

# MODERNIZING THE CLASSICS

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN.

BY ROBERT WEMISCHNER

## EQUIPMENT

Innovation on the equipment side for pastry chefs often drives new ways of thinking about the classics. In the realm of molds for mousses and other soft mixtures and perforated tart rings, in particular, there have been game-changing additions to the *batterie de cuisine*.

- Silikomart ([www.silikomart.com](http://www.silikomart.com)) offers an extensive line of sleek freezable molds with fresh contemporary shapes.
- De Buyer's ([www.deBuyer.com](http://www.deBuyer.com)) perforated tart molds lend a modern, lightly stippled exterior to tarts.
- Matfer ([www.matferbourgeatusa.com](http://www.matferbourgeatusa.com)) makes exoglass molds.
- JB Prince ([www.jbprince.com](http://www.jbprince.com)) has new versions of the classic guitar, which can be used to cut tart dough into uniform sharp-edged strips and equally portion ganaches, confections, paté de fruit and marshmallows.
- Koma's ([www.koma.com](http://www.koma.com)) blast freezer makes it possible to unmold mousse and other frozen products without damaging them.

Ask any pastry chef worth his or her salt about the origins of their present-day creations, and the answer undoubtedly will point in the direction of the classics, whether European or American.

The message in modern pastry seems to be this: To go forward, one has to go back to do the research before deconstructing what has been standard practice for perhaps centuries. Thoughtful and inventive pastry chefs are asking questions and yielding new answers and solutions with delicious results.

## MILLE-FEUILLE

Yann Couvreur is owner of Pâtisserie Yann Couvreur in Paris. “I do not like to think that even the classics should remain unchanged for ever and ever,” he says. “It is true that pastry is built on precision of measurements and execution, but once those basics are learned and respected, pastry chefs can be bold in interpreting the classics.

“Creativity has no boundaries, and this is no less true in the field of pastry than in other artistic endeavors.”

Taking the mille-feuille a step beyond its classical beginnings, Couvreur opts for a *kouign amman* (sugared laminated dough) base instead of puff pastry. He is unconventional in cooking thin shards of the dough in a panini press, rather than baking, before layering with a pastry cream complexed with vanilla beans from three different places of origin.

Though he may seem somewhat subversive in the cooking method for an element of his dessert, he is far from alone in exploring new ways to think about the classics of the sweet repertoire.



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## APPLE PIE

At Gramercy Tavern in New York, where American farm-to-table cuisine rules in both savory and sweet offerings, pastry chef Miro Uskokovic brings a fresh approach to the classics. Even something as seemingly unassailable as apple pie gets a reinterpretation.

Taking inspiration from New England, where serving apple pie with locally made cheddar cheese is a tradition, his version is enhanced, instead, by a scoop of cheddar cheese ice cream made with Cabot clothbound cheddar. The crust contains buckwheat flour, which lends a pleasant nuttiness. Locally made Laird's applejack brandy figures in the caramel sauce served alongside.

"At Union Square Hospitality Group restaurants, we recognize that the contemporary American restaurant is evolving," Uskokovic says. "Desserts embody that reality, and need to be familiar yet interesting and intriguing. I am modernizing a classic through an emphasis on the quality and origin of ingredients. Sourcing many of our staples locally and working with a high-quality regional dairy for the cheese to use in the ice cream reflects our philosophy perfectly."

## MADELEINE

Los Angeles-based baker/pastry chef Rose Lawrence of Red Bread (eatredbread.com) gives a new spin to the classic madeleine by branching out and using einkorn instead of the traditional wheat flour. She explored locally grown grains and specialty grains from other regions of the country before settling on einkorn. With its high protein and low gluten content, einkorn was one of the first grains to be cultivated.

"The pleasing rich-yellow color and almost sweet, mellow flavor works well as the base for a classic sponge cake, where tenderness of crumb is desired," Lawrence says. "With its creamy, malty, cooked-corn flavor, I can pull back on the amount of sugar in the cake. I flavor the batter with a bit of homemade limoncello for a highly satisfying, complex finish."

