

G R E A T C H E F S O F B O S T O N

L'Espalier's Holiday Squab

by **Clint Hamblin**

Now located at 774 Boylston Street next to the new Mandarin Oriental Hotel, L'Espalier continues to flourish as one of the top 20 restaurants in the United States. Since his purchase in 1988, award-winning chef/owner Frank McClelland's Back Bay eatery has been named number one in Zagat, Boston for the last eight years and is the only independent restaurant in New England for the last six years to receive Five Diamonds from AAA.



L'Espalier Chef/Owner Frank McClelland

Chef du cuisine James Hackney runs the day-to-day operation of the L'Espalier kitchen. "We all enjoy our work," Hackney said, while tending to the needs of a small bird about to go into the oven. "L'Espalier is a great place to learn about running a restaurant."

Oysters are always a great first course, especially when they're Skip's Island Creek oysters served with apple mignonette, cider vinaigrette and topped with a dollop of American caviar. These perfectly shucked oysters slid out of their shell and into my mouth with great ease.

L'Espalier's butter poached

Maine lobster with kiwi and grapefruit served with Italian caviar was outstanding, as was the Hawaiian blue marlin with artichokes barigoule served with French osetra caviar. The marlin was rare and cooked to perfection, paralyzing our conversation until every piece had been eaten.

A delectable monkfish with apple spaetzle and black trumpet mushrooms served with German osetra caviar was the last course before cleansing the pallet with a lovely concord grape sorbet.

Tender foie gras with sweet potato fondant and cranberry ginger relish was followed by an unusual but quite spectacular beef marrow ravioli and venison with wild escargot ragout and cocoa satsuma sauce.

A selection of cheeses and condiments preceded a white chocolat martini with concord grape foam and chocolat shavings and a thyme pomegranate manhattan.

The standout was L'Espalier's whole roasted squab served with rutabaga mash and cranberry relish, a colorful holiday dish, easy to make and a great alter-

native to the Christmas ham or turkey. Cooked rare, the squab is as delicious as a tender filet mignon. Happy holidays!

L'ESPALIER'S HOLIDAY SQUAB

Rutabaga mash (serves 4)

Ingredients

- 3 pounds rutabaga
- 1/2 pound butter
- 2 bay leaves
- 6 black peppercorns
- 1/2 teaspoon Kosher salt



L'Espalier's Holiday Squab

Directions

Roughly dice rutabaga into 1-inch squares and place in a cooking pot, barely covering with water. Add butter, bay leaves, peppercorns, and 1/2 tablespoon salt. Bring to a simmer and cook covered until tender. Once cooked, drain, discard bay leaves, and crush rutabaga with a potato masher or an electric mixer, making sure not to over-mash. Finish with extra butter, salt and pepper to taste.

Cranberry Relish

Ingredients

- 1 pound frozen cranberries
- 2 cups orange juice
- 3 cups ginger ale
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons light brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 orange, zest of
- 1/2 cup golden raisins

Directions

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan (stainless steel is best), and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 30 to 45 minutes or until liquid is reduced by half.

Whole Roasted Squab

Ingredients

- 4 whole squabs with gizzards removed
- 1/2 pound butter
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/2 bunch of thyme
- 4 cloves crushed garlic
- Sea salt and cracked black pepper

Directions

Put oil in pan and heat on high until consistency of water. Add 1/4 pound of butter and place squab breast side down, adjusting heat to medium. Add the remaining butter, thyme and garlic until frothy. Brown the squab on breast side, then turn. Baste until medium rare. Put into oven at 375 to 400 degrees for four minutes, and remove and let rest covered with foil or butter paper for 2 minutes. Serve squab with rutabaga mash and cranberry relish.

Wine Pairing

L'Espalier's Kate Moore is a charming and well-informed sommelier. Her pairing recommendation is a 2004 Silver, "Julia's Vineyard", Pinot Noir, Santa Barbara.

Signature Cocktail

There's something special about the taste of tangerine juice, especially if you mix it with gin and Cointreau.



Mandarin Gin Fizz

The Mandarin Gin Fizz

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 ounce tangerine Juice
- 1 1/2 ounce Cointreau
- 2 ounces Beefeater Gin
- 1 egg white

Directions

Mix all together, and shake vigorously. Strain into a champagne glass, and add an orange garnish.

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