



Culinary Concept-Personal Essay
The enhancement of natural colors to provoke seasonality

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Abstract

Seasons provide variation in the beautiful colors that we see in nature and in food. This broad range of natural colors can be used in a dish to intensify the feeling of seasonality that the dish evokes. Guests can appreciate a dish more fully when it is completely matched by the season and nature seen in the surrounding environment. Natural colors can be enhanced by using scientific knowledge and culinary techniques, giving the opportunity to build a calendar of colors and seasons to express the qualities (a chromatic range) of foods aligned with those seasons.

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Introduction to the culinary concept

A world in motion

There are some aspects to culinary pleasure that, while captured through our senses, are intimately connected to emotions, intellect, and the environment (Korsmeyer, 2002). It is in this ambiguity of concepts and in this abstract space, where rules are not arbitrary, that the senses are met by pleasure. One of the aspects that can considerably influence an individual's perception is the surrounding environment, and a large component of this is season: spring, summer, fall, and winter. Each season expresses their own individual environment, but they each share something in common: their beauty is unique, and one facet of a season's uniqueness is the color seen in the landscape. The sensory perception of the particular characteristic in each season at that time of the year can

guarantee a dining guest a pleasurable and unique experience by helping to align their feelings with nature.

The world is constantly in motion, and this change is marked by the passing of seasons, which in turn cause the external perceived environment to be transient. A cook can control and take into account seasonal changes through time by capturing these changes in a thorough, balanced and conscious manner, producing a dish that becomes an encounter with nature. The guests' encounter with nature in a dish provides them with the beauty and memory of the fleeting environments in a season.

We can enhance the most beautiful properties of produce, and use them in their corresponding season, to induce this encounter with nature. This evocation of memories in a season becomes an artistic experience; as a painter would use color and stroke to make elements stand out, the chef can use food elements to highlight the unique beauty of a season. We view the concept of seasonality through the demarcated four seasons, while the dishes represent nuances of specific moments in each season.

The aim of this culinary concept is to show that it is possible to design cuisine that precisely matches the movement and changes in the world surrounding us. We can tune specific characteristics of the product by enhancing it with scientific knowledge and culinary techniques. Guests can experience a more complete interaction with the dish by being completely matched with their surround environment: season and nature.

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Culinary concept: definition

Using culinary products and techniques in a particular moment of the season provides an enhancement of the natural colors and textures in food. This manipulation provides a feeling of seasonality, which perfectly matches the surrounding environment.

Description of the culinary process

The enhancement of natural colors to provoke seasonality (Dominy, 2004) in a dish is carried out with several techniques. These include dehydration, roasting, aeration, steeping and hot infusion, incubation, fermentation, cold-press juicing, gelation, straining, freezing with liquid nitrogen, and sous vide cooking (McGee, 2004). Depending on the particular characteristic of a product to be emphasized, one technique, or a combination of several, are used to increase the potential to induce the feeling of seasonality in a dish. Therefore, the relationship between the dish and the seasonality invoked is paramount to giving the guest a feeling of harmony with their perceptions of nature in their environment. For instance, by using those techniques, a dish can evoke the bright yellow-orange color that surrounds everything in nature during summer time.

Depending on the season, the way of cooking must change in order to enhance the colors for that particular time of the year. Therefore, through cuisine, it is possible to feel the progression as the world moves and turns. As the product from the farmer is also changing through the season, the preparation of that product changes as well.

Spring

During the spring, blossoms, reappearing after a barren winter, punctuate the ubiquitous green that has emerged. At that time, rhubarb comes up, with its pink and red colors peeking through the leafy greens on the top of the stalk, so it is crucial to drive a dish with rhubarb by choosing cautiously colors, aromas and other properties to perfectly match the overall presentation (Fig. 1). Techniques used are cold-press juicing, gelation and straining.

In this case, it is possible to obtain a brilliantly colored juice of rhubarb by cold-press juicing this spring vegetable. Cold-pressing is a technique which maintains the integrity of the fruit in that it avoids heat which can alter the structure of plant cells (Knorr et al., 2002). This technique mirrors the spring, since during this season, fruits and vegetables are ripe for the picking and ready to eat without any cooking or processing. The juice is transformed into a gel with the addition of the hydrocolloid Gellan, representing a transformation of the ingredients that avoids cooking, again reflecting the freshness of this season.

The gel rests upon a yogurt made of sheep's milk, imparting the fresh and tangy flavors of milk produced in spring. The yogurt is strained over cheesecloth, and through this process, whey separates from the yogurt and drips out, resulting in a



Fig. 1. A dish with rhubarb by choosing cautiously colors, aromas and other properties. Techniques used are cold-press juicing, gelation and straining.

thicker, more concentrated flavor in the yogurt. In this flavor, the guest experiences the verdancy of spring through grassy flavors, a vestige of the animals' diet. The rhubarb is garnished with cherry blossoms, eastern redbud and the greenery of wood sorrel. The rhubarb shines through red and green flowers, similar to the color in the stalk peering through green as it comes up in the ground.

Summer

When summer arrives, sun beats everywhere and creates a fiery yellow and orange environment, and warm aromas come out. This is seen in a vivid summer dish using techniques of fermentation, roasting and sous vide cooking.

Here, carrots, sea urchin roe (uni) and flowers display the beautiful yellow and orange colors (Fig. 2). A carrot miso is the star of this dish, providing deep flavor and color, complemented by a carrot puree and softened with fresh uni. In order to enhance the specific color and aromas typical of summer, carrots are used in a miso and in a puree. Carrots are scrubbed clean and then roasted slowly to dry out the skins, which concentrates color, producing a brighter orange.

In the summer, the heat causes a natural fermentation of the sugars in plants and their vines. Carrots are fermented with koji to produce intensely flavored miso. In a fermentation process, starches from a substrate are converted into acids and alcohols, which influence the flavor of fermented products

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