

CATIE AWARDS
SUBMISSION 2025

BEST SMALL PLATE



DICED SALMON BURGER

Synopsis

An enthusiastic sales director comes to a motivated Chef and asks for a small plate that has no boundaries except the dish needs to be Michelin Star caliber and needs to pair with a famous Scotch from Laphroaig. The Chef's soul lights up, eyes widen and the result is The Diced Salmon Burger. This dish is a refined play-on of a Salmon Burger you might order from a grungy dive bar or Swedish pub. The attention to detail, complexity and imagination of each component is precisely executed to balance the familiar flavor and astonishing presentation.





It is not often a catering chef will be given the golden ticket of creative freedom, especially being able to utilize past experiences in fine dining restaurants. The Diced Salmon Burger was inspired by pairing smoky, fruity and earthy flavors of an amazing Scotch for a Scotch tasting event. By utilizing a small plate design, it had the ability to present complex flavors and textures to complement the beverage pairing and not overpower them.

When planning the menu, the client provided an inspiration picture of the Laphroaig Quarter Cask and a lobster roll. While a version of the lobster roll would have been an easy task, we really wanted to push the envelope on creating something new and innovative. Salmon came to mind as a more common taste for the general public's palettes. Then using the lobster roll bread idea is what led to a play on salmon burger to keep the dish in the sandwich family.

The first challenge was that we did not get to sample the Laphroaig Quarter Cask prior to the event. We had to research the tasting notes which included peatness, seaweed, gentle fruit, smoke and salt. These flavors were used in developing the salmon mix recipe. We added lemon zest and red wine aged irish cheddar as the gentle fruit flavors. Then we leaned into smoked paprika and fresno chile for the peatiness and smokey flavor. Finally for the earthy flavors, we used thyme, dill and oregano.

Another challenge was coming up with a way to bind the mixture together to create a “burger patty”. Since we wanted to keep the salmon flavors we chose to dice it instead of grounding it. But this then required an extra step in creating a “binding agent.” Some chefs would think of egg or cornstarch that is commonly used in meatballs or meatloaf. However, we worked with a hydrochloride called Activa RM. Activa RM is a transglutaminase (TG) enzyme preparation that's used to bond protein-based ingredients together, similar to glue. We thought this was a more interesting way to keep the protein patty together and were able to portion and press them to look like a burger.





When coming up with the plating presentation, we had to think outside the box for a unique “bun”. The idea came to life of a dry version of gremolata. Gremolata is composed of parsley, garlic and lemon processed like a pesto. We were able to source freeze dried parsley leaves that were vibrant green. We then minced garlic and fried it on low heat to make the “garlic” component. For the lemon component, we microplaned lots of lemon zest and dehydrated it for 3 hours at 110 degrees fahrenheit. Lastly, we prepared brioche bread crumbs to add in. This process was able to create the same flavors of gremolata and turned it into a dry gremolata similar to a panecito. To balance the “burger” and “bun”, we added a sauce that was bright and creamy. Creme Fraiche was the perfect compliment to contrast the salmon burger. This also helped pair with the sea salt flavor from the Scotch. Adding everything spice gave the dish more deep full flavors and paired well with sea salt.

What is the customer's first impression of a dish? How will this dish convince them that the items plated are going to be delicious? We all associate beautiful food with amazing taste. Another challenge was in plating, having a “burger” look like it was made by a Michelin chef. The salmon patty has many colors ranging from maroon, green, yellow, pink and brown from searing the patty. The idea was to make the dish pop and make your eyes rotate around the plate. Before placing the burger, we dusted the top with the gremolata, using a stencil to create a half-moon effect on the top. On the other side, we squeezed dots of everything spice creme fraiche in ascending size to contrast the gremolata like a yin-yang. Placing brioche chip on top of the salmon burger where the gremolata crescent was the thinnest. The final touches to tie the dish together was the dill oil and mustard frill. We placed a thin layer of dill oil on the side of the burger that had the everything spice creme fraiche. There was a small amount of negative space on top of the burger and some on the plate. Those were filled with mustard frill.





When in production at the event, we had to keep the salmon burger hot without overcooking it and also not break the creme fraiche once placed on top. This meant there was an intense number of steps for plating. Our plan of attack was to dust all the burger patties using the stencil. The next step was to pre-place the creme fraiche on the plates. When making the creme fraiche, we used xanthan gum to help stabilize the whey and milk emulsion. Keeping the sauce at room temperature helped it not to break once placed on top of the burger.

When creating custom dishes, the idea is to always try to plan the plate with all of the obstacles and challenges ahead of offering to the sales team. Using the idea of mise en place to think through the execution of the dish. It's also important to imagine the client eating and tasting all the flavors that are paired with the Scotch in front of them. The Laphroaig representatives were impressed with our combinations of flavors that complemented their famous Scotch and guests loved the high end tasting experience we provided.

