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CATIE Awards

BEST DESSERT

STRAWBERRY FOUR-PLAY



IMAGE ONE

2024 CATIE Awards

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STRAWBERRY FOUR-PLAY

A Swoon-Worthy, Sensory Experience
The Fifth and Final Course of a Private Valentine's Day Dinner

SYNOPSIS

When Detroit's Young Presidents Organization advised our team to push the envelope and let our creativity run wild for their intimate, 22-person Valentine's Day event, we were ready to not only set the mood but also the new dessert standard. After all, the most romantic evening of the year demands an unforgettable finish to dinner, especially when hosting a collection of the city's business leaders and their spouses.

Our executive pastry chef and her talented team took the beloved strawberry and reimagined its possibilities across four unique components to match the elaborate, four-course dinner that came before the dessert.

CONCEPT

From the start, our executive pastry chef knew two things. (1) The dessert had to deliver the wow factor to a group of guests with sophisticated palates. (2) She wanted to hone in on a single ingredient and showcase its complexity across components that played off one another and came together for a complete sensory experience. Then it struck our chef. For a Valentine's Day dinner, what better ingredient to spotlight than strawberries: natural, versatile, undeniably seductive, and a universal favorite featuring the perfect balance of sweetness and acid.

After hearing the four-course dinner menu was designed around wine pairings, our chef was set on bringing the dish-and-drink pairing to dessert by incorporating a house-made strawberry beverage that would round out the Strawberry Four-Play.

Extensive testing led to the final quartet: (1) strawberry gelee with vanilla bean cream in a crispy, chocolate tart shell, (2) strawberry shortcake with slow-roasted strawberries (3) strawberry ice cream topped with strawberry leather candy, and (4) strawberry soda with a strawberry sugar cloud to savor as the final sips of the night.

Our chef was inspired to create a dessert decadent and dimensional, creamy and crunchy, icy and iced, traditional with plenty of twists, and something sweet, spiced, subtle, indelibly strawberry and entirely sublime.

PRESENTATION

There was no shortage of ideas when it came to plating. Of course, there was the back-and-forth of how to mirror the dinner's mood-setting atmosphere with how to tie the individual components together. After testing 30+ serving dishes, the texture of a black slate plate made the bright sirens of the strawberries stand out and was a fitting frame for the mini works of art.

With the serving dish settled, it was all about highlighting the dessert's romance and whimsy. The house-made ice cream topped with hand-crafted strawberry leather put the candy in eye candy. The red, reflecting glaze of the strawberry shortcake topped with gold provided an extra artful touch. Dehydrated strawberry dust, strawberry purée, a strawberry sugar cloud and cookie crumble accents complemented the course's deliciousness and inventiveness—inviting guests to dig right in.



IMAGE TWO



IMAGE THREE

PRODUCTION

Our executive pastry chef and team only had three weeks to conceptualize and test the components of the complex dessert, working down to the wire to get everything right.

The Valentine's Day event was one of our client's first get-togethers following the pandemic so we wanted to treat them to a full dinner experience with a chef's table design where guests were able to watch our culinary leaders in action as they constructed each dish.

Add dimmed, mood lighting to the mix of an abbreviated timeline and chef's table environment and you have the ultimate trifecta of a pressure cooker.

Our team began final prep the day before by reworking recipes at the eleventh hour and creating the strawberry mousse for the shortcake as well as the strawberry soda base, both of which needed to freeze overnight. To ensure absolute freshness, the rest of the dessert pieces were cooked the day-of. At 9am the team began the gelee for the tart and then developed the red mirror glaze and ice cream components.

It wasn't until two hours before the 6pm dinner service that the final adjustments were made for the dessert pieces to be executed successfully, including the delicate tart shell. With each of the 22 plates having more than 30 touches, the team had to be expertly organized to pull off the cook in direct view of the dinner's guests.

OBSTACLES

The dessert course was quite the high-wire act, and it all started with dreaming up highly creative desserts within three weeks.

By the numbers, the house-made strawberry soda took 100+ recipes to get the flavor and balance right. It took 50+ attempts over 3 days to land on the plating and arrangement of components. 48 hours before service, the recipe for the shell of tart had to be completely reworked to ensure it would not collapse and the final iteration was not completed until two hours before service.

It took countless recipes, shapes, sizes and densities for the sugar cloud to finally sit on the brim of the soda cup. Every day leading up to the event, our executive chef worked to get the right ratio for the gelee to set.

All said the various components took 1,000+ tries to get right.

But the biggest obstacle of all? Cooking and every step of plating in front of our guests in near darkness. And did we mention one of the guests was our very own CEO, just for a little more pressure?

The labor of love was worth every minute to see the joy of our guests as they discovered the dessert tasted even better than it looked. From their front row seat watching the magic unfold before them to the final taste of strawberries, our team was told again and again that the dessert experience was the perfect ending to a one-of-a-kind night.



IMAGE FOUR

RECIPES

STRAWBERRY GELEE

680g Strawberries, Hulled
20.25g Gelatin Sheets (Gold)
120g Water
15g Agar
90g Sugar
10g Orange Flavor Paste

Dice strawberries to measure $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. Put remaining strawberries in a food processor and process until smooth. Strain and measure 2 cups. Bloom gelatin in cold water. Pour water into sauce pan and bring to a rumble. Add puree and bring to a boil over medium heat. Add bloomed gelatin, stir and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and add remaining strawberries and orange flavor paste. Stir in sugar and, if needed, add more to taste. Add diced strawberries. Skim any froth and pour into a hotel pan and let set for at least 2 hours. Cut out semi-circles as needed.

