

WHAT'S IN SEASON //

Pear-fection

In salads, baked goods, or simply poached, Bartlett pears are ripe and ready.

When I was growing up, our family dinners were sourced by Tyson, Swanson, and Kraft. Dessert, though, was strictly Del Monte: cling-peach halves lacquered in syrup, fruit cocktail in homogenous dice. I dutifully spooned them up and moved on to homework. But Del Monte pears were also in rotation, and those I adored. Decades later, pears are still my eaten-out-of-hand fruit of choice. Pear sorbets, salads, mimosas, Bellinis...I crave them all. And pastries? My mantra: Anything an apple can do, a pear can do better.

Though most pear varieties debut in autumn, Bartletts prefer an early entrance. At farmers' markets come August, their green skin is easy to spot amidst blushing nectarines and flaming beefsteaks. That green will turn yellow when ripe, but, since all pears are best picked unripe, they'll need a few days on your kitchen counter. Then bite, poach (actually, you can poach an unripe pear—the liquid will soften it), caramelize, or bake to your heart's content.

Nannette Connors is in mid-Bartlett swoon right about now. American "country" desserts dominate at her **Provisions Bake Shop** (209 Wolfs Lane, Pelham 914-738-6622; pelhamprovisionsbakeshop.com), and pears do a star turn in muffins, upside-down cakes, and crostadas. "I love their juiciness and sweet-tart flavor," she says. "I'm big on putting them in salads, too, with crumbled Gorgonzola or goat cheese, toasted walnuts, and an apple-cider vinaigrette." At home, she'll often add them to an arugula and prosciutto salad with balsamic dressing, but, at the bake shop, it's strictly flour, butter, and sugar. Against that, Del Monte never would have stood a chance.

Pear-Ginger Muffins

Courtesy of Nannette Connors, Provisions Bake Shop
(Yield: 12-14 muffins)

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup sugar
- 1 Tbsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp ground ginger
- ¼ cup candied ginger, finely chopped
- 2 large Bartlett pears, peeled, cored, and cut into 1/2-inch dice
- ½ cup unsalted butter, melted
- 1 cup whole milk, slightly warmed
- 2 large eggs

Preheat oven to 400°F. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and both gingers. Stir in pear dice. In large bowl, whisk together butter, milk, and eggs. Pour liquid mixture into dry mixture and gently fold until smooth and well blended. Spray standard muffin pans with non-stick cooking spray. Fill each cup ¾ full with batter. Bake until lightly browned and firm to the touch, about 20 minutes.

// Diane Weintraub Pohl

COFFEE WITH THE CHEF //

Matt Kay

Cedar Street Grill
23 Cedar St, Dobbs Ferry
(914-674-0706; cedarstreetgrillny.com)



Five Items in my Home Refrigerator...

Good cheese, multi-grain bread, an assortment of cold cuts, whole-grain mustard, and a bottle of wine.

Favorite Cuisine...Mexican. The flavors are clean and the techniques are still authentic. Plus, any cuisine that uses hot peppers gets my vote.

Last Book Read...*Setting the Table* by Danny Meyer. The book says a lot about proper hospitality functions and customer-service techniques.

Favorite Place to Dine Out (other than the restaurant I'm at)...

Sam's Italian Restaurant in Dobbs Ferry. I'm not only guaranteed a great meal but I owe them my start. Sam's was my first restaurant job when I was 15 years old.

I Never Cook With...my brother Joe. He is my business partner and I trust him completely with the front-of-house operations, but we should never be in the same room with knives.

Favorite TV Show...I'm a sucker for food reality TV, so it would be a toss-up between *Bar Rescue* and *Kitchen Nightmares*. I'm always amazed at how neglectful people can be about important aspects of the restaurant business.

I Hate It When You're Dining at a Restaurant and...your table is constantly interrupted by a server or manager. There are ways to check on a table without being disruptive to the meal.

What Waiters Should Never Do...Grab a glass by the rim. The golden rule in my restaurant is to always hold a glass by the stem

My Eating Disorder Is...I don't deny myself food. Ever.

The Most I've Paid for a Meal...I paid almost \$60 for a Kobe burger with foie gras at Café Boulud. It truly was worth every penny.

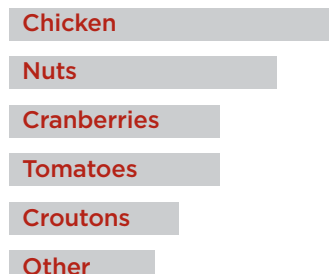
Most Famous Person I Ever Cooked for...New York Yankees pitcher Andy Pettitte.

My Biggest Superstition Is...Opening an umbrella inside—I'm convinced it's really bad luck, especially when it happens in the restaurant!

// John Bruno Turiano

Lettuce Plus...

What are the favorite mix-ins at County salad bars?



// JBT with Alex Martocci