

TEAM RUSKELL 2005

Richard Ruskell

Stephen Durfee

Louise Chien

STRAWBERRY FLOATING ISLAND

WITH FENNEL POLLEN, SPRING FRUIT SALAD
AND MASCARPONE SHERBET

Pastry Chef Stephen Durfee, who prepared this dessert at the 2005 National Pastry Team Competition, said his team created it because it was a variation on a classic with light, bright flavors. He knew the judges would be tasting a lot of chocolate desserts, so in his mind this dessert would be a refreshing change. Durfee loves the combination of sweet strawberry and aromatic fennel, and the simple Mascarpone Sherbet gives the dessert a tangy richness. **MAKES 14 SERVINGS**

Meringue

225 g (7.9 oz/4½ large) egg whites

275 g (9.7 oz/1½ cups plus 1 Tbsp) granulated sugar

1. Preheat the oven to 250°F (122°C).
2. Combine the egg whites and sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer and place the bowl in a skillet of simmering water, whisking frequently, until the whites are hot and no longer viscous.
3. Remove from the heat and, using the whisk attachment, whip the whites on medium speed until they are full and fluffy. Transfer the meringue to a pastry bag fitted with a medium, plain tip.
4. Spray 14 baking cups with nonstick cooking spray. Pipe the meringue mixture into the cups and transfer them to a hotel pan. Surround the cups with water and cover the pan with foil. Bake until firm, about 12 minutes. Remove them from the water and chill in the refrigerator.

Strawberry Cream

140 g (4.9 oz/½ cup plus 1 Tbsp plus 1½ tsp) heavy cream

60 g (2.1 oz/¼ cup) strawberry-rhubarb purée

40 g (1.4 oz/⅓ cup) finely chopped, fresh strawberries

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whip the cream on high speed to medium peaks and then fold in the strawberry-rhubarb purée and chopped strawberries. Transfer the strawberry cream to a pastry bag fitted with a medium, plain tip.
2. Using a #40 ice cream scoop, hollow out the bases of the Meringues and pipe in the Strawberry Cream. Refrigerate the Meringues.

Fruit Salad

380 g (13.4 oz/1¼ cups) grenadine syrup

75 g (2.6 oz/2 stalks) rhubarb, diced

1½ navel oranges, cut into suprêmes, then diced

146 g (5.14 oz/1 cup) fresh strawberries, washed, hulled, and cut into pea-size Parisienne balls

1. Place the grenadine syrup in a saucepan and bring to a gentle boil over medium-high heat. Add the diced rhubarb and simmer over medium-low heat until tender, 3 or 4 minutes; do not overcook, or it will be mushy. Cool and refrigerate in the syrup.
2. Store the diced orange and strawberry balls in the refrigerator.

Fennel-Scented Custard Sauce

305 g (10.6 oz/1¼ cups) whole milk

250 g (8.5 oz/1 cup plus 1 Tbsp plus 1 tsp) heavy cream

100 g (3.5 oz/5⅓ large) egg yolks

50 g (1.8 oz/¼ cup) granulated sugar

Pinch of salt

3 g (0.1 oz/1 Tbsp) fennel pollen

1. In a saucepan, combine 241 g (8.5 oz/1 cup) of the milk with the cream and bring to a gentle boil over medium-high heat. In a bowl, whisk together the egg yolks, sugar, and salt. Whisk some of the hot milk mixture into the egg yolk mixture to temper the eggs, then return the entire mixture to the saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon until the custard coats the back of the spoon and reaches 175°F (80°C). Strain and measure out 100 g (3.5 oz/⅓ cup plus 2 Tbsp) of the finished sauce and chill.
2. In a saucepan, combine the remaining 64 g (2 oz/¼ cup) milk with the fennel pollen and bring to a simmer to infuse. Strain, chill, and combine with the reserved custard. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.



