

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

# Meritage's Pan-Fried Soft-Shell Crab

**by Clint Hamblin**

From the youngest executive chef in the history of the famed "21" Club in New York City to an 18-year love affair with the Boston Harbor Hotel, executive chef Daniel Bruce has established himself as a major international culinary talent. In October of 2002, Bruce created his own signature restaurant at the Boston Harbor Hotel.

A truly outstanding dining experience, Meritage offers a unique approach of pairing food with wine, a distinct alternative to pairing wine with food. Instead of selecting your favorite dish and then picking an appropriate wine to pair it with, the menu suggests you first pick your favorite wine and then choose one of Bruce's culinary creations.

Bruce's passion for food and wine launched the Boston Wine Festival, the nation's longest running food and wine pairing series. How well respected is Bruce? At Julia Child's 80th birthday, Mrs. Child requested that he cook for her.

Like a mezzanine seat overlooking a great water stage, our table at Meritage had an unobstructed view of the Boston Harbor, where a 12-piece floating orchestra played Sinatra's most famous songs. We enjoyed a glass of Vive Cliquot champagne served with a maple-smoked salmon, avocado and crème fraiche tower and cava laced frisée. The salmon was light and tender with a hint of maple served with cool and delicious avocado and crème fraiche.

A glass of bold white wine accompanied pan-seared diver sea scallops served with spring pea mix and pink grapefruit butter. Slightly on the rare side, the scallops were cooked to perfection, so fresh and delicious, my eyes closed as I bit into this



Chef Daniel Bruce

jewel of the sea.

Moving now to a robust red wine, the prosciutto wrapped venison loin served with beluga lentil ragout, swiss chard, French beans and red wine sauce was exceptional. The prosciutto partners beautifully with the rare and tender venison, creating a distinctly rich flavor complimented by the peasant taste of the lentils and vegetables. The wood-grilled filet mignon with soft whipped potatoes, horseradish onion cream and Meritage syrup



Pan-fried soft-shell crab

elevated a traditional meat and potatoes dish to an entrée of distinction.

An abundance of desserts were available, including a citrus tasting plate of lime and coconut ice cream sandwich with lemon cream on mango salsa and sweet naval Orange Charlotte. You might like to try the White Fruit Tasting Plate of White Peach panna cotta or sweet lychee sorbet and banana cream cake.

Every dish at Meritage is unique and Bruce intends to keep it that way with his policy of never repeating a single dish. If he changes his mind, my vote is for the pan-fried soft-shell crab served with tomato, green onion and asparagus salsa. The recipe is simple, and the dish is beautiful to look at and even better to savor – with a glass of sparkling wine, of course.

### Pan-Fried Soft-Shell Crab with Tomato, Green Onion & Asparagus Salsa

#### Ingredients (Serves 2)

- 2 each prime or similar sized soft-shell crab
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 teaspoons cornmeal
- 2 teaspoons flour
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 bunch green onions, finely chopped and blanched
- 1/2 bunch green asparagus, blanched
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- 1/4 cup champagne
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 4 each red pear tomatoes cut in half
- 4 each yellow pear tomatoes cut in half
- Salt and pepper to taste

#### Preparation

In a bowl add milk and soft-shell crabs, and refrigerate for a half an hour. In another bowl combine flour and cornmeal, and season to taste. Place crabs in flour mix to coat. Heat nonstick sauté pan over medium heat and add two tablespoons of oil. When hot, add crabs and sauté until golden brown on both sides.

In small bowl combine asparagus, tomatoes, green onions, one teaspoon of oil, champagne, and season to taste. Serve

crab topped with salsa.

#### Wine Pairing

Bruce recommends a dry sparkler to a Sancerre from the Loire Valley.

#### Signature Cocktail

A great way to acquire your daily dose of potassium is Meritage's Banana Fosters Martini. Yes, it's sweet, creamy and oh so delicious.

#### Banana Fosters Martini

- 2 parts Kettle One vodka
- 1 part crème de banana
- 1 part Kahlúa
- 1 part milk

Shake with ice, strain into a martini glass and serve with a caramelized banana chip.



Banana Foster Martini

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