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# SEXY SEAFOOD DISHES

Travel and Food Writer Shares Favorites

| BY TRACY ELLEN BEARD

The dictionary definition of sexy is exciting, stimulating, interesting, appealing and intriguing. During my travels over the past year, I have eaten many unusual, tasty, stunning and creative seafood dishes, and I am pleased to share with you my top five sexy choices. Each plate is outstanding for a variety of reasons—they excite the pallet with tempting flavors, incorporate unexpected, fascinating textures, originate from different destinations from around the world and are alluring works of art.

## ULTIMATE FAVORITE

The Cylinder of Sesame Seeds, created by Executive Chef Andrès Delpout at the Michelin star restaurant [Bridges](#), received my all-time favorite seafood award. I enjoyed this surprising, seductive dish while staying at the opulent Sofitel Legend the Grand Amsterdam Hotel in The Netherlands after my husband Steve and I traveled up the Rhine River from Basel, Switzerland, on a Viking River Cruise. Bridges is located inside the hotel. Chef Delpout creates delectable dishes for both restaurants, the bar, and catered events.

Chef tossed together raw ahi tuna with spicy wasabi, cream cheese, and a soy dressing to make the filling. He then stuffed the mix into a cylinder made of candied multi-colored sesame seeds. I was excited after the first bite. It was delicate and light with sweet notes from the candied shell and saltiness from the dressing. The fish was tender and succulent contrasting with the crunchy exterior. This one stunning dish incorporated everything desirable into the perfect bite.

## EXQUISITE AMBIANCE

So many things contribute to the dining experience including the surroundings where one eats. While traveling and working on a story about the recovery after the 2017 fires in Napa Valley, California, my friend, Connie, and I

experienced a culinary extravaganza at [The Restaurant at Auberge du Soleil](#), a Michelin star restaurant. Executive Chef Robert Curry creates Mediterranean-inspired cuisine using locally sourced ingredients.

Eating outside on an unusually balmy February night overlooking the vineyards filled with bright yellow mustard flowers, we watched the sun go down over the Valley while we dined on appetizing creations of culinary art. My favorite seafood dish of the evening was The Day Boat Scallop. Chef Curry prepared the delicate scallop by searing the outside until it formed a crust while simultaneously keeping the inside supple and cooked to perfection. The scallop rested on a bed of pureed sunchoke accompanied by a baby carrot, sunchoke, cabbage, shaved Prosciutto de San Daniele and a drizzle of black garlic with oil.

## PHENOMENAL CROWD PLEASER

The word “festival” brings to mind thoughts of innovative products, creative foods, beer, wine and other alcoholic beverages. The BC Shellfish Festival in Comox Valley, Vancouver Island, Canada, did not disappoint. I traveled to the island by seaplane to write a few stories about the industry and the use of local products. Each night encompassed either a special event where accomplished chefs manned booths turning out exceptional food along with free-flowing beer and wine, or an elegant multi-course dinner.

Executive Chef Nigel McMean from the [Black-fn Pub](#) distributed a few hundred paper plates with sablefish and a ginger yam puree. The delicate fish marinated for 24 hours in mirin, tamari, diced ginger and sambal oelek which added a bit of spice. Chef then brushed the sablefish with oil and seared it skin-side down. The fish baked in a convection oven for 10-12 minutes until it was opaque throughout. The yams were steamed until soft and then whipped with a puree of caramelized ginger and onion, whipping cream, butter, cayenne pepper and a little salt and pepper to taste. Chef Nigel and his staff worked quickly and efficiently to prepare plate after plate with a mound of smoothly pureed yam as a foundation for the sablefish, and then they expertly decorated the plate with a reduction of hibiscus and wasabi aioli.

## UNEXPECTED ORIGIN

In the past seafood was considered best if eaten in restaurants established near water. Today this

perishable protein flies overnight almost anywhere in the world giving chefs in Midwestern cities and other inland places around the globe an opportunity to create spectacular dishes. Recently I visited St. Louis, Missouri, to write historical and luxury stories. While staying at The Chase Park Plaza Royal Sonesta St. Louis I dined in their restaurant, [The Preston](#), and was delighted to discover a sensual seafood dish in a region I thought unlikely to deliver such an arousing plate.

Chef de Cuisine Nathan Sandknop takes octopus and turns it into something marvelous to savor. First, he simmers the octopus in a court bouillon made of onions, celery, lemons, black pepper, smoked paprika and bay leaves for an hour or two depending on their size. Once finished, the octopus is cleaned, grilled and tossed in a paprika vinaigrette with house-made potato gnocchi. The two ingredients lay over a bed of pureed sunchoke mixed with cream and butter. The vinaigrette adds a light acidity, and the soft pillowy gnocchi pairs lovingly with the tender, tasty octopus.

## SENSUOUS SUSHI

Portland, Oregon, boasts some spectacular seafood, but my favorite place for sushi is [Sinju](#). This chain of restaurants serves premier Japanese food in three different locations around Portland—Bridgeport Village, Clackamas Town Center, and the Pearl District. I live near Portland and frequent the city for both work and pleasure. It doesn't matter which restaurant you visit, each one uses the same recipes. A favorite plate for me is one with a Caterpillar Roll and a Sunshine Roll.

The Caterpillar Roll incorporates smoked eel, cucumber, nori, rice, avocado and a sweet sauce. The Sunshine Roll features shrimp, crab salad and avocado wrapped in rice, and then it is topped with raw salmon, mango, and a drizzle of honey mustard sauce. I like to eat each bite with a little soy sauce mixed with wasabi and a tiny piece of pickled ginger. The combination creates an explosion of flavors.

Seafood is a fabulous source of protein, generally low in calories, and highlighted in a variety of cuisines. Take a chance and try some new dishes when you are dining out, or pick up some seafood at your local purveyors and try a recipe that will delight your taste buds. ❖