

# Taste



## REVIEW PREVIEW

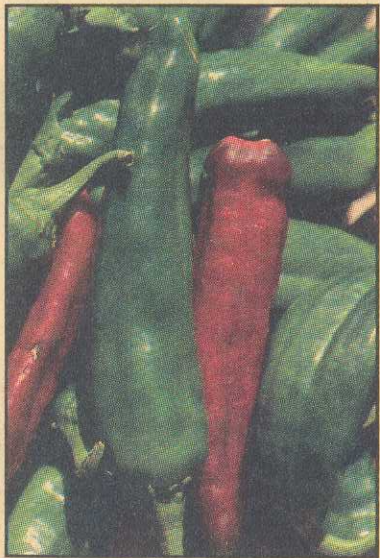
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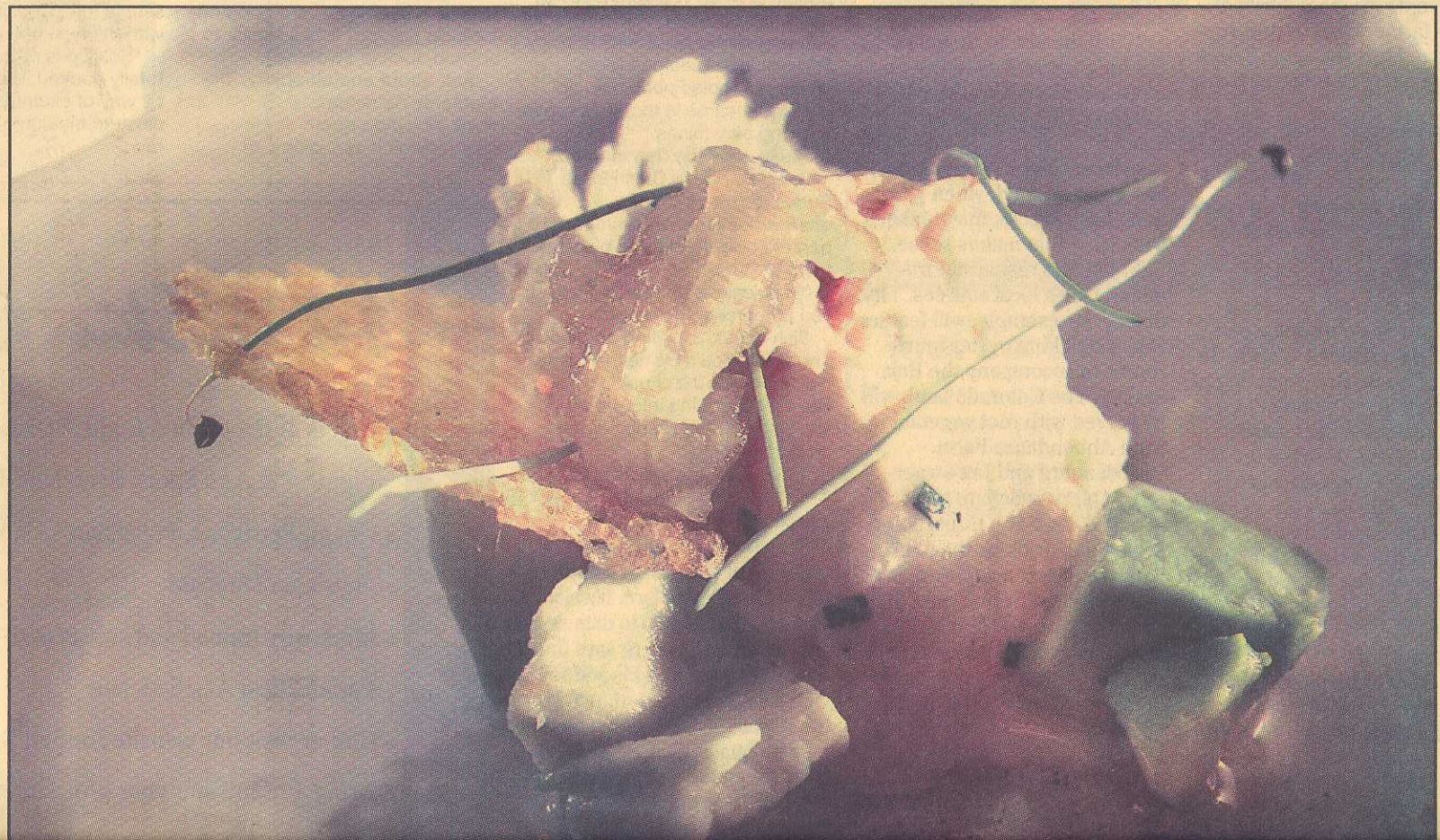
## AT THE MARKET



