

DINNER, DECONSTRUCTED

Modelled after a Victorian-era tavern with plush leather seating and inviting dim lights, classic European dishes become new again at The Civic. Chef Dave Couse prepares tender organic elk chops and venison as part of an inspired dinner menu that changes monthly to reflect the seasons **Claudia McNeilly**



JUNIPER - CRUSTED VENISON AT THE CIVIC IN TORONTO

Pasture-raised red deer venison is crusted in fresh Ontario juniper berries, coriander seeds and pink and black peppercorns before being seared in a sizzling hot cast-iron pan.

A garnish of spicy RubyStreaks mustard greens accents the peppercorns hidden within the juniper crust.

Each galette is braised in duck fat and maple syrup, transforming the starchy vegetable into a luxurious, candied treat.

Dried local currants are rehydrated in port and venison trimmings to create an addictive sweet and savoury jus.

Chef Couse highlights sweet potatoes from Waterford, Ont. with a light, butter-free sweet potato puree and two sweet potato and pistachio galettes.

In living colour

LAURA BREHAUT

When faced with a wall of snack food options, how do you decide which one to choose?

If you're like the vast majority of people (anywhere from 62 to 90 per cent), you make your decision based on colour alone. And you make it swiftly — within the first 90 seconds of encountering the product — according to a University of Winnipeg study published in *Management Decision*.

As Food Dive reports, demand for "clean label" foods — products made with more natural ingredients and fewer additives and synthetic ingredients — has never been higher. Central to consumer desires is the use of naturally derived colour: nearly 80 per cent of shoppers interpret "natural" foods as being free from artificial colours.

Food and beverage manufacturers are paying attention, with major players including Kraft Foods, Hershey's and Campbell's Soup Co. altering formulations or launching new product lines that are in step with customers' "natural" expectations. The pursuit of plant-based, high-intensity colour is on. More than 60 per cent of General Mills cereals, for example, are made with natural colours derived from plants such as radishes, purple carrots and turmeric.

While General Mills has stated that its goal is 100 per cent, it hit an obstacle last year with Trix. The company ultimately reintroduced the child-targeted cereal with artificial Blue 1, Red 40 and Yellow 5 tints after consumers complained that the more subdued, naturally coloured range was "depressing."

We've learned to anticipate the taste and nutrition of foods by relying on sensory signals like colour and scent, Charles Spence writes in *Gastrophysics: The New Science of Eating* (Penguin Books, 2018). "Change the colour of wine, for instance, and people's expectations — and hence their tasting experience — can be radically altered. Sometimes even experts can be fooled into thinking that they can smell the red wine aromas when given a glass of what is actually white wine that has just been coloured artificially to give it a dark red appearance," he writes.

When it comes to colour, it's not just the hue that we interpret but also saturation, or intensity. And its effect depends heavily on the type of food we're considering: blue wine is enticing, blue steak, not so much. Colour plays a vital role in our food choices, but as FoodIngredientsFirst reports, social media makes it even more important to snack food marketers.

"As social media becomes increasingly visual, colour helps make snacks more appealing and also helps indicate its flavour profile," Michael Serrur, food writer at GNT USA (a natural colour brand), told FoodIngredientsFirst. With customers increasingly seeking out more healthful snacks, expect to see more eye-catching vibrant, plant-based colours in the snack food aisle.

Weekend Post

