



KANN + CHEF GREGORY GOURDET

One of Oregon's Top Dining Destinations

| BY TRACY ELLEN BEARD

Chef Gregory Gordet is the Executive Chef and Founder of the brilliant open-flame fire restaurant Kann, highlighting traditional Haitian flavors and dishes inspired by African and Caribbean cuisines. Dining at Kann is a tempting and exciting experience of new flavors. Chef Gregory is a best-selling author and a celebrated TV chef. He attended the Culinary Institute of America, interned under chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten for almost seven years, and became one of Jean-Georges' chefs de cuisine. Before Gregory opened Kann in 2019, he was well-known for his ten years of running the show at Departure Restaurant + Lounge in Portland, Oregon.

Chef Gregory, Winner of the 2022 James Beard Foundation Award for Best General Cookbook "Everyone's Table: Global Recipes for Modern Health," and the 2023 James Beard Foundation Award Winner for Best New Restaurant, Kann, considers himself sober. Sousòl, a popular bar located beneath Kann, serves tasty alcoholic beverages and food inspired by cuisines from Haiti, Cuba, Mexico, and several Caribbean islands. Sousòl is a place for everyone; the bartenders' craft zero-proof and non-alcoholic drinks with the same care as full-spirit cocktails.

As the owner of Kann and Sousòl, Gregory is a regular trail runner and an avid traveler. He is notorious for using worldwide ingredients and is recognized for his infusion of unique methods while balancing his Haitian heritage to create incredible seasonal cuisine with tantalizing flavors.

The Cuisine at Kann

Dining at Kann was one of my most memorable culinary experiences. Although I have a fan-

tastic job, where I frequently dine at establishments that serve innovative and delicious food, Kann was a new experience for me. I sat at the chef's bar/table and watched the team stoke the fire and prepare dishes that enchanted and mesmerized guests. The spacious, open-kitchen restaurant was boisterous and filled with energy.

I have never tried Haitian cuisine, although I have enjoyed Caribbean, African, and many other exotic foods. However, the tastes and textures at Kann were delightfully new and surprising, exotic, and yet somehow familiar. There was nothing I had not eaten before ceviche, pork, plantains, chicken, and pineapple. Yet, the way Chef Gregory put together the seasoning, cooking, and presentation was fresh and exciting. The flavors and textures were perfectly balanced with sweet, sour, and spicy, then combined with tender and crunchy ingredients.

The colors popped off the plates. Nothing swam in sauce, nor was anything dry. Each expertly designed dish delighted all the senses. Visually, the dishes were art. The aromas were intriguing and enticed diners to try more. The crunching sound and the rhapsodic vibe circulating throughout the room resounded above the kitchen noise.

Textures were varied and never dull or mundane. The tastes were riveting, and every other sense was combined with the delicious flavors to make each plate so much more than simply memorable. I cannot wait to return and taste the dishes I had no room for on my first visit.

My dinner

My experience at Kann was reminiscent of a smorgasbord of flavors. I began with the Akra, crispy taro root fritters served with remoulade. Akra is a traditional Haitian dish made by grating and seasoning taro root. The mixture is formed into balls and then deep-fried until the outside is crunchy and the inside is tender. The remoulade was rich and slightly spicy. Akra is an appetizer that the chef's mother made for family celebrations. She fried these as she prepared the other dishes for the family feasts.

The Griyo Twice Cooked Pork was served with bannann peze (fried plantains), sliced

avocado, and pikliz (pickled vegetable relish). Griyo is the national dish of Haiti and one of the most popular dishes at Kann. The pork, marinated in a Haitian seasoning called epis, was added with orange, lime, and habanero. Then, it was braised until tender and fired to add a crispy texture. A reduced cooking liquid made a glaze for the pork. Pikliz is the most well-recognized Haitian condiment. It is a spicy, crispy cabbage pickle with scotch bonnet chili and onion sprinkled into the cabbage to brighten fried food. This dish was not only delicious but Instagram-worthy.

The Eggplant was phenomenal, prepared with a dried tomato relish and creole cream.

The Lightly Cured Kampachi, also known as yellowtail, amberjack, or almaco jack, is a lean, fatty fish typically found in Japanese cuisine. The fish, sought after by chefs for its rich white flesh, has a high fat content and is clean with a sweet flavor that exhibits nutty notes. Kampachi has a firm texture and pairs well with many flavors. Chef Gregory served it with pickled jicama and smoked coconut milk.

It was delicious.

My main entrée was the Spice Glazed Chicken, which arrived with smoked fruit, ginger, and habanero. The entire chicken is cured overnight and then roasted to a beautiful golden color under a crust of ginger, black pepper, and rosemary.

Luckily, I was smart enough not to finish each dish, and I saved room for dessert. The Baked Haiti was a coconut sponge cake with Bavarian cream, Haitian spiced pineapple, and charred meringue and basil. Cinnamon, star anise, vanilla, and lime seasoned the pineapple that studded the light coconut custard, all covered in a charred meringue. A reduction of pineapple juice, olive oil, and sea salt finished the dessert. This dish was one of the most flavorful and tasty desserts I have ever had. It made my list of top ten.

Kann is currently one of Portland's most popular restaurants. Make your reservation early so you, too, can sit at the Chef's Table. ❖