

## Sharing the Delights of Maine

Star Chefs (August 2004)

<http://www.starchefs.com/>

*Chef Sam Hayward considers food to be rather mystical, a link to land and place. At Fore Street Grill, Hayward's restaurant in Portland, the natural elements - fire, water, stone, wood, and metal – play a part in the décor, connecting every diner to the essence of Maine. The view of the Casco Bay Ferry from the large windows completes the picture. Working with ingredients found in local waters and forests, Hayward allows the rustic, primitive qualities of food to reveal the traditions and agriculture of Maine, past and present. The chef, his menu, and the ingredients that inspire both are quintessential Maine treasures.*



## BIOGRAPHY

When life on the road as a 1970's R & B musician lost its charm, Sam Hayward traded in his bass guitar for a sharp set of knives and a summer job on Maine's Appledore Island. With his roots in Louisiana, Tennessee and upstate New York, Sam took to the new coastal landscape and immediately fell in love with Maine.

After a year in New York City and New Orleans kitchens, Sam moved to Maine permanently. In 1981, Brunswick – a college town – was the first to experience Sam's cuisine when he bought 22 Lincoln and started concentrating on local food sources. His restaurant consolidated the community of local growers and showcased the unique

specialties they produced in Maine's challenging northern climate. After 10 years, 22 Lincoln closed its doors to a saddened community.

In 1996 Sam opened Fore Street Grill, a brick building on the fringes of Portland's Old Port district. Huge wood-burning ovens dominate the open kitchen, and the daily changing menu reflects specialties of this method: turnspit roasted pork loin, wood grilled yellowfin tuna loin, wood oven-roasted day-boat halibut fillet. Fore Street diners are treated to ingredients found in local waters and forests, reflecting Hayward's passion for the distinctively characteristic food of Maine and the Maritime Provinces.

Hayward received a coveted James Beard Award for Best Chef in the Northeast. He has also been named Best Chef by Casco Bay Weekly. He has been featured in Atlantic Monthly, Saveur, Food Arts, Wine Spectator, and The New York Times, and Gourmet Magazine has rated Fore Street Grill 16th out of 50 Best American Restaurants.

## **RECIPES**

### **Herb-Roasted Sea Bass**

1 whole wild black sea bass, about 3 pounds (or any other fresh, firm-fleshed fish)

4 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

2 Tablespoons green garlic, garlic scapes, or garlic chives, thinly sliced

1/4 cup green onion tops, thinly sliced

1 sprig each of fresh tarragon, thyme, basil, and rosemary

Sea salt, to taste

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Juice of 2 lemons, plus extra wedges for serving

Build a hardwood fire in a charcoal grill. Allow flames to subside until a bed of glowing coals remains. Place a grill over the hardwood coals and heat. Rub the grill with a cloth moistened with olive oil. Meanwhile, season the fish inside and out with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper. Lightly drizzle olive oil in the cavity of the fish and loosely stuff it with fresh herbs. Tie the fish with soft cotton twine to help retain its shape. Generously drizzle the outside of the fish with olive oil and place it on the grill. Cover the grill, adjusting air supply and vent to permit moderate, even heat. Cook the fish on one side for about 8 minutes for a 3-pound fish. Carefully turn over the fish, cover the grill, and continue cooking over moderate heat for an additional 6 to 8 minutes.

Remove fish from grill and place on a serving platter. Discard the herbs and drizzle fish lightly with olive oil and freshly squeezed lemon juice. Serve whole, lifting off sections of fillet and dividing among dinner plates, accompanied by wedges of lemon and a pitcher of olive oil. Yield: 4 Servings. Wine Pairing: A medium-bodied Albarino, like the Condes de Albarei 2002. Note: Other fish species may be used for this recipe. On the New England coast, striped bass are abundant in the summer months, and roasting them whole over hardwood coals may be one of the simplest and best ways to enjoy them.

Select a very fresh fish with a clean, oceanic aroma, firm flesh, and bright eyes and gills. Ask the fishmonger to dress and scale the fish, and to snip the fins close to the body.

