

The Alchemy of Taste and Smell

Astor Center, New York City

November 12-13, 2010

ABOUT

Cooking is alchemy: the art of transforming raw materials into a perfected form. Cooking fuses taste and smell, emotion and memory, culture and nature. The work of chefs today is much discussed, but the process by which new dishes and flavor combinations are created remains mysterious. This event will explore creativity in cooking, the composite nature of flavors and the importance of aroma in food and drink.

The event commences on Friday evening, with a cocktail making demonstration, followed by a reception and cocktail party that will feature creative cocktails and hors d'oeuvres. Saturday will have demonstrations and talks, followed by a meal.

Eight chefs will collaborate on the dinner on Saturday night. The seven-course meal (one course by each chef) will be experimental in nature, exploring new flavor combinations and making explicit the connection between what we smell and what we taste. For instance, a cucumber/melon salad served on a plate scented with mint essence, as a sensory sleight of hand where by the end of the dish the diner thinks that they have eaten the herb, even though they have only smelled it. Mandy Aftel will collaborate on the dinners. The dishes would be accompanied by appropriate wines.

PROGRAM

Friday Evening

5:00 p.m.:

Dave Arnold and Audrey Saunders

Demonstration: *Using Aroma in Cocktails* (The Study, up to 36 people) \$55

Dave Arnold and Audrey Saunders will demonstrate how they use aroma in cocktails, including distillations, essential oils and infusions.

7:00 - 10:00 p.m.:

Opening Party (The Lounge and The Gallery, up to 250 people) \$95

Creative cocktails by Dave Arnold and Audrey Saunders

Participating Chefs: David Chang, Alexander Talbot and Aki Kamoza, Daniel Patterson, Nils Noren, Bill Corbett

The party will feature stations spread throughout the two rooms, with chefs and mixologists on display, making food and cocktails. There will be some passed food as well, and white and red wines will also be served.

Saturday Day

11:30 a.m.:

David Chang, Wylie Dufresne

Demonstration: *New Flavor Combinations* (The Study, up to 36 people) \$55

Chang and Dufresne will demonstrate some of the dishes that illustrate the strikingly original approach for which they have become famous.

1:00 p.m.:

Harold McGee

Lecture: *Thinking about Flavor* (The Gallery, up to 100 people) \$45

McGee will outline the chemical and biological nature of flavor. He will describe the molecules that stimulate our senses of taste and smell, how taste and smell work together to create the perception of flavor, and how that perception is influenced by past experience and by context.

2:30 p.m.:

Daniel Patterson and Johnny Iuzzini

Demonstration: *Flavor and Aroma* (The Study, up to 36 people) \$55

Patterson and Iuzzini will demonstrate dishes that focus on the interaction between taste and smell. They will each make dishes starting from the same flavor combinations, demonstrating a range of styles and techniques.

3:45 p.m.:

Panel Discussion: *Creativity and Flavor* (The Gallery, up to 100 people) \$35

Five leading chefs will discuss the process by which they create new dishes. The discussion will include the role of ingredients and technique, and how childhood memories and historical and cultural contexts influence the chefs. Moderated by Harold McGee.

5:00 p.m.

Mandy Aftel

Demonstration: *Creating with Aromas* (The Study, up to 36 people) \$35

Aftel will demonstrate the process of how she creates with scent --- showing you how to orchestrate the interactions between pure and natural essences when blending a flavor or fragrance. The design concepts include register (top, middle, base), relative intensity, evolution, locking, and burying. This architecture of aroma will be illustrated graphically by smelling some unexpected combinations, over a range of concentration ratios. The goal is to produce beautiful and innovative aromas.

Saturday Evening

7:00PM

Dinner. The Lounge (40 people) \$300

David Chang, Wylie Dufresne, George Mendes, Carlo Mirarchi, Alexander Talbot and Aki Kamoizawa, Nils Noren, Daniel Patterson, Bill Corbett. The chefs will each make one dish. Some of the dishes are in collaboration with perfumer Mandy Aftel using her essential oils. The price includes beverage and service.

PARTICIPANTS

Mandy Aftel (Owner, Aftelier Perfumes; Author)

Dave Arnold (Director of Culinary Technology, FCI)

David Chang (Chef/Owner, Momofuku, ** Michelin Stars for Ko, World's 50 Best Restaurants #26 for Ssam Bar)

Bill Corbett (Pastry Chef, Coi)

Wylie Dufresne (Chef/Owner WD-50, * Michelin Star, World's 50 Best Restaurants #45)

Nils Noren (Vice President of Culinary and Pastry Arts at The International Culinary Center)

Johnny Iuzzini (Pastry Chef, Jean-Georges, *** Michelin Stars)

Harold McGee (Author and NY Times Columnist)

George Mendes (Chef/Owner, Aldea)

Carlo Mirarchi (Chef/Partner, Roberta's)

Daniel Patterson (Chef/Owner Coi, ** Michelin Stars)

Audrey Saunders (Mixologist, Owner Pegu Club)

Alexander Talbot and Aki Kamoizawa (Chefs and Authors, Ideas In Food)