

Cook_inc.

international food magazine



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Cover: Billy Wagner & Lukas Mraz at Nobelhart & Schmutzig
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Cook_inc. International Magazine!

While we haven't been able to meet during this global Covid-19 health emergency, here at Cook_inc. we'd love to share with you some specially chosen articles published in previous editions of the magazine in Italy. So, we are releasing a series of online mini-editions featuring some of these compelling stories of food, people and places. They reflect our deep-felt passion for seeking out fresh and exciting restaurants and dining experiences and sharing them with our readers through a fusion of wonderful writing and eye-catching photography.

The second dispatch will take you on a gastronomic journey stretching from Italy to Berlin and onto Montréal. With this unique library of virtual magazines, we'd love you to take some time out and enjoy these eclectic culinary stories both in the original language and alongside selected translations into English.

We hope to feed your appetite for beautiful food and destinations that may be out of reach at the moment but can still be savoured in your own home as we all look forward to planning dinner reservations and inspiring travel in the near future.



SULLE MIGLIORI TAVOLE DEL MONDO





#STAYTOSTO

TERRITORY ON THE ROAD
VENEZUELA-ABRUZZO

I wanted to get me a full pack
complete with everything necessary to
sleep,
shelter, eat, cook,
in fact a regular kitchen and bedroom

right on my back,
and go off somewhere
and find perfect solitude
and look into the perfect emptiness of my mind
And be completely neutral from any and all ideas.

The Dharma Bums - Jack Kerouac

WORDS *by* LORENZO SANDANO
PHOTOS *by* ALBERTO BLASETTI

Gianni Dezio's life is comparable to an exciting pinball game. Gianni is a fantastical, mercurial ball bouncing up and down from one end of the globe to the other driven by an adventurous spirit: a perpetual game with sudden changes of speed, in which experiences multiply on the luminous scoreboard. The prize at stake is to achieve his dream tied to his love for cooking. Gianni Dezio is a determined guy (tosto in Italian), just like the name of his restaurant in Atri. A roving cook, with a ready quip on his lips and a piercing gaze, he is a young man with a humble and curious personality, who has had hospitality running in his blood since childhood. His blood imbued with many cultural influences as Gianni wanders perpetually from Abruzzo to Venezuela, tearing up and re-purchasing one-way tickets and continuously changing course. In the backpack he always carries with him he packs his love for cooking. A passion Dezio inherited from his parents, who with true pioneering spirit opened a restaurant in Calabozo at the turn of 2000, after taking an enlightening trip to Venezuela with Gianni's grandparents in the 1960.

Born in Atri and raised abroad, Gianni lives between two worlds and from an early age, has bounced back and forth between Italy and Central America, just like a pinball in a game arcade. He attended kindergarten and high school in Venezuela, but went to elementary, middle schools and to university in Abruzzo. In between, there are a vast succession of experiences and encounters, including the sentimental spark of Daniela, his partner in both life and work. Gianni met his soul mate in Venezuela while attending kindergarten and today Daniela skillfully manages the Tosto restaurant in Atri. Theirs is a culinary dream shared between two wandering hearts. However, before returning home to fulfill his ambitions, it was necessary to garner new skills and raise the level of his game. In spite of the calm and reflective appearance that often makes him seem absorbed in his thoughts, Gianni is always looking for ways to test himself.

In Venezuela, his head is bent over schoolbooks while his hands are firmly in the kitchen of the family restaurant. The restaurant Nonna Italia is the first catering challenge Gianni faces as he prepares for the final exam of the Tourism Sciences degree. The restaurant's name pays tribute to his beloved grandmother and at Nonna Italia Dezio consolidates his love for the culinary art, cutting his teeth next to his mother and cooking traditional Italian dishes. He then branches out internationally, working in the kitchens of a Venezuelan hotel where he is able to set free his creative streak for the first time.

"Where I was before, I certainly could not compete with my parents," explains Gianni jokingly. "I did not have cooking school experience to support me. I only had the basics I had learned at the family restaurant. So I threw myself into a new idea of my own, perhaps closer to a gourmet vision with select fusion add-ons. I also organized theme nights featuring Mexican or Japanese dishes, almost without limits of expression and breaking loose from the quality standards and numbers usually imposed by a hotel. It was a stimulating chapter of my life given that in Venezuela everything was new, everything needed to be built from the ground up and so every initiative always met a reasonable amount of success". While still working in the hotel, Gianni gains real cuisine expertise, as he simultaneously takes on the crazy role of teacher for Italian language courses, who was focusing on her culinary career.

Two years later, even this new path bores Gianni's hungry spirit to death, so he decides to return to his mother's restaurant. A Bohemian joint venture that follows an experimental path and that offers him security, whilst strengthening his passion. "My parents' business was going well so I felt the time had come for me to seek new validation," Gianni emphasizes. "I felt the need to make a leap forward and undergo more rigorous training. I could choose between the school of Alma and that of Niko Romito. Following instinctively my heart and roots, I chose Abruzzo".

This is a new turning point in Gianni's journey; one where the pinball slows down and then shoots out again, stronger and faster than before. In Castel di Sangro, Dezio strides into a Casadonna classroom during one of the first courses taught by Niko Formazione, between 2012 and 2013. Here, he reboots his mind and starts from scratch. An endless array of new stimuli, ideas, and conceptual and practical applications open up, but above all the young chef is able to meet one of the most important interpreters of the Nuova Cucina Italiana.



Previous pages: *Consommé of fermented bread and onion – Creamed codfish wrapped in natural thin cannoli of crunchy pepper – Local goat's cheese tart with mixed salad – Licorice Grissini – Olive biscuits and peanuts waffles - Bread, Valentini's olive oil and Venticina spreadable cream*



Gianni enthusiastically remembers, “The impact with the structure, with Niko’s team and with my fellow students was indescribable. Ever since the very first days, the great attention to detail in every aspect, from the aesthetics to the organizational foundations of the project, fascinated and convinced me. I thought that if this amount of attention was given to small things, then certainly this was the right place for me.” Dezio continues, “At the end, cuisine - along with all that revolves around the restaurant - consists of many small elements. Memorable moments, which I treasure in my heart, intermixed with technical skills. Undoubtedly, one of the core values that stayed with me when preparing for the future role of Chef has been learning a compositional method for the genesis of my dishes. The construction, the proportionate and harmonic blending of flavors and textures, while contemplating elements that must always be present. The use of bitter, sour and vegetable flavors, even in desserts. A pragmatic aspect perhaps that for me is simply a measurement scale that must always be taken into consideration”.

After finishing school, another important step in Gianni’s career is that of Spazio, the ingenious restaurant format launched by Niko Romito in Rivisondoli, in the venue of the former Reale restaurant. A team which provides training for fertile minds, the experience launches him towards the decision to open his very own restaurant. Gianni returns to Venezuela to pack up his luggage and to kidnap Daniela, whom he marries as soon as he returns to Abruzzo. They choose Atri, Gianni’s homeland, and take over a house, giving birth to their new activity. Seemingly an empty and isolated village, in reality Atri is bursting with small and intrepid producers. It is located in a unique position, where the mountains look straight towards the Adriatic Sea, separated by the evocative Calanchi. These stunning clay-sandy formations etch and sculpt the hills, creating artistic inlets that embrace this small outpost of Abruzzo. In 2014, a small restaurant located in the historic center of the city marks the beginning of Tosto’s adventure. A name that is chosen to mirror the courageous spirit that permeates the project, while at the same time quoting the roasting technique that serves to enhance and extract the maximum flavor from ingredients.

