

G R E A T C H E F S O F B O S T O N**Bonfire's Tacos**by **Clint Hamblin**

Tucked away on the first floor of Back Bay's Park Plaza Hotel & Towers is Bonfire, a lively steakhouse restaurant with a dramatic decor and an energetic clientele. This is Todd English's first South American-inspired restaurant and executive chef Eben Leonard has his hands full managing a diverse menu with a unique but very approachable cuisine.

The Smoked Duck Empanada with a baby tomato salad, avocado and black bean crema combines easily recognizable flavors that go so well together, and with Bonfire's creamy cauliflower soup served with toasted pecans, crispy garlic, chorizo and golden raisins, this comfort food combination is superb.

How about a dozen perfectly shucked and completely fresh Wellfleet oysters served with a grape-champagne mignonette? The steakhouse salad of baby iceberg lettuce, Maytag blue cheese and bacon vinaigrette is almost as good as the Bibb salad served with gorgonzola, toasted pumpkin seeds, crispy tasso ham and a fig vinaigrette.

If you're in need of a piece of steak,

*Bonfire Executive Chef Eben Leonard*

Bonfire's Grilled Ribeye is cooked just for you and served with cauliflower gratin and tempura green beans with malt vinegar aioli.

These days, a high-quality steakhouse must serve high-quality seafood and Leonard's outstanding paella is loaded



with lobster, mussels, shrimp, chorizo, chicken and saffron risotto. It's an entire meal in a bowl.

How about a Chili Relleno served with Chanterelle Mushrooms, blue Hubbard squash, smoked pepperjack cheese and red mole or Grilled Mahi Mahi served with Achiotte Shrimp, corn tamale, chayote squash salsa fresca? Bonfire's Well & Rare includes smoky braised beef short ribs and a grilled rare sirloin, whipped sweet potato, gingered spinach and charred onion salad – all great tastes that beautifully complement each other.

Desserts include Chocolate Fallen Cake served with dulce de leche and pecan ice cream. Apple fritters include apple compote with cinnamon ice cream, which is very delicious.

When thinking taco, one usually envisions ground meat in a taco shell filled with salsa, onions and cheese, but when Leonard thinks taco, anything goes. In addition to Skirt Steak Taco served with avocado crema, pico de gallo and chipotle aioli, other taco choices include Clam Taco packed with crispy belly clams, cherry pepper aioli and smashed avocado, and then there's Tuna Tartare Taco served with ginger carrots and avocado crema.

The favorite is without a doubt the Lobster Taco with black bean crema, toasted almonds and sherry butter. They look scrumptious and that's because they really are. Relatively simple to make and fun to eat, Bonfire's Lobster Taco is definitely worth a try.

Bonfire's Lobster Taco
(Makes four tacos)**Ingredients**

1 12-inch flour tortilla
2 each lobster claws
2 tablespoons butter
1 ounce toasted almonds
2 tablespoons sherry
1/4 bunch finely chopped cilantro
4 tablespoons black bean crema

Black Bean Crema

1 pound black beans
1/2 pound cubed bacon slab
2 each chopped carrots
1 each chopped onion
2 stalks chopped celery
1 tablespoon toasted and ground cumin
Salt and pepper to taste
1 quart heavy cream
4 cloves garlic
1/2 cup honey

Preparation

Blanch the lobster claws in boiling water for about two and a half to three minutes depending on size. Put them in ice

water to stop the cooking. When cooled, shuck the claws and cut the lobster into bite size pieces.

In a small sauté pan brown the butter with the almonds. As the butter and the almonds brown, add the lobster. When the butter has fully browned, pull it off the heat and add the sherry. Cook the sherry alcohol out, but be careful as it could flame up.

Put the beans, celery, carrots, onion, garlic and bacon in a large pot. Cover the beans with the heavy cream and bring to a boil. If there is not enough heavy cream to cover, add some water. Cook until the beans are tender. Purée and add the cumin, honey salt and pepper.

To Assemble

Trim the edges of the tortilla creating a square. Cut that square into four smaller squares. Warm the pieces of flour tortilla slightly.

Place one tablespoon of black bean crema in each square. Then divide the lobster mixture in four and place in the tortillas. Garnish with the chopped cilantro.

Wine Pairing

Leonard recommends a Mexican beer called Negro Modelo or a Sangria Rojo.

Signature Cocktail

A delicious combination of coconut vodka and lime is one of the Bonfire's most popular cocktails – the Coconut Lime Martini.

Coconut Lime Martini

3/4 of a lime sliced into wedges
2 Kaffir lime leaves
1/2 tablespoon sugar
2 ounces coconut pearl vodka
Ice to chill

Muddle the lime wedges, Kaffir lime and sugar. Add vodka and ice. Shake and strain into a sugared rim martini glass.

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