."

Thompson sets the milky liquid into a quart-sized container and submerges bar straws into the "soup" for six hours before pushing out the gummy worms. "We wanted to be as playful as possible," says Thompson. "Offering something new but familiar helps people be more adventurous."

Stella Parks, former pastry chef at Table Three Ten in Lexington, Ky., specializes in the familiar. Over the years, she's recreated everything from Pop Tarts to Oreos by swapping out preservatives for natural ingredients, including a fresh take on oatmeal creme pies.

Her goal is to remain as faithful to the original recipe as possible, so she blends all the key ingredients on the package's ingredient list—including a touch of cocoa powder and dried apple rings—in a mix that also includes flour, rolled oats, molasses and a touch of ginger, cinnamon and mace. Some gelatin helps preserve the unmistakable gooeyness of the marshmallow filling, yielding a gluten-free ode to a childhood classic (recipe, p. 92).

"You want them to be super soft and fold in half without breaking in two," says Parks, who recommends plump, moist apple rings instead of dry ones. "They're freakishly accurate to the originals. And

hard to resist for anyone who grew up eating them.”

Josh Gripper of The Dutch in Miami approached his modern take on a classic sundae with a similar sense of whimsy, setting a brownie inside a giant goblet and then loading it up with a carefully balanced mélange of flavors, which includes chocolate and caramel ice cream, passion fruit sorbet, hazelnut cremeaux and marshmallow fluff. That clever mix is then topped with an extra layer of caramel foam, meringue, *feuilletine* and bananas in a big dessert made for sharing (\$26, recipe, plateonline.com).

Balance is achieved via careful plating. The passion fruit sorbet is set atop the brownie, creating a classic citrus-chocolate pairing. The hazelnut cream is

spread along the side of the goblet where the caramel ice cream sits, while the marshmallow pairs with the chocolate. The caramel foam—delivered via a CO2 canister—adds a burnt saltiness to the dish, which is topped with *feuilletine* and meringue, surrogates for Crunch bars and Lucky Charms marshmallows.

“We wanted each spoonful to be a surprise,” says Gripper. “So when you’re sharing it, the person on the other side of the table is tasting something different than you are. You’re sharing and interacting. And like any great dessert, it becomes a great conversation starter.”

When Peter Gianopulos needs a sugar rush, his default fix is an established classic: a plate of coconut-coated Girl Scout samoas.



BIRTHDAY SURPRISE

Simplicity has its virtues. There’s something universally appealing about the elemental textures and flavors of a simple frosting-swathed birthday cake. Moist cake plus a heaping bouffant of frosting usually translates to smiles, regardless of age. But by carefully blending together traditional birthday cakes with other classic desserts, chefs around the country have added a layer of panache to the equation.

At STK in Atlanta, a bite-sized almond torte is wrapped in vanilla buttercream, topped with sprinkles and paired with cookie-dough ice cream, fusing together three birthday staples in one compact package.

It was leftover cake scraps that inspired Christina Tosi of Momofuku Milk Bar in New York City to make her popular b’day truffles; rainbow cake, enrobed with white chocolate

and rainbow cake crumbs.

Chef Jason Gehring’s goal at Astro Doughnuts & Fried Chicken in Washington, D.C., is to brighten up traditional donuts with birthday cake flavors. He dips a chocolate doughnut under a vanilla glaze and adds a colorful shower of sprinkles plus a candle, serving the colorful creation as a Saturday special.

At The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, Colo., the liquid birthday cake is made by combining cake batter ice cream and vanilla rum in a blender. They add sprinkles for color for this childlike milkshake with a grown-up kick.

“The ingredients play off of each other; birthday cake, ice cream and even sprinkles have flavor profiles like baking spices vanilla, mild caramel, molasses/sugar,” says Broadmoore bartender Robert P. Leavey. “All with that sweet smell of cake!”