A complete restyling of the interiors begins while Gianni and Daniela jump into the car for an on-the-road journey, on a quest to unearth the best local artisans and producers. “For me, the exotic part of our trip was precisely that of discovering and then using ingredients from Abruzzo and not from Venezuela. In my humble way of seeing things, this is a more sensible territorial approach. First of all, I needed to explore and touch what I had here in Atri. Then, over time, I managed to introduce small elements related to my experiences abroad, small influences that are contextualized always and solely in Abruzzo”.

Thus, the true richness of a solitary village materializes: a place where sensitive souls can make the most of a small, great avant-garde. Unforgettable ancestral cheeses ranging from the goat’s brie produced by a micro-dairy, to the pecorino, ricotta and stracciatella cheeses made by an old cheesemaker from Atri. Meat is purchased from the local butcher during the daily scouting mission at the farmer’s market in the city, whereas the fish from the nearby Adriatic sea is selected in person at Giulianova’s auctions. The much-abused and inflated concept of foraging, in the Calanchi Nature Reserve becomes a peasant harvest of spontaneous and medicinal herbs that is in tune with nature’s unfaltering rhythm. A landscape that is barren and arid only in appearance and that instead hosts and preserves many varieties of wild capers, fennel, purslane, carrots, mint, oregano and much more. Products with a flavor marked by the ancient presence of the seawaters, which characterize the surrounding ecosystem.

Tosto’s cuisine stems and develops from here, from the land of the Calanchi, and is deeply rooted in the gastronomic traditions that have accompanied Atri since the dawn of time. The famous licorice, harvested and processed locally on site since 1433, is a case in point. This native, spontaneous and invasive plant - whose cultivation has now unfortunately disappeared in Abruzzo - continues to be imported and processed by Menozzi De Rosa, a company that inaugurated its first factory in the center of Atri in 1700 within a former friars’ monastery that dates back to the 1500s. Thanks to the industrialization process promoted by the De Rosa family as early as 1836 and which established it as a leading Italian company specializing in licorice, Atri in Abruzzo became one of the world’s capitals of this famous root. This process has contributed to the creation of iconic Italian products, such as Tabù mints, in addition to providing fresh inspiration to Dezio’s cuisine after Gianni, toured the production workshops, and lost himself among the sweet and aromatic aroma of pure licorice blocks.

In line with the Romito philosophy, the utmost care for all these small details have contributed to Tosto’s gradual and conscious evolution. From the simple trattoria with revisited traditional dishes to current renewed identity of a dynamic and modern restaurant. A restaurant that is able to celebrate the territory’s heartbeat with determination, talent and a very personal hint of multiculturalism. “Ever since the inauguration, Niko’s moral support has been very important to us,” recalls Gianni as he prepares the service line. “Daniela and I threw ourselves into the restau-

Beside: Various states of processing licorice at the establishment Menozzi De Rosa





rant world, following an impulse that was as brave as it was reckless. Our very low and reserved profile initially clashed with the conservative and wary mentality of the Atrians. Today we know what we are doing and how and why we are doing it. Although we can still improve significantly, the results have come and, for me, Niko continues to be my kitchen guardian angel”.

On the wooden and unadorned table lay a bonanza of appetizers that cover the entire flavor spectrum. Strengthening consommé made with fermented bread and onion with oriental hints; silky creamed codfish, wrapped in natural micro cannoli made of Crusco pepper; a tart made with mesclun salad, local goat cheese and Centerbe, the wild herb liquor that assaults the senses in a friendly aromatic and vegetal crescendo. Finally, licorice grissini, biscotti with olives and peanut waffles as a tribute to the Italian typical bar aperitif. The way the bread is baked (wonderfully) carries in it the years of studying in Casadonna: only mother yeast, wholegrain flour and potatoes. A crisp, warm crust with pronounced air pockets. To be served with the Valentini olive oil or with the dangerously addictive Teramo ventricina spreadable cream, whipped in water and served as butter.

The remembrance of a maternal gesture, essential and pure, insinuates itself among the starters, a contribution from Gianni’s mother, who now fiddles around in the kitchen with him when he returns to Venezuela. A soup of celery, celeriac, mushrooms and roasted chestnuts is a loving and reassuring embrace that tastes of home stoves and walks in the countryside, skillfully interweaving the different types of seasonal mushrooms and a prompt acidic boost to liven up the entire dish. The iodized eclecticism of the octopus, beans and onion follows, a dish where the crunchy and vigorous cooking of the cephalopod, cooked only in its juices, wonderfully counterpoints the citrus cream of Atri beans revived by the pungent aroma of confit onion.

A hint of travelling and experiences abroad boldly return in the lentil, tripe and white turnip reduction: a culinary gem of contrasting flavors that alternates the smoked force of paprika salt, the soufflé-like texture of the offal, the toasted tripe that emulates the bread crust and the crystalline acidity of the white turnip, with a crunchy texture and slightly marinated in rice vinegar. The tortello with artichokes, with Atri’s pecorino cheese fondue and fresh mint, is completed by offering a tribute to the Menozzi factory and to the city’s traditions: a licorice sphere molded at 90°C in a truffle-like shape and preserved under a bell cover is scenically grated at the table, as a flavor enhancer. The taste is full, rich and strong; it highlights the spectrum of local flavors elevating them to a contemporary reading. The spaghettone with pistachio emulsion, condensed olives and bottarga (mullet roe) is sinuous and intriguing. Finally, we are swept away by the enveloping minimalism of rice, butter, sage and anchovies: a dish that elegantly summarizes two traditional recipes in a graceful, bold and vibrant way.

The lacquered mackerel in cooked wine, wild mustard and milk curd is served as an unpredictable pre-dessert and balances perfectly Japanese undertones and Abruzzese ingredients. The bitter flavor and the vegetal nuance cut through the sweet and sour richness to create a perfectly calibrated dance, down to the last millimeter.

Consistently with the Romitian vision, there is also room for non-sweet desserts. The first is entrusted to the polyhedral Fuori di Zucca (a wordplay in Italian that means, out of your mind)- a blending of citrus fruits, yogurt, pumpkin and rosemary. Last but not least, the edible reproduction of the Calanchi, with a dessert of a dizzying aesthetic composition: fake licorice land, a rocky layer made of licorice cream with a red turnip sorbet and red fruit heart, topped with a powder made of capers and dried wild herbs, including fennel, mint, oregano, wild carrot leaves.