### **Mixed Shellfish Grill**

1-1/2 sticks (6 ounces) unsalted butter  
12 cloves garlic, peeled  
1 cup dry white wine  
4 Tablespoons cider vinegar  
Sea salt and black pepper, to taste  
Pinch of cayenne pepper  
2 teaspoons summer savory, finely chopped  
2 live Maine lobsters, about 1 pound  
12 Atlantic oysters  
24 medium blue mussels  
24 littleneck clams  
Lemon wedges, for garnish

Melt 4 Tablespoons of the butter in a small saucepan over low heat, add the garlic cloves, and cook slowly until garlic is very soft and light golden brown. Remove garlic, cool slightly, and mash with the side of a knife. Increase heat, add the wine and vinegar to the pan and reduce it by 3/4. Lower heat and whisk in remaining butter 1 tablespoon at a time to make a smooth butter sauce. Whisk in mashed garlic and season with salt, black pepper, and cayenne pepper. Add the chopped savory and keep warm. Build a hardwood fire in a kettle grill and allow flames to subside until a bed of hot coals remains.

Kill the lobsters by plunging a knife through the shell behind the head. Twist off the claws, tail, and body. Split the tails lengthwise into equal halves. Separate the knuckles from the claws. Lightly drizzle lobster pieces with olive oil and toss to coat.

Remove one shell from each of the oysters, clams, and mussels. Working in batches, place a few of each variety of shellfish, including lobster, on the grill, shell-side down. Sprinkle lightly with salt and spoon a small amount of butter sauce onto each shell. Baste the lobster tail meat with the sauce. As the shellfish cook, the sauce will begin to simmer in the shells. Avoid overcooking. Serve outdoors on platters with lemon wedges and crusty bread. Yield: 4 Servings. Wine Pairing: A Californian Sauvignon Blanc, such as the Porter Creek Sauvignon Blanc 2002. Note: Besides the shellfish listed, all of which are common in New England markets, any number of regional shellfish may be used, including shrimp, langoustines, and spiny lobster. Although they don't have shells, cephalopods such as squid, cuttlefish, and octopus would also be great.

### **Strawberries with Grilled Pound Cake & Buttermilk Ice Cream**

For buttermilk ice cream:  
2 C light cream

1/3 C turbinado sugar  
1/3 C honey  
4 egg yolks  
1 C cultured buttermilk

For strawberries and pound cake:

2 quarts ripe strawberries  
Turbinado sugar to taste  
1 LB all-butter pound cake  
2 TBS unsalted butter  
Fresh mint (for garnish)

For buttermilk ice cream: Whisk all ingredients together until sugar dissolves. Process in ice cream maker according to manufacturer's instructions. Chill for at least thirty minutes in freezer. Soften slightly before serving.

For strawberries and pound cake: Hull, wash, and drain strawberries. Quarter the berries and place in a medium bowl. Sprinkle lightly with turbinado sugar and toss gently. Set aside to macerate.

Slice pound cake into four thick portions. Melt butter in a large skillet. When the foam subsides, add pound cake slices and toast on both sides until golden. Divide cake among dessert plates. Spoon sweetened strawberries over the cake slices, allowing additional syrup to absorb into the cake. Place a scoop of buttermilk ice cream on each plate. Garnish with fresh mint.

### **Summer Salad of Arugula, Tomatoes & Parmigiano Reggiano**

1 pound medium arugula leaves  
1 pound ripe garden tomatoes  
3 ounces Parmigiano Reggiano, freshly grated  
4 Tablespoons cider vinegar  
1 cup extra virgin olive oil  
Freshly ground black pepper to taste  
Sea salt (preferably from Maine) to taste

Pick over, wash, and drain the arugula. Remove long stems. Remove the stem scar from the tomatoes, wash, drain, and cut into thick wedges. Whisk together vinegar and olive oil. Season to taste with sea salt and black pepper. Place arugula and tomatoes in a large bowl. Season with sea salt and black pepper. Whisk vinaigrette again and pour about 4 Tablespoons of the mixture over the greens and tomatoes. Toss the salad. Divide among salad plates, and sprinkle grated cheese generously over the salads. Yield: 4 Servings. Wine Pairing: A crisp Italian white, such as the Anselmi San Vincenzo 2003.

## INTERVIEW

By Liz Tarpy

Liz Tarpy: What is your first food memory?

