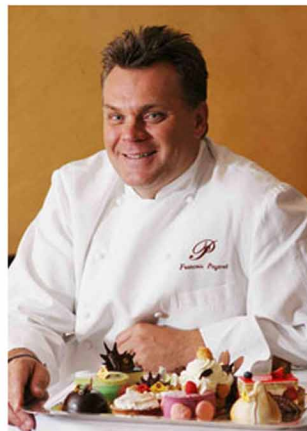




The Sit-Down 01/09/2009

Francois Payard Will Be Using Pop Rocks Soon



Francois Payard, who has just introduced a Sunday brunch on the Upper East Side at his **eponymous restaurant**, sat down with Feedbag correspondent Laurie Pila Horowitz, and answered some tough questions about desserts. To wit:

What do you think of the current trend of using savory ingredients in desserts?

I used to do that when I was the pastry chef at **Le Bernadin**. Also, I used to make a swiss chard tarte at Daniel. The first time I served it, nobody wanted to eat it. Then I didn't tell them what it was, and everybody loved it! But I have to say I think this type of thing is only good in a small dose. I like the

Vosges chocolate with curry. But something like this, I don't like to have it every day. Or to say it another way—if I eat a piece of chocolate before sleep, I may have a beautiful chocolate with vanilla, or a chocolate with raspberry, or even a praline. Something that reminds me of when I was growing up.

Speaking of when you were growing up, salted caramel, a traditional flavor which originated in your native France, was dubbed by the New York Times as "flavor of the year" for 2008. What do you think?

It's funny that it took 10 years for people to know that caramel is even better with a pinch of salt! I've used salted caramel for the last 11 years. I also think a pinch of salt in every chocolate cake is the greatest. You know, living in New York, we are exposed to the world. But if you go to the middle of America, it's still shocking for people to see sea salt on top of a cake. I think it's a good thing for people to try new things. This year for Valentine's, I'm going to shock everybody. I'm going to make everything with Champagne, and I'm going to make a truffle with Pop Rocks, you know, the children's candy!

Really. Pop Rocks?

Yes, you will have the beautiful smooth ganache with the Champagne extract and then the Pop Rocks like bubbles. You know I think on that day, people want to feel like a kid again. So I make it more fun. Especially with the way things are right now. I think people want to drink more, and eat chocolate!

What flavor or ingredient do you think should be the winner for 2009? And I'll assume it's not Pop Rocks.

[Laughs] I think it should be chocolate. Dark chocolate. Finally, Americans love dark chocolate like in Europe. Chocolate is a very versatile ingredient. What are your favorite chocolate brands? I don't advertise for anyone. But, the best of the best is Valrhona. Number two is a new chocolate we found from Ecuador called Republica El Cacao. I agree about Valrhona.

Mr Payard, many people would describe you as a classicist. I'm curious about your opinion on the controversy of chefs using molecular gastronomy? For example, using liquid nitrogen to speed up ice cream making.

Well, last time I was a judge on *Iron Chef*, [the contestant] made an ice cream using nitrogen. I said, "Why not use the ice cream machine right behind you?"

What about the PacoJet, have you ever used that? (The Pacojet is a food processor that can turn a block of ice into sorbet with the touch of a button.)

Yes, I used it all the time when I was the pastry chef at Daniel. It's very good for a small restaurant with less volume because you can portion 1-10 items. But if you are a busy shop that sells a lot of ice cream, there's no way.

-Laurie Pila Horowitz