The light shifts and changes between the Duomo of Atri and the church of San Francesco that overlooks the restaurant. The pinball, however, continues to move, because Gianni and Daniela’s game is not over yet. Two wonderful twins have recently joined the family picture and future prospects could lead Gianni and Daniela to search for a new venue to satisfy growing needs and ambitions, beyond those walls that are now becoming too narrow and small. Everything in time, however: one can recognize true travelers by their patience. One thing is for sure, having wandered around opposite corners of the world, from now on their road will never stray further than Abruzzo. Not beyond the boundaries of what they can now call home. The land of the Calanchi.

Beside: Gianni grates a licorice “truffle”



Terra dei Calanchi





Smoked lentil, tripe and white turnip reduction

For the smoked lentil reduction

6 onions
3 carrots
2 stalks of celery
3 cloves of garlic
2 bay leaves
1 kg of beef knees
1 kg of pig's feet and ears
1 kg of lentils from Santo Stefano di Sessanio
10 pepper corns
10 juniper berries
natural smoked salt to taste

Smoke the onions, carrots and celery in the Green Egg. Keep to one side. Roast the beef knees in the oven along with the pig's ears and feet. Combine the two preparations in a large pot and continue roasting, adding the garlic, the lentils and then deglazing with red wine. Cover with water and ice and add the pepper corns, bay leaf and juniper berries. Cook for 24 hours on low heat. Reduce liquid to a quarter, filter and season with natural smoked salt.

For the tripe

200 g tripe (honeycomb)
1 untreated lemon
10 Sarawack white pepper corns
2 cloves
3 g of salt
Evo oil to taste
seed oil to taste

Put all the ingredients in a vacuum bag. Bake at a temperature of 68°C for 12 hours. Remove from the bag and carefully dry the tripe, pan roast it in seed oil, exerting a light pressure with the help of a light weight. Dab off excess oil and cut into rectangles of about 1x4 cm.

For the white turnip

200 g of white turnip
rice vinegar to taste

Cut the turnip into rectangles of the same size as the tripe ones. Marinate the turnip in rice vinegar for 5 minutes. Put to one side.

To complete the dish

8 leaves of Rumex Acetosa
Evo oil to taste

Pour the lentil reduction into a deep casserole and alternate the tripe and turnip rectangles. Complete with some drops of oil and some sorrel leaves.



Lacquered mackerel in cooked must, wild mustard and sheep's curd

To lacquer the cooked must

Slowly reduce and set aside.

*100 ml of rice vinegar
50 ml of chestnut honey
50 ml of cooked must
10 ml of anchovy sauce
110 g of ginger*

For the mackerel

*2 medium-sized mackerels
100 ml of soy sauce
100 ml of rice vinegar
50 ml of cooked must
seed oil to taste*

Eviscerate and debone the mackerels to obtain 4 fillets. Marinate them briefly (for 30 minutes) in the mixture of soy, rice vinegar and cooked must. Scald them on the side of the skin for a few minutes in seed oil, taking care not to overcook them.

For the wild mustard

*500 g of wild mustard leaves
olive oil to taste
salt to taste*

Peel half of the mustard leaves and quickly blanch them in water, salt and oil. Cold press the other half of the mustard leaves to maintain pungency intact.

For the pickled mackerel broth

*heads and bones of mackerel
1 liter of water
50 g of spring onion
70 g of parsley stems
30 g of coriander stems
20 ml of anchovy sauce
40 ml of Tosazu vinegar (smoked rice vinegar)*

With the scraps of the two mackerel used previously, make a broth starting from cold and combining spring onion, parsley and coriander. Simmer for 20 minutes and then, once the heat is off, add the smoked vinegar and the drippings.

To complete the dish

200 g of sheep's curd

Lacquer the mackerel with the reduction of cooked must and allow it to rest for 5 minutes in oven at 60°C. Repeat this operation 3 times. Place the sheep's curd on the plate. Complete with mustard extract, blanched mustard and lacquered mackerel. Serve in combination with the pickled mackerel broth.





Tosto

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VEGETABLES



PASTA



FISH

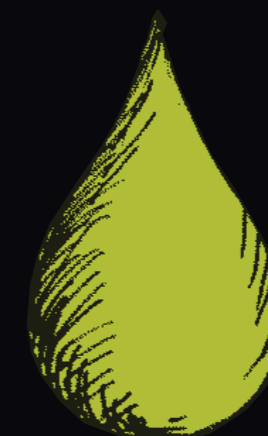


MEAT



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JRE
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Montréal la Mélangée

WORDS *by* MARIE-CLAUDE LORTIE
PHOTOS *by* NINON PEDNAULT



Il y a deux ans, Martha Stewart, la grande star de la cuisine télévisée américaine est venue à Montréal pour parler à C2MTL, une vaste conférence sur la créativité en affaires. À tous ceux qui voulaient lui parler avant de la voir partir, elle a fait savoir que c'était impossible, qu'elle était très pressée et qu'elle devait aller prendre un avion. Ce n'était pas totalement faux. Ce que ses assistants ont toutefois omis de dire, c'est que Mme Stewart était surtout pressée d'aller d'abord manger les Éclairs à la carotte et le Céleri rave à la bagna cauda du restaurant Vin Papillon, avant de repartir à New York. Quand Barack Obama est venu lui aussi donner une conférence dans la métropole québécoise, l'année suivante, c'est au Liverpool House qu'il s'est posé pour déguster des Asperges et de l'Agneau du Québec et du chardonnay et du pinot ontariens en compagnie du premier ministre canadien, Justin Trudeau.

Les deux restaurants font partie de la même famille, celle du restaurant Joe Beef, une des rares tables canadiennes à s'être hissée dans le palmarès des 100Best et figure de proue d'une cuisine montréalaise nouvelle aussi locale que multiculturelle. Car si Montréal fut il y a quelques décennies la ville où on mangeait comme en France, mais en Amérique du nord — le grand journaliste gastronomique américain Alan Richman de GQ fut longtemps un de ses apôtres — aujourd'hui elle s'enracine dans cette tradition pour aller bien plus loin. Et les anciens silos linguistiques et culturels ont fondu pour ouvrir la porte à une cuisine où le sirop d'érable côtoie autant le foie gras et les Paris-Brest que le cheddar, le toffee ou le sunday roast. Et les restaurants de la famille Joe Beef, où on adore les traditions françaises, tout en faisant honneur aux racines anglo-saxonnes des chefs, du quartier et de la ville, sont donc l'incarnation même de ce métissage porteur.

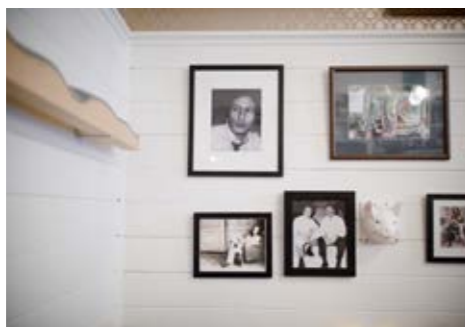
Ce qui est particulier à Montréal, en Amérique du nord, aime répéter le chef David McMillan cofondateur et copropriétaire de Joe Beef, ce qui permet à la ville de faire vivre des tables comme la sienne, c'est la profondeur de la culture culinaire. «Je le dis tout le temps à mes collègues américains: il y a des jeunes femmes dans la vingtaine qui viennent chez moi manger des rognons et des fromages de style Époisses ou Reblochon et qui demandent leur steak bleu. Aux États-Unis ou ailleurs au Canada, on ne voit pas ça. Ils n'en reviennent pas». Cette profondeur est généralement attribuée aux racines françaises de cette ville francophone américaine. Sauf que paradoxalement, ce n'est pas dans la culture culinaire traditionnelle qu'est la parenté avec la France, mais plutôt dans la cuisine contemporaine.