Culinary School of the Rockies

### Peppers

The smell of roasted peppers is a straight shot of autumn pleasure. This year's bodacious pepper crop is apparent in the red, yellow, green and purple jewels that line the Boulder Farmers' Market right now. Whether roast-



# Jax offers something fishy for the landlocked

Continued from 1F

The Jax menu for the Beard dinner, created by Rosenberg and Denver Jax Chef Sheila Lucero, illustrates a convergence of two seemingly contradictory trends in the culinary world. Chefs with good supplier relationships can get just about any type of food from anywhere in the world at its peak of flavor. At the same time, many chefs are focusing intensely on seasonal, locally grown products, establishing relationships with nearby farmers and even throwing around terms such as *terroir* in reference to peaches or tomatoes.

Paradoxically, it's the very elevation of the special qualities of the local product that makes a chef likely to tap his Fed-Ex account to fly in mussels from Prince Edward Island or blueberries from Maine.

"I think it's a dilemma as a restaurateur, a chef and a customer," says Izabela Wojcik, director of house programming at the James Beard Foundation, which promotes the culinary arts. "You have to strike the balance that makes you feel comfortable ... You can stick to local and seasonal and be very limited at times throughout the year. Or you can say 'I demand the most beautiful strawberry I can find in another season across the globe.'"

For the sustainability minded, the idea of eating local all the time has great appeal. But if you live in a place such as Colorado with a short growing season and no nearby ocean, the offerings can get a little grim come February.

Local fish lovers may remember the dark days when jumbo

fried shrimp, rubbery crab legs and frozen deviled crab were the only seafood available, and often accompanied by an iceberg lettuce salad or something from freezer or can.

Query remembers when fresh seafood was harder to come by in these parts. In 1989, when he owned Lick Skillet Café, he had fish delivered in insulated, iced boxes to his garage, before he ferried them to the restaurant.

How, then, to strike a balance?

"With the ability (to get everything) comes the question of responsibility," Wojcik says. "I wouldn't drag apples across the country if you have great apple resources. Maybe something like great seafood, when you don't have access, maybe that's a decision that makes sense."

At Jax, the restaurant frequently uses local sources. The dinner, for example, will feature Hazel Dell king oyster mushrooms to accompany the Baja scallop. The Colorado lamb will be served with root vegetables from Abbondanza Farm.

Rosenberg and Jax owner Dave Query will go to a nearby lake and catch the trout themselves. The fruit for the plum vinaigrette that accompanies it will be picked from trees from a friend of Query's. Apples from Ela Farms will be used in the dessert of caramel apples in seven flavors. The restaurant is also conscious about using sustainable fish, as is its supplier.

The Beard House dinner is a way to showcase Colorado products and the ability of landlubbers to handle the day's catch. It's considered quite an honor in the culinary world to be

## Selecting and cooking fish

Fish lovers, rejoice. Home cooks can buy fish as good as what people are eating in California.

But we should not forget our landlocked status; it serves to allow us to treat fish as the precious resource it is. In other words: Cook it beautifully.

**Good fish begins with a good product.** Ask your fish purveyor when the fish came in and take a close look.

"The best advice I give to people is when you go shopping, don't go into a store knowing what you're going to buy," says Jeremy St. Gelais, the seafood team leader at Whole Foods Market. "Ask what came in today. Be open to trying new things."