Sam Hayward: My grandmother's housekeeper, Zella, in Morristown, TN, making an apple pie. It had a meaty lard crust that I have never been able to duplicate. She also made a crab soup, which I seldom try to recreate because it doesn't do it justice. But when I do, I call it Zella's Low Country Crab Soup and it just sells out the door.

LT: What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a self-taught chef?

SH: I'm not constrained by someone else's ideas of refined, professional cuisine. I am free to explore other traditions and methods. There is no worry of fitting into a professional canon. If I can't get rustic, primitive qualities in the food I am working with, I am not limited to learned, refined techniques. I can be rough-hewn because those refined techniques are not ingrained.

LT: Your cuisine has been described by others as "New England's closest equivalent to Alice Waters." How does it feel being compared to Alice Waters? How would YOU describe your cuisine?

SH: Totally unworthy and a little embarrassed. My cuisine is simple. I limit the number of ingredients so as to not overshadow or over complicate the preparation. I like to shine a bright light on the raw material. Other efforts are superfluous and distracting. I am interested in how to use locally raised food, seasonal and fresh produce. It reveals something about Maine. The traditions and agriculture. I find that more interesting than satisfying my own flights of fancy and personal artistic expression. I find inspiration out of local forests, waters.

LT: Who have been your influences?

SH: Fernald Point and his book *Ma Gastronomie*. If I sense that one of my incoming cooks has potential and likes to read, I make them read this book. Also Jean-Louis Palladin and Alain Chapel. They were always exploring and experimenting, very connected to the earth, the notion of terroir, saw food as simple and brilliant. Alice Waters. I have read her books, and eaten there twice in my life. It was everything I had hoped it would be. She led us to the "farm to restaurant" concept that is uniquely strong in Maine and has made Maine an epicenter for the concept on the east coast. There was also a woman home cook I met in the early 80's. Trudy Hupper. She and her sister cooked on logging barges in the 1920's and earlier. She would have these parties in the wintertime with massive amounts of turkeys, hams and pies. She was a terrific storyteller. She taught me what Maine food tasted like in the early 20th century and that has had a huge impact on my thinking.

LT: When I was in culinary school, I noticed a difference among my classmates. Some of us were already good cooks, others had potential, but some were way beyond the rest of us. The way they approached food was almost mystical, like an inner harmony that the rest of us could only hope to know one day for ourselves. Do you think someone is born with THIS - or can IT be learned?

SH: I was not born with IT. But because of all the women in my life – my mother, grandmother, aunt – being in the kitchen was like play. The smell memories are powerful. My approach is sensual, tactile, very mystical because food is part of the connection to land and place.

LT: What is your advice to aspiring chefs?

SH: Eat, taste, learn how to use salt and pepper, develop technique the best you can, eat other people's food as often as you can, eat from the land or sea where you are, and know when to stop adding other things to the dish.

LT: How do you guarantee consistency in your kitchen?

SH: Consistency is not top priority. Quality is crucial. I require precise cooking techniques because we are dealing with wood fires – a reluctant technology. When dealing with small-scale local farmers there is no way to guarantee consistency. There are dramatic cooking characteristics. I don't fight the differences, I celebrate them. Animals are never identical, so the outcome isn't either. That is what is so fascinating. Consistency is a cover up for standardized food. I look for quality, taste, seasoning, precise cooking, and sensitivity to muscles of animals.

LT: What do you do when you're not cooking?

SH: I am usually in the woods or the garden, writing, backpacking or canoeing.

LT: What's next?

SH: Opening a seafood retail shop with a seafood restaurant in the Public Market in the early summer. We will serve traditional New England shore foods using the best raw materials. Standard Bakery will make our oyster crackers, Parkerhouse rolls and brown bread. We will do the food with care and attention to detail, and it will be affordable.

LT: Do you get to cook much these days?

SH: Not as much as I'd like. I spend a lot of time with the farmers and foragers, learning about new products, talking to them about how to cook with them, what makes them unique. Then I bring it back to the restaurant and play around with it. When I feel confident, I teach my cooks, or at least my sous chef, how to work with the product. Like me, all my cooks right now have an exceptionally short attention span, and they are

always hounding me for new products to use, new dishes to cook. They like to be challenged.

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