David McMillan



Vin Papillon



Liverpool House



La langue a permis des échanges, des voyages, la construction de ponts avec la gastronomie de l'hexagone dans un passé relativement récent. Ceci fait qu'il y a 50 ou 60 ans, au Québec, manger du camembert importé de France ou trouver un croissant digne d'une boulangerie parisienne n'avait rien d'extra-terrestre, ce qui n'était pas nécessairement le cas ailleurs de ce côté de l'Atlantique. Et des chefs, restaurateurs, pâtisseries, professeurs de cuisine, comme Henri Bernard, Serge Bruyère, André Bardet, Jean-Paul Grappe, Jean-Michel Cabanes ou Jacques Landurie, venus s'installer au Québec au siècle dernier, ont pavé la voie à ce que l'on voit aujourd'hui. Mais si l'on fouille dans les carnets de notes de nos arrière-grands-mères et plus loin encore, les recettes sont souvent beaucoup plus proches de la cuisine traditionnelle anglo-saxonne que française.

Il y a, par exemple, la Tourtière, une véritable tourte à la viande de veau et de porc hachée, que plusieurs voient comme une cousine de la kidney pie. Il y a les Fèves au lard, un plat de haricots rouges braisés dans la tomate et la mélasse, qui ressemblent drôlement aux Boston Baked Beans, comme si toutes les anciennes colonies de la côte nord-est américaines s'étaient passé le mot.

Dans la liste des plats uniques, dont on ne connaît pas parfaitement les origines et qui ne ressemblent à rien, il y a deux vedettes. Le Pâté chinois, un étagé de bœuf haché, de grains de maïs et de purée de pommes de terre. Et la fameuse Poutine, création des années 60 qui a conquis le monde: un amalgame de frites baignées dans une sauce brune — généralement préparé avec un fond de poulet — avec du fromage en grains, tout frais, aucunement affiné. On la mange traditionnellement aux petites heures du matin, après une soirée arrosée, quand la faim revient au galop. Rien de cela ne ressemble à de la cuisine rustique française traditionnelle.

Si on veut comprendre ce qui se passe actuellement dans les cuisines montréalaises, il faut comprendre ces paradoxes. Les origines modestes et rustiques d'une cuisine à base de porc et de pommes de terre, l'influence contemporaine française, les goûts British.

Ajoutez à cela les apports des vagues d'immigration continues et riches en saveurs — italienne, portugaise, grecque, juive est-européenne, maghrébine, libanaise, pakistanaise et sri-lankaise, latino-américaine — et vous aurez une bonne idée de ce qui se passe dans nos restaurants. Parce que à coté des restaurants contemporains créatifs qui auraient sûrement des étoiles si le guide Michelin se posait ici, les adresses les plus connues de Montréal sont souvent des tables issues de cette diversité culturelle. Il y a par exemple Schwartz, une institution du smoked meat et de la cuisine ashkénaze qui demeure un attrait touristique même si on est rendu loin de la culture fondatrice: la chanteuse Céline Dion est maintenant une des propriétaires! Autre adresse mythique, qui a fait des petits à New York, Miami, Las Vegas et Athènes: Milos. Dans ce restaurant classique



Schwartz



Schwartz

du quartier grec spécialiste des poissons, où l'on sert des produits souvent importés directement de Grèce, les joueurs de hockey et vedettes internationales de passage se succèdent, de Johnny Depp à Puff Daddy.

Et puis, à côté de tout cela, il y a les tables qui veulent combiner toutes ces influences et créer une cuisine métissée, fière d'être bâtarde, dont le père spirituel s'appelle Normand Laprise. Chef et copropriétaire du Toqué, un Relais et Château qui mériterait sûrement deux, voire trois étoiles Michelin, grand technicien classique mais esprit créatif, Laprise est un peu le Alice Waters de Montréal, du Québec et même du Canada. C'est celui qui a donné le ton dans les années 80, pour amener la cuisine vers les produits locaux, naturels, permettant ainsi à des fermes et des producteurs de viandes et de volailles de voir le jour et non seulement d'être encore ici maintenant mais d'avoir fait des émules. La plupart des pilotes des meilleures tables en ville, comme Martin Picard (Pied de Cochon), Cheryl Johnson et Charles-Antoine Crête (Montréal Plaza) ou Dyan Solomon (Olive + Gourmando et Foxy) sont passés par ses cuisines. Et tous poursuivent cette mission de travailler les produits du Québec, en leur redonnant leurs lettres de noblesse. Il n'y a pas tant de décennies, personne ne cuisinait avec le sureau, la chicoutai ou le thé du Labrador. Personne ne savait que les morilles ou les matsutake poussent dans le nord du Québec. Et si on connaissait la présence, dans les eaux glacées du golfe du Saint-Laurent, de tonnes d'oursins et de crabes des neiges, on ne se donnait pas la peine de les cuisiner et d'en manger.

Comme ce fut le cas chez les chefs nordiques, il y a 15 ans, les cuisiniers et cuisinières québécoises et montréalaises commencent à peine à mesurer la quantité infinie de produits à leur porte, poissons, herbes, fruits de mer, baies, dont ils n'ont jamais soupçonné l'existence ou le potentiel. «On commence à peine», dit souvent Normand Laprise.



Toqué



Normand Laprise





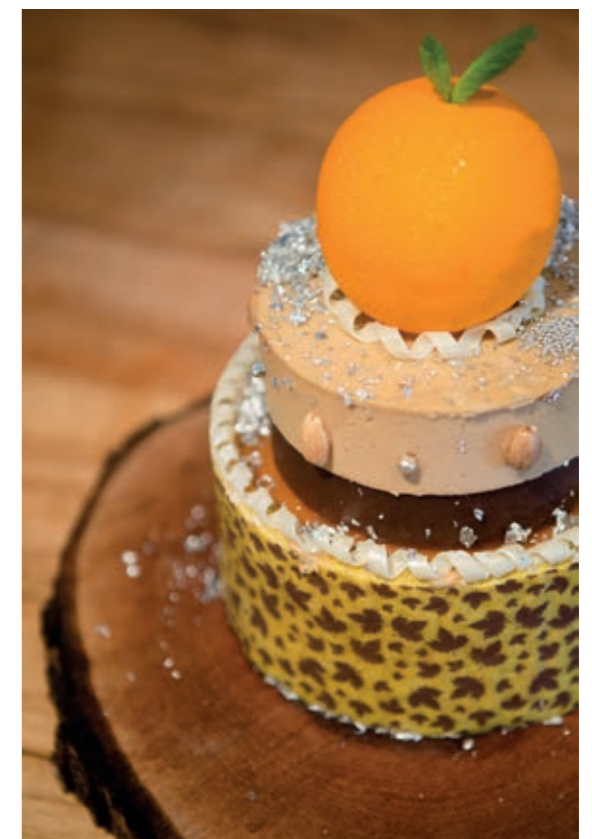
Martin Picard



«Tout est encore à faire». Longtemps on s'est lamenté d'être un pays froid sans richesses alimentaires, tout en jalousant les pays de la Méditerranée pour la variété et la magie de leurs produits. Mais la découverte de qui nous sommes est en marche.