**Make sure the fish is fresh.**

Jax Fish House Chef Hosea Rosenberg says simple observation is the most important part of choosing a good piece of fish.

"Your eyes and nose will tell you 80 percent," he says.

Fish should look firm and moist. The flesh should be neither slimy, nor too dry and it shouldn't look like it's separating into pieces. The smell should be clean and of the ocean, not fishy.

asked to cook there.

Wojcik calls the Jax menu "a really great spin on the classic kind of fish house fare. It's also very modern and up to date and appealing." Rosenberg says the most important thing is starting with an exceptional product. For the Beard dinner that means the highest quality seafood and the most exceptional Colorado produce. It's a formula that works here and in the Big Apple.

Contact Camera Staff Writer Cindy Sutter at 303-473-1335 or [sutterc@dailycamera.com](mailto:sutterc@dailycamera.com).

Embarrassed to ask for a sniff of the fish of the day? Don't be. "It happens all the time," St. Gelais says.

**Learn how to talk about fish.** If you're picking a new type of fish, give the fishmonger examples of what types of fish you like. As a rule of thumb, white and lighter fleshed fishes tend to have a lighter flavor profile. But there are exceptions: Bluefish, for example, is white but quite fully flavored. Use the word "delicate" when asking for a fish that tastes like sole or cod. "Meaty" is a good one for fuller flavored fishes similar to salmon, tuna or swordfish.

**Ask about sustainability.** The Monterey Aquarium, [www.mbayaq.org/cr/seafoodwatch.asp](http://www.mbayaq.org/cr/seafoodwatch.asp), offers an

excellent guide.

**Ask how the fish has been treated.** Preservatives can mean that the fish is less fresh, and they also affect the taste. Wet pack scallops, for example, often have a slightly chemical aftertaste, for example. Ditto shrimp.

**Use the fish within a day. Do your cooking homework.** Ask for preparation advice when you buy and look up recipes.

Overcooking is the most frequent mistake. But there's no simple rule. Cooking time varies with the type of fish.

"Scallop is not very good when totally cooked," says Rosenberg, by way of example. "Opa is better close to medium. It's chewy if it's raw."

For those inexperienced with fish, simple preparations are more likely to yield success.

Michael Dolan of Dolan's Restaurant says home cooks can adapt easily adapt some restaurant dishes. He suggests a halibut en papillote, he's currently serving as the halibut season comes to a close.

"We wrap (it in parchment paper) with fresh vegetables and lemon-basil butter. When you open it up, the steam and aroma gets you salivating," he says.

Dolan suggests looking to the seasons for accompaniments.

"In the summer, we do more things with fruit," he says. "In the winter, heavier things like mushrooms."

— Cindy Sutter

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HANS R. KUISLE, M.D., F.A.C.S.  
WINFIELD HARTLEY, M.D., F.A.C.S.  
BOARD CERTIFIED PLASTIC SURGEONS

per crop is apparent in the red, yellow, green and purple jewels that line the Boulder Farmers' Market right now. Whether roasted or fresh, peppers add color and zest to everything from salads to stews.

**Quick tip:** Take any thin-skinned chili pepper — bright red Jimmy Nardellos work well — stuff with manchego or soft chevre, pop in a roasting pan and bake until peppers are soft. Simple and delicious.

**Selecting:** Choose peppers that are fresh, firm, bright, thick-fleshed and deeply colored. Avoid bruised peppers and those with soft spots. Peppers with paler skins and soft, pliable flesh are often immature.

**Storing:** Store peppers in the crisper for no longer than 2 weeks

**Freezing:** If roasted, peel and freeze in zipper bags. Fresh peppers also freeze well.

**Chili pepper factoids:** Mouth on fire? Don't drink water; it will only spread the chilies' oils. Bread or tortilla chips may do the trick. Next to salt, chilies are the world's most popular seasoning. The intense burning sensation a person experiences when eating hot chilies can trigger the body into releasing endorphins, often resulting in mild euphoria.

