

# quench

## Mav Chefs 2015: Chef Nick Nutting, Wolf in the Fog, Tofino, British Columbia

*Lisa Hoekstra - September 25, 2015*



Nutting went from big-city living, working in Calgary and Montreal, to foraging his own mushrooms in small-town Tofino — and he couldn't be happier. This tiny town is perched on the edge of Vancouver Island's west coast looking over the Pacific Ocean. There, Nutting gets to follow his passion to honour fresh, local ingredients and let them sing in his cooking. While the way he cooks hasn't changed from the big-city style, the presentation has made its mark. Casual and communal, guests can chat and share as they enjoy delicious dishes fresh from the ocean. The result is an influx of tourists that make their way around the winding road to Tofino just to get the Wolf in the Fog experience.

### **What do you love about cooking?**

I love both the creative and the technical aspects of cooking, and also the rush of busy service. I'm lucky to have a great team — we have a lot of fun in our kitchen.

### **How did you get involved in the project with Andre McGillivray and Jorge Barandiaran?**

All three of us were looking to move away from “fine dining” and create a unique restaurant that showcases the cuisine and vibe of Tofino.

## How often do you change up the menu and why make these changes?

Our menu is based heavily on what's available at our doorstep. We have amazing seafood, produce and foraged mushrooms. We aren't really following trends here, just inspiring ingredients. We change our menu with the seasons to go with the freshest local ingredients, plus we will switch up dishes on a whim if there is something new available.

## What role does social media play in your life and in your kitchen?

I can't say it's a huge part of our lives ... but we take photos of dishes and drinks to share on social media. A lot of people like seeing what's cooking in Tofino.

## A restaurant is more than just its main dishes — is there anything special you do to ensure that the side dishes are as impressive as the mains?

Everything we put on our menu has a lot of care and thought put into it. From a side of fries to a platter of fish to share, we take a lot of pride in doing things right.

## It's easy for restaurants like yours to get fresh produce. Can you still cook something good with frozen or grocery store ingredients?

Good produce makes cooking easy. It takes a little more work to create outstanding dishes from "not so perfect" produce, but it can be done. I'm always up for a good black box challenge with grocery store ingredients.

# chef nick nutting's carrot gnocchi with hazelnuts and gouda cheese

Serves 4

- 4 russet potatoes, skin pierced with a paring knife
- 1 heaped tbsp carotene (see recipe below)
- 1 egg
- 2 to 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter
- Sautéed mixed wild mushrooms
- 1/4 cup each: roasted carrots and onions
- 1/4 cup Gouda cheese
- Garnish: chives, celery leaves and toasted hazelnuts

Bake potatoes in oven at 375°F for 1 1/2 to 2 hours until soft. Rice the potatoes into a medium-sized mixing bowl using a potato ricer (or mash really well if you don't have a ricer).

Form a well in the centre of the processed potato and add carotene and egg while the mixture is hot. Mix gently until evenly coloured throughout.

Fold in flour and mix gently until it forms a soft but workable dough.

Form gnocchi by rolling dough into a 1/2-inch thick log and cutting into 1-inch cylinders. Blanch the gnocchi in salted water until they float, then leave them floating for another 30 seconds. Reserve on an oiled tray.

To finish, melt butter in a sauté pan. Add gnocchi and cook until golden. Add sautéed wild mushrooms, pre-roasted carrots and onions.

Top with Gouda cheese and gratinée under the broiler. Garnish with celery leaves and chives.

### **Carotene**

Juice fresh carrots until you have about 8 1/2 cups. Put juice in a tall pot with a squeeze of lemon juice and bring to a low simmer. The carotene will separate from the clear liquid; strain through a coffee filter to capture it. Though not ideal, you can also do this with store-bought carrot juice.

# chef nick nutting's charred humboldt squid with vietnamese slaw

Serves 4

- 2 tsp fish sauce
- 2 tsp ginger, minced
- 2 tsp garlic, minced
- 2 tsp sambal
- 1 tsp lime zest
- 4 sprigs cilantro, picked
- 12 oz Humboldt Squid, cleaned and scored on both sides
- 1 tsp grape seed oil
- Juice of 1 lime

for the vietnamese slaw

- 1 carrot, cut lengthwise on a Japanese mandoline slicer with medium teeth
- 1 cucumber, cut lengthwise on a Japanese mandoline slicer with medium teeth
- 1/2 daikon radish, cut lengthwise on a Japanese mandoline slicer with medium teeth
- 1 shallot
- 4 leaves Thai basil
- 2 sprigs cilantro, picked
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Combine fish sauce, ginger and garlic, sambal, lime zest and cilantro in a mixing bowl to create dressing. Using half the dressing, marinate squid for 1 hour prior to cooking.

Combine sliced carrot, cucumber, daikon, shallot, Thai basil and cilantro for Vietnamese slaw and dress with remaining dressing. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Preheat a sauté pan on high heat, add grape seed oil and heat until almost at smoke point. Sear squid on each side for 45 seconds. Pull pan away from heat and squeeze lime juice over squid.

Rest squid for 2 minutes then slice thinly. Place squid slices over slaw and serve.

*Match: Great food should be honoured by a bubbly. Or for a more relaxed feeling try opening a Pinot Grigio from the Okanagan.*