Et parmi ceux qui pilotent cette révolution, il y a Martin Picard, le fondateur du Pied de cochon à Montréal et de la Cabane du Pied de cochon, à 40 km de la ville, qui a pris la cuisine la plus rustique et la plus ménagère et l'a amenée à des lieues plus loin. Avec lui, la poutine s'est enrichie au foie gras, la tourtière si souvent trop banale s'est enrobée de pâte feuilletée, et tous les plats de la traditionnelle «cabane à sucre», où on célèbre à chaque printemps la fabrication et l'arrivée du nouveau sirop d'érable, ont explosé en saveur, grâce à l'ajout d'ingrédients locaux comme le homard ou le canard par dessus les œufs et le porc conventionnels.

Ailleurs dans la ville, le jeune Antonin Mousseau-Rivard, petit-fils d'un grand peintre et fils d'un chanteur légendaire, s'est imposé aussi récemment comme un artiste à sa façon. Autodidacte, il cuisine les ingrédients locaux de façon créative, directement inspirée des chefs nordiques, mais en allant aussi chercher des idées du côté des traditions autochtones où on fume les produits, on fait sécher la viande... Si vous y allez un jour, sachez que le Mousso est à deux pas d'Agrikol, un resto-bar d'inspiration haïtienne, dont les copropriétaires sont quelques musiciens du groupe musical Arcade Fire, un lieu parfait pour terminer la soirée joyeusement. Parce que Montréal c'est aussi un peu Haïti. Et un peu Mexico à la torteria Lupita et un peu Paris chez le pâtissier Christian Faure... Son identité est multiple et fusionnée. Comme une bonne minestrone qui a bien mijoté.



Cabane à Sucre du Pied de cochon



Le Mouso



Antonin Mousseau-Rivard





WORDS by ANDREA PETRINI
PHOTOS by LISA EDI

Lukas Mraz

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 6th

Damn snow! France is paralyzed, airports have basically shut down. We finally take off with a delay of almost two hours and when we land the cold grips you in a quasi-Stalingrad style. “Jump on a taxi, we are only waiting for you” whatsapps Lukas Mraz from his Austrian cell phone. “Our Uber is arriving in three minutes,” we answer back. “Uber? Do not waste your time, Uber does not exist here in Berlin” he retorts. Mimicking St. Thomas, as we are racing down the dark ring road, we reply, “You are wrong, the app located us and we are touching the car with our hand. Stop doubting and believe”.

After driving down a small tree-lined road flanked with little houses with a backyard, upon arrival Lukas Mraz greets us saying, “Given the time at night, we have obviously already started. Christof, however, in addition to the fish tartare, has also kept your ossobuco with mashed potatoes cooked in meat juice warm as a tribute to your italic honor”. And after dessert, the evening wraps up, well after 1 a.m. While munching on cheese, perfect host Christof Ellinghaus sees red-on-white and prolongs the experience of the oxidized Chenin blanc with a magnum of Marcel Lapierre’s red Morgon.

“Welcome to Berlin” he repeats over and over again at every toast. The gentlemanly rocker and enlightened lead of City Slang, an independent Berlin-based record label that among its protégés includes The Notwist, a group that has always been this author’s favorite. “They have just gone into the studio for the next album, and perfectionists as they are, we won’t get to hear anything for at least a year”, Christof predicts while Lukas Mraz takes advantage of the relaxed atmosphere and pours himself another glass of red to the sound of Calexico’s latest album. What strange bond links Lukas and Christof? In addition to being a magnificent 54-year-old on the crest of the music scene, Christof is also the brains behind the historic wine bar Cordobar. The place where the twenty-year-old Lukas Mraz was welcomed behind the cooking range and then catapulted both Lukas and the Cordobar into the firmament of the new Berlin culinary scene, as a local Chateaubriand. “We can talk about all this on Saturday, once I come back from Brussels. How about having dinner together? Stuart Staples, the lead voice of the Tindersticks, should have been here tonight, but he got stuck somewhere. On Saturday, another old friend of mine, David Newgarden, will be joining us. He has been Yoko Ono’s manager for ten years”.” The deal is signed and sealed!

HOWEVER, WHO IS LUKAS MRAZ?

This is the question we ask ourselves at three in the morning, as we lie sleeplessly stretched on the futon of the Michelberger Hotel, the bohemian epicenter of local pop culture that is always crowded with musicians, filmmakers, writers and cool travelers. Yes indeed: who is Lukas Mraz? A renegade. A traitor of his race. A Glorious Bastard with a Tarantino-like gift of gabber. An ideal Virgil who is a half Charon, ready to guide us through the day and night-time circles of this hellish Berlin. A Virgil who will help us steer clear of the Count Ugolino inspired redundancies of this cultural capital that is still behind the Iron curtain and bends to the regime of Terror imposed by the Michelin guide and its bureaucratic selection of law-abiding defenders of the French Realpolitik. A dissident who, for fear of cowardly retaliations, prefers to remain anonymous states, “Disconnected from the present time and with standards and selection criteria that are completely off the wall, the German Michelin guide is truly the worst thing that exists in the world”. O Lord, thank you for the miraculous discrepancy of this blessed city. A city that is the hearth of anarchists, of sodomites, of clubbers till the last breath and of artists who are appalled by the rapid reconversion of their Promised Land into a place that embodies the dogma of world real estate speculation!

Austrian Lukas Mraz has chosen another tradition for desertion. He is less of a spy who came from the cold a la John Le Carré, than an emulator of English Christopher Isherwood who fled from Victorian class society to capture in Berlin the last libertarian flashes of a metropolis that would then be crushed under the heel of totalitarianism.

Having left the Oedipus complex at home and having delegated to his brother the task of indulging his father, a two-star chef in Vienna recognized for the modernist classicism of his Mraz & Sohn and a fine example of a family-run progressive restaurant, Mraz searched for his Viennese Secession in the Berlin cauldron. “Without Lukas, Berlin would not be what it is today,” explain the confreres who are grateful for the neo-Gelinaz! Boy’s surgical dexterity in dealing with flavors and of his gargantuan thirst for natural bottles. Elements that made Cordobar into the prototype of the artist’s bistro, wiping away decades of subjugated conformism. “Once, even The Notwist, who are more post-Hippie intellectuals rather than foodists, remained amazed by Lukas’ expressive freedom,” remarks Christof when remembering the violent and almost Tarkovskian epiphany of Markus



Acher's group turned upside-down after enjoying a night at Cordobar permeated by Lukas's imaginative state of grace (as in the final sequence of Andrej Rublëv, 1966, where the bells are ringing).

