

# FLAVOR & THE MENU

FLAVOR TRENDS, STRATEGIES & SOLUTIONS FOR MENU DEVELOPMENT

May/June 2014

## Making the Most of MEAT

Tapping the full potential of protein requires a flavor-centered touch

By Joan Lang

A chicken's a chicken, a steak is a steak. What turns these ubiquitous proteins into unique menu signatures is the carefully considered process of bringing flavor to bear, in the form of ingredients and technique.

### PROTEIN TRENDS

## BEHIND THE PAYOFF

"I like to keep my food as close to its natural flavor as possible, and manipulate it very little, particularly since I go to such trouble sourcing the highest possible quality and freshness," says John Mooney, chef at New York City's Bell Book & Candle and the newly opened Bidwell in Washington, D.C. "You don't want to mask the inherent flavors, but you still want to make something that's your own—and you need to for competitive reasons."

With his signature Gin & Tonic Salmon, served at both locations, Mooney was aiming for the distinctive flavors of gravlax but in a cooked presentation, and he also wanted to capture the essence of summertime freshness. "And, really, what says summer better than a Gin & Tonic?"

The salmon portions are rubbed with a dry cure consisting of crushed juniper, coriander, lime zest, salt, sugar and pepper. "Citrus and fish are a natural, but the juniper and coriander bring those distinctive gin notes into the flavor profile," the chef explains. And instead of being left on for two to three days, as it would be to cure gravlax (or bacon, for that matter), the rub is removed after an hour, so only the barest bit of moisture is leached out and the flavor is more nuanced.

The cure also means that the fish becomes more caramelized and stays firmer when it's grilled to order, for a more memorable texture and flavor. The filet is served on top of a flat top-seared, deeply caramelized slice of cauliflower "steak," and napped with beurre blanc made with gin instead of white wine, echoing the flavor of the cure. A flurry of chopped chives, parsley and chervil, plus a drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkle of crunchy sea salt, finish the fish with bright, herbal notes and an added bit of color and texture.



BELL BOOK & CANDLE

Ofentimes, a minimalist treatment allows the natural flavors of the ingredients to shine, such as this subtly treated Gin & Tonic Salmon atop caramelized cauliflower.

with Passion