CHOCOLATE TART SHELL

150g Unsalted Butter
Pinch of Salt
120g Powdered Sugar
70g Egg Yolks
1tsp Vanilla Extract
260g All Purpose Flour
57g Cocoa Powder

Cream butter, sugar and slat together in mixer. Whisk egg yolks and add to the butter mixture, along with the vanilla extract. Mix until smooth. Sift the flour and cocoa powder tighter and add to the butter mixture. Mix until fully incorporated. Place the dough on a floured surface and form into a disk. Wrap disk in plastic wrap and chill for at least 1 hour. Pull dough from cooler and start to roll it until it is 3mm thick. Line only the sides of your ring molds, leaving the bottom empty. Create a hollow tart shell. Clean the excess dough off the top of the ring mold with a paring knife. Let rest in cooler for at least 30 minutes or until firm. Preheat the oven to 375 and bake tart rings for 15-20 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool completely before removing tart shell ring.

STRAWBERRY DUST

Place dried strawberries into a food processor until fine. Use as garnish.

STRAWBERRY CLOUD

In a cotton candy machine add strawberry flavored sugar and spin, following manufacturer's directions.

DEHYDRATED STRAWBERRIES

1lb Fresh Strawberries

Wash and hull strawberries. Slice the strawberries into $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{3}{8}$ " thick slices. Arrange the strawberry slices in a single layer on dehydrator trays, leaving space in between each. Dehydrate at 135F degrees for 6-12 hours or until dry. After drying, store in an air-tight container.

STRAWBERRY SODA

500g Strawberries, Hulled
500g Water
100g Sugar
5.5g Gelatin Sheets

Bloom gelatin sheets in cold water. Place the strawberries, water and sugar in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Stir in bloomed gelatin. Remove from the heat and puree with an immersion blender. Place in half size hotel pan, let cool to room temperature. Cover with plastic wrap and freeze overnight. Pull out from freezer and let drain through a cheesecloth. Discard the solids from the cheesecloth and place the strawberry liquid into a soda siphon and charge with a CO2 charger. Shake for 1 minute and refrigerate until ready to serve.

STRAWBERRY ICE CREAM

325g Whole Milk
285g Heavy Cream
60g Milk Powder
30g Invert Sugar
51g Light Corn Syrup
125g Granulated Sugar
375g Strawberries
5g Strawberry Flavor Paste

Combine the milk, heavy cream, milk powder, invert sugar, corn syrup and sugar in a saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Off the heat us an immersion blender to mix, strain into a bowl. Hull the strawberries and place them in a food processor. Process until a smooth purée, add in milk mixture, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. Pull from freezer and mix again with immersion blender. Place in ice cream maker according manufacturer's instructions. Place in freezer once complete before serving.

RECIPES

STRAWBERRY FRUIT LEATHER

370g Strawberries
75g Sugar

Heat oven to 150 degrees. Line a sheet pan with a Silpat. Hull strawberries and place in food processor to purée. Put purée and sugar in a saucepan and bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring often. Reduce heat to low and simmer until reduced by a little over more than half. Strain purée through a fine mesh strainer. Spread a thin layer on the Silpat. Dry in the oven until leathery, about 4 ½ hours. Should be tacky and flexible. Let cool. To make curls, cut desired stripe size and place them over a rolling pin. Let set for 1 hour to develop a curved pattern.

STRAWBERRY PUREE (PLATE GARNISH)

20oz Strawberries
65g Sugar
1 Lemon

Place the strawberries in a food processor and process until puréed. Pour the purée into a saucepan and add the sugar, cook on medium heat or until the sugar has fully dissolved. Add the juice of 1 lemon. Add more sugar to taste if needed.

COOKIE CRUMBLE

1 Box Vanilla Wafers
10oz Dehydrated Strawberries

Process cookies and strawberries in a food processor or blender. Process until a cookie crumble consistency is received.

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE

16g Gelatin Sheets
500g Strawberry Purée
120g Powdered Sugar
500g Heavy Cream
10oz Raspberry Jam

Bloom gelatin in cold water. Bring strawberry purée and sugar to a simmer in a saucepot. Stir in bloom gelatin to dissolve. Set aside. In a stand mixer, whip heavy cream to soft peaks. After purée is cool fold into whipped cream. Place a small amount of the strawberry mousse into a round mold covering the bottom. Add a small of raspberry jam, then fill the rest of the mold with strawberry mousse. Let mold set in freezer overnight before glazing.

RED MIRROR GLAZE

10g Gelatin Sheets
150g Glucose
15g Sugar
70ml Water
100g Condensed Milk
150g White Chocolate
Red Food Coloring

Bloom gelatin in cold water and set aside. Place white chocolate in a bowl and set aside. Place glucose, sugar, water and condensed milk in a saucepot and cook to 104F degrees. Pour hot mixture over with chocolate and let set for 1 minute. Whisk until smooth or use an immersion blender, add red food coloring until desired color has been reached. Cool until 84F degrees before pouring over strawberry mousse.



COLLAGE IMAGE (FIVE)