Wherever Lukas goes, the fame of his shadow with his rumbling baritone voice precedes him. He does not go unnoticed, just like Hemingway in Cuba. "I am very happy to be a bastard for Cook_inc. The places we will go to are the places I enjoy the most. But I am sure you will like them too". Dear readers, tell us why then did Lukas slam down the phone when with angelic innocence we said "Okay, Lukas, you lead the way: but you will also take us to the Kimchi Princess, right?"

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 7th

In the breakfast room at the Michelberger (open until 11), gay groups of Americans and Dutch with bags under their eyes as badges of honor following the nocturnal revelry. The buttery croissants win hands down and having greeted a splendid redhead wearing white socks who pretends to read one of the books left on the table, we get into Gennady's Uber. On the way, he tells us that Berlin is undoubtedly the promised land for someone who comes from the countries of the former Eastern bloc like him. And despite the continually rising prices of houses, Gennady believes life in Berlin is better than in London or Paris, given the countless artists and musicians who have chosen the city as their base. Including his cousin, a techno musician, who has tons of work. But time is running out so I drop off my suitcase at the fourth-floor suite of the Hotel Oderberger, which dominates the valley, and with the just-arrived director Morelli, we head towards Tim Raue's two-star restaurant.

1.05 PM

"Do you have a booking under Petrini?"

"No".

"Then, the table must be reserved under Morelli".

"No!"

"Could you please check if there is something under Mraz?"

"Why didn't you tell me right away that you were with Lukas?"

He is worse than a bastard. With him, all the doors open. Including those of Tim Raue, the only Berlin restaurant that is always full even for lunch. If the business lunch menus are on the way to extinction in Berlin, it's not because the economy is waterlogged or sinking or because Merkel has the extreme right hot on her tail. And it's not even due to the cult of the Aryan body that has pushed everyone to diet. No, the reason is that Berlin is a nocturnal city. When it's usually morning rush hour, here the streets are still deserted. You are liable to find only a couple of pensioners on their dog-walks at nine o'clock in the morning. Forget New York! Berlin is the city that never sleeps. With its techno roots and Rave parties every night to celebrate the solstice, with the alteration of the states of perception, in Berlin the notion of time beats an inner rhythm of its own. Readers should consult the pages written by philosopher Michaël Foessel in his book *La Nuit: Vivre sans témoin* (Autrement, 2018) where he describes the darkness, the chiaroscuro, the spaces of corporal freedom, the intertwining of bodies and feelings at the famous Bergheim club. Or, summarizing to the extreme the back cover: "At night, men keep vigil not to be watched over anymore." We could retort with the thesis of Jonathan Crary – a scholar in history of art and aesthetics at the University of Colombia – who instead argues that the multiplication of artificial solicitations and sleep deprivation are the last frontier in the alienation of bodies subjected to the market. (24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep Verso Publishing, 2013). However, to cut it short, Tim Raue is one of the few starred restaurants that is open for lunch.

When Mraz arrives at 1.20 p.m., fresh as a rose the house is already packed. With him at the head of the table, the menu is a done deal. Tim, or rather his second in command, has taken care of it. "Today Herr Raue is out of Berlin", the two meter tall gentlemen announces. All has been accounted for, including the Szechuan Hare with Chinese artichokes. Everything, but not the Pork Muzzle with green radishes and lovage, which we add to our taste bud journey together with the many digressions in true-style Asian that for years have been the world-wide signature of the chef. A modern, young, elegant and casual restaurant and even more so if you are wearing the latest "We Must Create" jumper. Internationalist, but focused on his obsession, namely the end of borders. "Among those who have invented their own style, this is the most historic of the German restaurants. Today it might seem like nothing, but in his early days in Berlin, Tim Raue had an effect similar to kicking off a revolution," confirms Lorraine Haist, a journalist for Die Welt. The question that arises then is, "Where do the younger generations go? Do we find them at Kimchi Princess?"

WEDNESDAY 7th, 8.20 p.m.

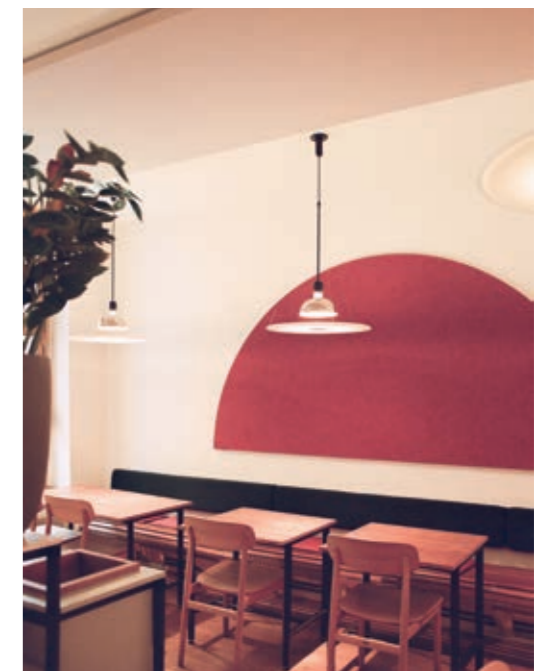
Lode & Stijn, we are coming! Late, but we will be there soon! They too, did not wait in the meantime. Sifting through the obviously natural wine list, as soon as we are seated we ask ourselves about the implicit nature of this hyper-raved-about neighborhood restaurant. A beautiful kitchen in the back, nice people, average age thirty, jeans and boots to fight the cold, earrings and tattoos on every forearm. A real Brooklyn on Rhine, which saves the 8 hours of transatlantic travel. The surprises are served on the plate. This softly swinging kitchen if it pushed the soul tune a bit harder, adding slightly more warmth and fewer northern manias - would be the ideal place for any occasion. Light, fresh and welcoming the restaurant makes everyone agree thanks to produce that is treated to high standards. Vegetarians should not abstain: turbot with creamed carrot, watercress and garlic, celery and horseradish cream, the bitter radicchio with butter noisette and beetroot or the cabbage with macadamia nuts. Good stuff for the body and mind.

But the first slap across the face that awakens you from such a non-animistic daze, is an exceptional beef tartare served on toasted bread with oysters and Jerusalem artichokes and - God is in the details - crispy fried capers that irradiate their saline essence. A signal from below, the moment when the base, tired of drinking only white, decides to gain power and order red wine. Power to the People, Pinot at will. We would have also ordered a second portion of the Fake Risotto made with spelt, cooked in veal shank and creamed with cheese: food of Italian origin, flavor and cooking dancing in unison with one eye to the countryside and the other to Tuscan tradition. A flicker of imagination, out of context: better even than the Deer Shin with chard, Brussels sprouts and berries served in their cooking jus. If we were members of the White Guide, we would have made them our Nordic Heroes. Iñaki, Puglisi or Lowe's class in a more religious version.

WHAT TO DO IN BERLIN BEYOND EATING?