Recipes

Diced Salmon Burger

Diced Salmon Burger

Yield: 145g Burgers

Ingredients:

Quantity	Ingredient
1700g	Rough Small Diced Salmon (Bloodline Removed)
14g	Chopped Thyme (Or Lemon Thyme)
8g	Oregano Chopped
30g	Dill Chopped
15g	Fresno Chilis (De Seeded and finely chopped)
10g	Lemon Zest
100g	Small Diced Red Wine Aged Irish Cheddar
15g	Old Bay
28g	Activa RM

Equipment:

Quantity	Equipment
1	Large Mixing Bowl
1	Rubber Spatula
2	Pairs Gloves
1	Ring Mold
1	Sheet Tray lined with Sprayed Parchment Paper

Procedure:

1. In a Large Mixing Bowl, Mix All Components except Activa RM to well combine.
2. Feather Activa RM over Salmon mix, ensuring no activa clumps form.
3. Gently fold activa and salmon together with glove hands, ensuring well mixed, but not mashed.
4. Spray Ring Mold, set Ring on Sheet tray.
5. Weight Salmon mix in 200g portions.
6. Place salmon in ring mold, press evenly around the middle and edges, packing it into a burger shape.
7. Allow burgers to set up in a refrigerator uncovered overnight.
8. On Pick up, sear salmon burgers in a lightly smoking pan with canola oil, get good color on each side, then finish by basting with butter, thyme (or lemon thyme), and crushed garlic.

Recipes

Dry Gremolata and Everything Spice Creme Fraiche

Dry Gremolata

Yield: 1 quart

Ingredients:

1x	2x	4x	Ingredient
500 g			Bricche Bread Crumbs
100 g			Fried Galic
100 g			Parsley Leaf
85 g			Dehydrated Lemon Zest
15 g			Kosher Salt

Equipment:

Quantity	Equipment
1	Robot Coupe
1	Microplane
1	Dehydrator
1	Mixing bowl

Procedure:

1. Measure all ingredients
2. First place bread crumbs or toasted brioche chunks in robot coupe.
3. Start pulsing til they are small enough, add the other ingredients and process til combined.
4. Result will be a vibrant green bread crumb.

Everything Spice Creme Fraiche

Yield: 1 quart

Ingredients:

1x	2x	4x	Ingredient
900 g			Creme Fraiche
50 g			Everything Spice
25 g			Lemon juice
1 g			Xanthan gum

Equipment:

Quantity	Equipment
1	Mixing bowl
1	Whisk
1	Rubber spatula
1	Scale

Procedure:

1. Measure all ingredients.
2. Wish together all ingredients except XG
3. Sprinkle XG while whisking til it thickens.

Recipes

Brioche Chip and Dill Oil

Brioche Chip

Yield: 30 pc

Ingredients:

1x	2x	4x	Ingredient
1 loaf			Brioche punched out by 2.5 in mold
150 g			Butter
3 g			Kosher Salt

Equipment:

Quantity	Equipment
1	Brush
1	2.5 in ring mold
1	Rolling pin
1	Aluminum foil
1	Sheet tray
1	Convection oven

Procedure:

1. Preheat the oven to 300 degrees fahrenheit.
2. Wrap rolling pin in aluminum foil.
3. Punch out brioche circles.
4. Brush both sides with butter.
5. Bake in the oven for 7 minutes.
6. Let cool on top of a rolling pin.

Dill Oil

Yield: 1 pint

Ingredients:

1x	2x	4x	Ingredient
500g			Grapeseed Oil
100g			Dill
4g			salt

Equipment:

Quantity	Equipment
1	Vita Mix
1	Pot
1	Ice Bath
1	Fine Mesh Chinois
1	Ladle
1	Rubber Spatula

Procedure:

1. Blanche dill in boiling water then shock.
2. Squeeze excess water from the dill and chop.
3. Add to Vita Mix with grapeseed oil and blend, increasing speed from lowest to highest.
4. Keep blending on high until the mixture is warm.
5. Strain through a sieve and force the oil through with the ladle.
6. Pack directly into a squeeze bottle.

Recipes *Diced Salmon Burger Plating*

Diced Salmon Burger Small Plate

Yield: 1 plate

Ingredients:

1x	2x	4x	Ingredient
150 g			Diced salmon burger patty
10 g			butter
10 g			Blended oil
30 g			Everything spice creme fraiche (squeeze bottle)
1 pc.			Brioche chip
7 g			Dry gremolata
25 g			Dill oil
5 pc.			Mustard frill

Equipment:

Quantity	Equipment
1	Plate
1	Sauce spoon
1	Fish spatula
1	Plastic stencil

Procedure:

1. Heat plate to a warm touch.
2. Sear salmon patty in blended oil, heat pan to smoke point, add blended oil, lay patty away from you in the pan.
3. Sear on side til golden brown, add butter and baste patty til 120 degrees fahrenheit. Take out of the pan and rest on top of a c-fold towel.
4. Using the stencil, dust the dry gremolata on top.
5. Pipe ascending dots of everything spice creme fraiche on top of the party on the opposite side of the gremolata creating a yin-yang effect.
6. Pipe descending dots of the everything creme fraiche on the plate off center, place the patty next to the dots next to the gremolata.
7. Place brioche chip on the thinnest part of the gremolata.
8. Using the sauce spoon, spoon dill oil on the side of the everything creme fraiche.
9. Fill in the negative space with mustard fill.

THANK YOU