### Cauliflower

Pureed in soup, baked with cheese, or dropped into a stir-fry, delicious, dazzling white cauliflower adds a healthy cruciferous crunch to any dish. Variations abound at the Farmers' Market, including bright purple and fabulously whorled green Roman cauliflower.

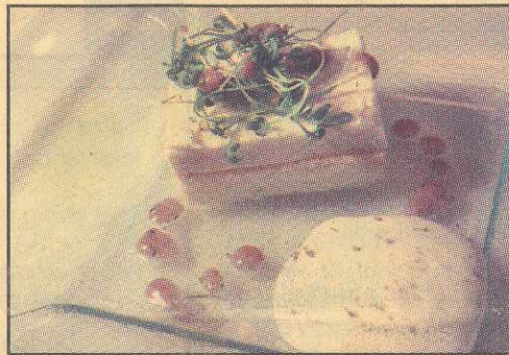
**Selecting:** Look for heads that are white or creamy white (or purple or Roman green), firm, compact, and heavy for their size. There should be little speckling or discoloration on the



Photos by Paul Aiken | Camera

**Stacked Dungeness crab** with avocado, preserved lemon and vanilla, is one of the courses at a special dinner served last week at Jax Fish House in Boulder. The dinner was a dry run for the dinner to be served Thursday at the James Beard House in New York.

Jax dinner  
balances  
far-flung  
seafood with  
local produce



# Fish for the landlocked

By Cindy Sutter | Camera Staff Writer

Do Coloradans have something to tell coastal dwellers about cooking fish? Apparently so. Jax Fish House chefs from Boulder and Denver will be cooking Thursday at the James Beard House in New York.

The menu, which includes Dungeness crab from Alaska and scallops from Baja, as well as closer-to-home Colorado brook trout and lamb, illustrates an important point: You can get marvelous seafood in landlocked Colorado.

"A lot of people don't believe you," says Hosea Rosenberg, chef at Jax in Boulder, of tourists from the east and west coasts who expect yesteryear's grim seafood offerings when they travel in the country's mid-section. "(They say) 'What have you got, trout?'"

Case in point, a skeptical out-of-town couple who ate at Jax on Monday with low expectations and reserved a table the following night for the special dinner that was a dry run for the Beard House meal.

"We've changed a lot of people's point of view," Rosenberg says.

He praises the restaurant's supplier, Northeast Seafood Products in Denver, which sources fish directly from fishermen all over the world. With the help of express shipping, the company can get fish into a Colorado restaurant kitchen 24 to 48 hours off the boat.



**Above,** Executive Chefs Sheila Lucero of Jax Fish House in Denver and Hosea Rosenberg of Jax Fish House in Boulder prepare plates of seared Baja scallop, celery root, Hazel Dell king oyster mushrooms, cured pork belly and Madeira. The two jointly conceived the menu and will cook it together in New York.

**Top,** Smoked Glacier Lake brook trout with fennel pollen, Haystack Mountain Goat cheese and grilled plum vinaigrette at Jax Fish House.

sonal, locally grown products, establishing relationships with nearby farmers and even throwing around terms such as *terroir* in reference to peaches or tomatoes.

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## Halibut en Papillote

- 6 ounces fresh halibut seasoned with salt and pepper
- 3 ounces julienned seasonal vegetables such as squash, zucchini and carrots
- 3 round cuts of lemon without the peel
- 1 ounce softened butter with lemon, basil and chive
- 1½ ounces white wine
- 2 sprigs of dill
- Roll of parchment paper

**Directions:** Preheat oven to 375.

Cut parchment paper into 14-inch circle, fold in half

Open paper and place the ingredients in the following order:

- Julienned vegetables
- Halibut
- Lemon
- Compound butter
- Dill sprigs
- Fold parchment edges

together leaving an opening to add wine.

Add wine and fold edges together creating an airtight cavity.

Place on sheet pan and cook in pre-heated oven for 12-15 minutes.

Remove and open with knife or scissors tableside.

Serves 1.

*Source: Dolan's Seafood Restaurant*