As said previously, follow philosopher Michaël Foessel to the Bergheim; dance for three days and nights, save tons of money and burn calories. If instead you do not care about being overweight, call the Lukas Mraz hotline. It will be a pleasure for him to find what food can nourish your edible perversions. Hang in there: a man warned is half saved given that for Lukas an opportunity missed is an opportunity lost! Thus, with the excuse of showing you around KaDeWe ("there is also a luxurious food space") known as the Berlin Galeries Lafayette, Mraz leads you to the top floor of a palace for purists tucked behind the Gedächtniskirche, the Church of Memory, that has remained skeletal since the bombings to remind us all of the suffering caused by the Second World War. "I am going to take you to The Barn, a coffee shop run by a gay couple; definitely for purists only... if I took my uncle, he would never forgive me because he is not used to the coffee being so sour". To be honest, it would not do for the aperitif either, given that on our quest to discover Berlin's underbelly, our initiation continues at the Taiwan Küche. Better to go with a guide: nobody speaks English there, just a little German; and if you comb through the menu you might still be there the next day. Better to get straight to the point. Order the Chilly Wong Tong, spicy ravioli in a thick sauce you can cut with your knife and continue with the Tofu fried in jelly. Or, naturally, with the memorable Bolognese Spicy Noodles! If the tripe is still available, give it a go. If not, pay the bill (cash only) and continue on your game of snakes and ladders. Lukas has also booked a second lunch at a Korean restaurant... "It's the place that is on the way to the airport. I always like to eat before flying, so that if the plane crashes, I will undoubtedly die but on a full stomach", Lukas philosophizes. "Look at this, isn't it cool? Actually, do not. It is better not to go into the kitchen; there are layers of grease everywhere. It is the sign that this place is alive and that here people take cooking seriously", he muses while showing us a video he has posted on the wall of his maestro David Chang ("a light, a source of inspiration") that here the pork slices for the Korean barbecue are served frozen.

BEWARE SPOILER: Finally, the reader will now understand why on the fourth day of our Berlin stay we have not gone to Kimchi Princess yet. "Because the princess is photogenic, like her slices of pork served cut extremely thinly and fresh. Are you able to explain to me - since she will not answer - how you can cut them if they are fresh? Yet she is able to do it and also sells nouvelle cuisine portions at inflated prices; a paradox considering that we are talking about Korean cuisine", comments Lukas, who does not consider the princess as an emissary between the two Koreas. Anyway, hurry up and eat your barbecue, the sour-sweet pork, the sticky tripe and the spongy Kimchi pancake, because Mraz wants to take you also to the Turkish Adana Grillhaus. "A family place, typical of Anatolian cuisine, but in its highest version. That is to say, popular. The reflection



Lode & Stijn

of the culture of a people who, as also Merkel says, have become well integrated” comments liberal Lukas. Pay attention to his tip: “Stop at the counter, there are four seats, but you are in front of the chef working at the grill. Everything comes from there. If you sit at the counter you can take in all the aromas and intercept everything that is prepared”.

To walk it all off, head to one of the many contemporary art galleries that abound in Berlin (“twenty years ago, this was a nirvana for artists. Now, rents have gone up”) or visit the Boros Collection, a museum in the heart of the city, housed in bunker built in the Hitler era. “When we finish, there will be time to have a drink before dinner”, he promises.

THURSDAY JANUARY 8th

@ 7 P.M. ON THE DOT “BE ON TIME OR THEY WON’T FEED US “

If we were Callisto Cosulich, we would write, “Welcome to Ernst, the restaurant that we would have liked to hate”, and that instead, we literally adored. The elements to rip it apart were all there: a single menu imposed on everyone just like wine pairing. Twelve seats set around the counter. Moreover, to get in you must first find it: there is no sign. Beware of the spy: having caught wind of our presence, the Michelin smartass has followed us at night. And when, at the end of dinner, you cannot see Dylan anymore on the other side of the counter it’s because the spectacled inspector (poor man, he is eating alone and drinking tap water) has already paid the bill and has flashed - like an exhibitionist pulling his penis out from under the raincoat - the Michelin shield announcing his surprise ambush. “I stepped out with him to explain to him that we are not interested and to ask him the courtesy of not listing us in the guide. A Michelin star would be the worst thing that could happen to us”. We don’t think he stands a chance... Here we are not talking about one star, but of at least two and perhaps in the near future three stars will hang around his neck.

Having opened less than a year ago, Ernst is the best thing that could happen in Berlin. Together with his three accomplices, Canadian Dylan is the lead climber. Not even thirty years old, Dylan has traveled around half of the world and, obviously, has also stopped at Noma, the most important restaurant in the world (as the publicist rightly says). For years, he has paid room and board by cooking with his longtime cronies in his home. Only for the initiated and by word of mouth. All those who now stress out trying to snatch a reservation ticket on Toc, the booking website. “There are customers who come here regularly once or twice a month”. Lucky guys, because they know what they will find.

A kitchen in tension like a violin string that aims at Jansenist purity without any concession to common sense. It should be noted, that nowhere it’s written in black and white that Ernst practices the art of Teutonic Kaiseki. Yet, this is the spirit, coupled with a frenzied rhythm resulting from almost ten years of work in the area (Dylan requested a Berlin residence permit when was just over 18 years old). In short, the program is more codified than an opera libretto. Here you drink right stuff, German, Austrian and the best French nature wines (Ganevat, Overnoy of course) while conversing in English with the four partners who, from the other side of the counter, explain everything, even the birth and weaning of the calf. Pretend not to know and go behind the counter to snap a picture of the evening’s detailed menu in which everything is planned, dish after dish, more painstakingly than in a script, including the knife to be changed, the wine to be served, the entries and the choreography behind the scenes. Incredible but true, it is amazing stuff. A teacher’s pet, but with that ounce of poetry, a generous serving of modesty and three dashes of friendliness that earnestly contribute to making Ernst one of the discoveries of the year (in German Ernst means Earnest). An experience that slips away in four hours more smoothly than a letter in the mail as we journey between fresh buffalo cheese miso-style with sunflower seeds, blood oranges with arctic juniper, croissants with noisette butter and vinegar powder, shitake Tempura in spelt batter, endives cooked in butter and apple vinegar, sashimi-style potato heart cooked with steamed salt water, celery with mushrooms with a surprising abalone texture, a pork Wagyu that calls for a standing ovation. We hope that the Michelinians will be like Prussians who keep their word and will never award a star. Otherwise, you will never find a seat at Ernst’s even if you live to be 100 years old.

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE MEANTIME

We changed hotel. We are staying at the Orania, a boutique hotel in a district on the way to gentrification, luxurious but youthful, slightly hipster and not yet fully accepted by the local extra-parlia-

mentary left that occasionally likes to smash the hotel’s windows. After having had a terrible idea (“I will deduct the cost of the cheese cart from your fee!”), our esteemed director Anna Morelli has given up and downloaded the Uber app again. Here in Berlin it is the best solution and beats taking a taxi: taxi drivers speak little or no English (let alone Italian), credit cards are not widely accepted and when they are, a 3 Euro surcharge is applied. Lukas Mraz, once again single (he split with his girlfriend, the Road Manager of PJ Harvey), is ready to set sail for new shores. Tomorrow the bastard is leaving us to our own devices. He is travelling to Barcelona with his father and his brother to go dine at Albert Adrià and, since he is there already, he will also stop at the Roca Bros. We miss him already.