Fennel Crisps

30 g (1 oz/just over ½ large) egg whites
150 g (5.3 oz/1¼ plus 1 Tbsp) confectioners' sugar
2 g (0.07 oz/2 tsp) fennel pollen

1. Preheat the oven to 250°F (122°C).
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer, stir together the egg whites and sugar. Place the bowl on the mixer stand and, using the whisk attachment, beat on high speed for 6 minutes until firm and thick. Transfer the mixture to a small dish and cover with plastic wrap.
3. Spray a silicone baking mat with nonstick cooking spray and wipe it clean. Place it on a sheet pan. Make a 3-in (7.6-cm) round stencil out of plastic. Spread the egg white mixture over the stencil, placed on the lined sheet pan, forming at least 14 circles. Sprinkle each disk with some fennel pollen. Bake for 6 minutes. Immediately remove the disks from the mat, cool, and store in an airtight container.

Candied Fennel Bulb

250 g (8.8 oz/¾ cup plus 1 Tbsp) simple syrup (made with equal parts sugar and water)
10 g (0.4 oz/2 tsp) anisette liqueur
75 g (2.6 oz/¾ cup) finely chopped fennel bulb

1. In a saucepan, combine the syrup, anisette, and chopped fennel. Bring to a gentle simmer over medium-low heat and poach the fennel until tender, about 10 minutes. Cool and refrigerate the fennel in the syrup.

Candied Fennel Financier

62 g (2.2 oz/½ cup plus 1½ tsp) confectioners' sugar
20 g (0.7 oz/2 Tbsp plus 1½ tsp) all-purpose flour
18 g (0.6 oz/3 Tbsp plus 1 tsp) almond flour
50 g (1.8 oz/slightly more than 1½ large) egg whites
30 g (1.1 oz/2 Tbsp plus 1½ tsp) beurre noisette (see page 117)
2 g (0.07 oz/1 tsp) finely grated lemon zest

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F (163°C).
2. In a medium bowl, combine the sugar and the all-purpose and almond flours. Stir in the egg whites and butter, then stir in the lemon zest.
3. Transfer the batter to a pastry bag fitted with a medium, plain tip. Pipe the batter into fourteen greased 2 x 4-in (5 x 10-cm) financier molds. Arrange a few strips of Candied Fennel Bulb on top of each cake. Bake for 8 minutes, or until golden. Cool completely.

Fennel Oil

6 g (0.2 oz/1 Tbsp plus 1½ tsp) fennel seeds
20 g (0.7 oz/½ cup packed) fresh, flat-leaf parsley leaves
200 g (7 oz/¾ cup plus 3 Tbsp) canola oil
65 g (2.3 oz/2 cups) fennel fronds, chopped

1. Fill a saucepan one-third of the way with water and bring to a boil over high heat. Add the fennel seeds and parsley leaves and blanch in the boiling water for a few seconds. Drain, dry, and purée them with the oil in a blender. Add the chopped fennel fronds and chill.

Mascarpone Sherbet

250 g (8.8 oz/1 cup) mascarpone cheese
325 g (11.5 oz/1 cup plus 1 Tbsp) simple syrup (made with equal parts sugar and water)
35 g (1.2 oz/2 Tbsp plus ¾ tsp) freshly squeezed lemon juice

1. Purée the mascarpone cheese with the simple syrup in a blender or food processor. Process in an ice cream machine according to the manufacturer's instructions, adding the lemon juice when it is nearly frozen.

Fennel Chips

1 fennel bulb
Confectioners' sugar for dusting

1. Preheat the oven to 200°F. Cut the fennel bulb in half lengthwise. Set the mandoline on the thinnest setting and shave 14 pieces from one of the halves (save the remaining fennel for another use).
2. Line a half-sheet pan with a silicone baking mat and dust it liberally with confectioner's sugar. Lay the fennel slices on the mat and dust them with more sugar. Bake for 2 to 3 hours, or until the chips are dried and crisp. Cool and store in an airtight container.

ASSEMBLY

100 g (3.5 oz/1/3 cup plus 2 Tbsp) strawberry-rhubarb purée

1. Drain the fennel and rhubarb from the syrups. Strain the Fennel Oil.
2. Ladle a pool of Fennel-Scented Custard Sauce onto each plate. Unmold a Meringue into the puddle of sauce. Top with a Fennel Crisp.
3. Drizzle each plate with strawberry-rhubarb purée and Fennel Oil. Arrange some of the Fruit Salad on top.
4. Place a Candied Fennel Financier on each plate and top with a quenelle of Mascarpone Sherbet. Garnish with a fennel chip.

