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### **Michele Mercuri XO Le Restaurant, Hôtel Le St-James Montréal**

*"It's really spectacular up here in Québec in the fall—perfect in September and October, when there's a lot available in the markets that gives me ideas for my upcoming menus. But no doubt, it's pretty cold by January. As far as technique goes, we now have access to so many more tools and equipment that allow me to practice 'precision cooking,' which translates into more consistently executed dishes."*

**Appetizer** KONA KAMPACHI CONFIT, GINGER/MINT/GRAPEFRUIT SAKE & FINGER LIME/RHUBARB ICE. "For a first course, I like to start with something fresh or acidic that goes well with Champagne. The temperature and texture should open up the palate. For this dish, the kampachi is just barely cooked in olive oil at a temperature of 65 degrees. The fish will be warm but still mostly raw. For a contrast in temperature, serve three or four slices with ice-cold finger lime/rhubarb granité. Finger limes are these little citrus fruits from Australia, about the size of a thumbnail, which contain small pearls that pop in the mouth with a flavor similar to but not as strong as regular limes. For a sauce, infuse sake with grapefruit, ginger, mint, and lemongrass; cook with simple syrup

just long enough to get rid of the alcohol taste; thicken with some xanthan gum. Garnish the plate with dehydrated rhubarb and rhubarb gelée.”

**Entrées** KABOCHA SQUASH CONSOMMÉ, BURNT WHEAT *PANSÔTI* STUFFED WITH BRAISED OXTAIL, SOY JELLY, SHAVED MATSUTAKE MUSHROOM. “*Pansôti* are stuffed pastas similar to ravioli. For a smoky effect, make the dough with a combination of half burnt flour and half regular. Fill the pasta with braised oxtail meat seasoned with shallots, veal jus, Parmesan, and duxelles. The kabocha squash consommé is made clear utilizing a process known as gelatin clarification. The squash is roasted and then braised in vegetable stock and a little smoky bacon to extract its sweet earthy flavor before gelatin is added. The consommé is then frozen and strained through a fine sieve as it melts. The result is a clear consommé full of all the rich fall flavors you’d expect from



a more rustic soup. Garnish with the *pansôti*, little clouds of foie gras emulsion, cubes of soy jelly made by gelling soy sauce with a combination of gelatin and agar-agar, and top with shavings of fresh matsutake mushrooms.”

SEARED VENISON LOIN, PORCINI TERRINE, CROSNES, COLOMBO EMULSION, QUINOA, QUINCE, SALSIFY. “Venison is one of the top products of Québec. Cook the boneless loin sous-vide before searing and slicing. Serve with crunchy pickled crosnes, also known as Chinese artichokes; a sweet curry emulsion known as Colombo, made with apples, onions, and peaches; puffed quinoa that look a bit like puffed rice; batônettes of cooked quince; and a porcini terrine. The porcini terrine is like an aspic, only presented in a contemporary way. It’s made with dried porcini and flavored with black garlic and onions. I find the dried porcini to have more concentrated flavor and a touch of smokiness, which I like. Instead of using traditional gelatin, gel the terrine with iota-carrageenan, which allows the terrine to hold its shape when hot. Set terrine in a shallow pan to set before slicing and draping a sheet over the venison.”

**Dessert** CHOCOLATE SOIL, TONKA BEAN, TOASTED BARLEY JELLY, COFFEE ICE CREAM, ROOT VEGETABLE PAPER.

“To create a soil-like effect, bake unshaped, unpacked, and loosely scattered clumps of chocolate sablé dough mixed with ground macadamia nuts; cool; crumble with fingers. Over that grate a tonka bean, which has the sweet fragrance of vanilla and nutmeg. Use acetate to mold a tube of sweetened goat’s milk infused with toasted barley and set with gelatin. Lay the chocolate soil down on a plate and arrange the tube on top. Serve with a scoop of ice cream made using Gold Nugget coffee from India, which has a lot of spice notes. Over the top, lay a square of root vegetable paper, which might include parsnip, butternut squash, or candy cap mushrooms. To make the paper, simply spread the puree on crisp film and place in a dehydrator until set. Garnish the plate with candied mandarin orange peel, and sprinkle smoked sea salt and Chinese long pepper on top.” ➤

## **SURF 'N' TURF: COD & SQUAB WITH BRAISED CABBAGE & JERUSALEM ARTICHOKES**

EXECUTIVE CHEF MICHELE MERCURIE, XO LE RESTAURANT,  
HÔTEL LE ST-JAMES, MONTRÉAL

For 1 serving

*Braised cabbage:*

5 Tbsps. duck fat  
2 Tbsps. smoked bacon, chopped  
1/2 head Napa cabbage, shredded  
2/5 cup Muscatel vinegar  
4/5 cup apple juice  
1 cup plus 2 Tbsps. chicken stock  
1 sprig thyme



1 bay leaf

kosher salt

black pepper, freshly ground

Heat fat in rondeau; add bacon; cook until just brown; add cabbage; cook until brown; pour off fat; deglaze with vinegar; add juice; bring to a boil; reduce by 50 percent; add stock, thyme, and bay leaf; cook until cabbage is tender; season; remove from heat; reserve (keep warm).

*Squab:*

6 1/2 Tbsps. granulated sugar

1 cup Blis maple syrup

1 Tbsp. plus 2 tsps. Muscatel vinegar

1 tsp. orange zest, cut into fine julienne

12 fennel seeds, toasted and crushed

1/2 tsp. fresh ginger

1 green cardamom pod, toasted and crushed

1 whole squab

kosher salt

black pepper, freshly ground

olive oil

1. Heat sugar and 2 Tbsps. water in a saucepan set over high heat until it registers 250°F on an instant-read thermometer; add syrup, vinegar, zest, fennel seeds, ginger, and cardamom; bring to a boil; remove from heat; cool; place in vacuum-sealable plastic food bag;

reserve. 2. Bone squab; remove thigh bones from bird; season; drizzle with oil; place in vacuum-sealable plastic food bag; vacuum seal; cook sous-vide 3 1/2 hours, maintaining temperature at 158°F; remove bag from water; reserve (keep warm). 3. Remove skin from breast; season; place breast in reserved bag; vacuum seal; cook sous-vide 9 minutes, maintaining water temperature at 149°F; remove bag from water; reserve (keep warm).

*Assembly:*

**2 Jerusalem artichokes, peeled**

**2 Tbsps. plus 2 tsps. unsalted butter**

**2/5 cup olive oil, plus more for artichokes**

**kosher salt**

**black pepper, freshly ground**

**1 3-oz. cod fillet**

**curly endive (for garnishing)**

***fleur de sel* (for garnishing)**

1. Heat oven to 350°F. 2. Place Jerusalem artichokes and butter in small pan; drizzle with oil; season; bake until tender and brown; remove from oven; place artichokes on serving platter; reserve (keep warm). 3. Heat oil in sauté pan set over medium heat until instant-read thermometer registers 131°F; add cod (it should be completely submerged); cook until white all the way through; remove from heat; drain off oil; discard; reserve cod (keep warm). 4. To serve, mound cabbage on plate; top with artichokes; remove squab breast from the bag; cut in half; place next to Jerusalem artichokes; flake cod; place next to breast halves; remove thighs from bag; place on top of Jerusalem artichokes; drizzle with maple caramel from the bag; garnish with curly endive and *fleur de sel*.

*What to drink: Tawse Estates Pinot Noir Niagara Peninsula*