WHY WE ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES TO MISS LUKAS MRAZ

The city is in mourning. Since the news spread that the bearded Lassie is returning home to his parents, Berlin has woken up in the aftermath of a hangover. The party is over, the days of wine and roses when everything was possible are gone. Seven years ago, Mraz landed here so young he did not have any facial hair and radically changed the face of the city. Christof Ellinghaus, our friend and leader of the City Slang label, is devastated: “When he arrived at Cordobar, the test dinner was enough to make us understand that gifted guys like him don’t come in twos. Our restaurant has become a national point of reference, it is always open until late at night and is the place to go, where one can meet artists and wine lovers. He, however, was convinced that people patronized Cordobar more for the wine than for him. We had started looking for another venue, a place where we could open a restaurant just for him in the neighborhood he wanted. The day we found it, I called him. Lukas was in Latin America, and exactly the night before, with his father he had agreed to return to the family fold and take the reins of the two-star restaurant. I sincerely wish him tremendous success. But now, we have to find a chef for the new restaurant. If you know a talented young chef, please put me in touch. Nowadays, Berlin is the place to be”.

A STRATEGEM TO BRING THE PRODIGAL SON BACK TO BERLIN

Lukas Mraz has Berlin in his blood. Who better than he can sway Christoff Ellinghaus to put in a good word with the Bavarians of The Notwist (read above) to convince our favorite music group in the whole world (Anna von Hausswolff, Caexico, Grandbrothers, Lima, Son Lux, Tindersticks are all under the City Slang banner) that nothing would please us, him and Lukas Mraz more than organizing a THE NOTWIST PLAYS GELINAZ! Performance?

The best chefs of planet Earth all gathered to stage their impromptu creations on the cooking range following the music score composed by Markus Acher and his ensemble for the occasion. The venue - “a huge industrial space that until quite recently was in East Berlin” - is already available. All that needs to be done is to convince Markus and his partners. “They are late hippie artists and they love food, but the world of starred clubs is galaxies away from their intimate and holistic approach to life. The Atalas, the Botturas or the Changs do not even know who they are”. Ergo, Lukas Mraz. Maybe in order to be forgiven for abandoning us, he winks and promises, “I am leaving for Japan with Christof at the end of March. I will take care of convincing him to put pressure on the Notwist. I am sure we will be able to pull it off here in Berlin next year. Take it easy and go to dinner with him. He is going to introduce you to a friend of his who was once Harvey Pekar’s manager, the one in the film American Splendor, and who for the past ten years has been Yoko Ono’s right-hand man. Leave the rest in my hands”.

A NOBLE HEART WITH DIRTY HANDS

This is the literal translation of Nobelhart & Schmutzig. And, it does not start well. Billy Wagner is a full-on bastard and it takes a while to understand that he is in fact a great guy. At first, he scowls at you because you are grimacing. Yet another star-studded one? Another tasting menu? Can we not order à-la-carte? No? However, the wine, yes? “Look, Billy is a friend of mine. Here we are his guests”, Lukas whispers into my left ear. “Then don’t be obnoxious and let him take care of the wine pairing, trust me he is very good”. Nevertheless, we know where we are. Seated around a counter for about forty lucky people, a workshop American-style kitchen, another couple of tables at the back (the Mayor’s table is tucked behind the entrance). The twelve-course menu sings the praises of the vegetables and of the local products, the pride and glory of the home-cuisine phi-



Beside: Nobelhart & Schmutzig



Christof Ellinghaus owner of the Cordobar





ernst

losophy. Here - Horror! Tragedy! - we only drink white on white. So - clear understandings make long friends - “Ok, Billy: you choose the wines but put some red wine in the mix, a lot of it too, otherwise we are leaving”. And instead, he refuses straight out. “If you want some red I’ll serve you, but not with the dishes. Pretend it is an intermission, a Red Break, that you can drink it when you want between two dishes, maybe smoking a cigarette, but I am keeping an eye on you, do not even try it with food, Hein?”.

This definitely does not put you at ease. You want to make a bet that in order to relax, when you know that at the restaurant you will be dealing with a big head like Billy, you need at least to roll a joint? “Well, smoke yourself a joint then!” Billy says as the first dishes arriving on the counter stifle any rebellious ambition. Dumbstruck, we are helpless witnesses to a parade of empty bottles (“let’s do a crash-test, first a Riesling full of sulfites” and we immediately tell Billy that it is undrinkable “and then a natural wine before setting sail for other shores, including Italy). This, while in between dishes, the head host offers us a tray with: 1) Virginia tobacco 2) a mound of weed 3) a packet of large format Rizla.

“If you need a joint to relax, help yourself,” he says. While we, the incarnation of virtue, do not accept his offer. At any rate, we are absorbed by the succession of small masterpieces served one after the other. The legendary eel of Müritz placed on a quenelle of red cabbage to be eaten with your fingers as if it were a nigiri, quarters of braised chicory with rhubarb candied rose petals (getting your fingers dirty is awesome), an infusion of apple seeds and Balm lemon served in a bowl shaped like a vulva. Not to mention the phallic knife used to spread butter on the spelt bread of Sirone (the Italian baker who has become an idol of Berlin). Punctuated by more and more empty bottles, what follows are the Northern spike with porcini mushrooms as a prelude to the poached egg with mustard and incredibly thin raw potato strips, a playful journey through the immense contrast of textures and spiciness. Next, the horseradish Brassica, the shocking duo of the pork face to face with its lard and a quick succession of blockbusters without the tension ever easing. The music is a crescendo, the lights fade and the desserts are on stage. The only thing we are missing is a Barolo Chinato and we would reach nirvana.

And Wagner? He is proud of his work all-around. He philosophizes and mocks to no end: “So, did you have a joint?” Is the gentleman joking? No way! “You seemed stiffer than a codfish, so I brought it to you. But my place is DIY; you got to roll the joint yourself”. But what do you mean? We are in a public place and what’s more, a star-studded one! “What does that mean? As long as you do not bother your neighbor, everything is tolerated in Berlin. Do you see the table in the back? They smoke cigarettes, to each his own”, smiles Billy who has become increasingly friendly since the room has filled up with the sounds of well-known tribal percussions. Dear readers, tell us then how long has gone by since you stumbled upon an emblazoned restaurant by following the drumbeat of The Feeling Begins, the first song of the soundtrack that Peter Gabriel wrote for Martin Scorsese’s The Last Temptation of Christ? By now, we have jumped behind the counter and have hugged Billy Wagner. Of course, trading one temptation for another and with Peter Gabriel interceding for our divine blessing, weed and Barolo Chinato would have been the icing on the cake...



Ho Do Ri Koreanische Küche



Adana Grillhaus

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Billy Wagner & Lukas Mraz