## ECLAIR

Not content with the standard cream puff or éclair shape, pastry chef/educator Saba Jangjava, former pastry chef at Café Pouchkine, Paris, and now based in Moscow, modernizes this classic paste of butter, water, flour and eggs and transforms the mixture to create a unique shape.

Using cylindrical metal molds lined from top to bottom with textured silicon mats cut to fit, he produces crispy golden-brown containers. These are then filled with chocolate cream and peanut caramel and topped with vanilla ice cream.

Although one might ask how it's possibly to innovate with something that has been around for centuries, in Jangjava's tubular éclair, which functions as a kind of ice cream cone, function follows form.



## DEEP DISH BUCKWHEAT APPLE PIE

Miro Uskokovic, Pastry Chef II Gramercy Tavern // New York

### APPLE COMPOTE

909 g green apples  
909 g Pink Lady or Jonagold Apples  
80 g sugar  
40 g light brown sugar  
2 g lemon zest  
2 g salt  
1 g ground cinnamon  
28 g lemon juice  
28 g cornstarch

**Method:** Peel and cut apples into quarters. Cut 1/8-inch-thick slices from each quarter. Toss with sugars, lemon zest, salt and cinnamon. Cook apples over medium heat until tender, stirring often. When apples are tender, separate liquids from solids by passing apples through fine-mesh strainer. Combine lemon juice and cornstarch to create a slurry. Put liquid from cooked apples back into pot. Add slurry; continually whisk until liquid thickens and comes to a boil. Remove from heat. Pour over cooked apples; toss to fully coat. Cool over ice bath.

### BUCKWHEAT PIE DOUGH

2,161 g all-purpose flour  
288 g buckwheat flour  
58 g powdered sugar  
9 g salt  
1,585 g frozen butter  
468 g cold sour cream  
432 g ice-cold water  
Egg wash and Sugar in the Raw, as needed

**Method:** Sift flours, sugar and salt into large mixing bowl. Place bowl in refrigerator until flour is cold, approximately 10 minutes. Grate frozen butter. Add to cold flour; mix to just combine. Transfer dough to bowl of mixer with paddle attachment. Add sour cream and ice-cold water; mix until just incorporated (dough should be slightly crumbly/shaggy). Form dough into 1-inch-thick square. Wrap in plastic wrap; store in refrigerator overnight. The following day, roll out dough 1/4-inch thick. Using upside-down pie tin as stencil, cut 5 circles 1 inch larger than tin and 5 circles 2 inches larger than tin.

### ASSEMBLING, BAKING PIES

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line pie tins with 2-inch buckwheat dough circles. Fill each tin with apple compote, compact and mounded approximately 1 1/2 inches higher than rim. Place 1-inch circles over top of each pie; crimp together edges bottom and top

pieces of dough. Put pies in refrigerator; chill just until dough is cold, 10-15 minutes. Make small "x" in center of each pie; egg-wash and sprinkle with Sugar in the Raw. Bake 30-40 minutes, until golden-brown.

### APPLE CARAMEL

374 g sugar  
374 g apple brandy  
248 g butter  
4 g salt

**Method:** Make dry caramel with sugar. Deglaze with brandy; reduce by half. Remove from stove; add butter and salt, using hand blender to emulsify. Cool over ice bath.

### APPLE SAUCE

870 g roasted apple puree (recipe follows)  
43 g apple brandy  
87 g apple cider

**Method:** Combine roasted apple puree, apple brandy and apple cider in blender. Blend until combined. Pass through fine-mesh strainer.

### Roasted Apple Puree

Peel and quarter 1 kg Granny Smith apples. Add 160 g apple caramel; toss to fully coat. Cover baking dish with foil; bake at 325°F until apples until mushy. Once fully cooked, transfer to blender; blend until smooth. Pass puree through fine-mesh strainer.

### CHEDDAR ICE CREAM

179 g sugar  
205 g glucose powder  
60 g milk powder  
7 g ice cream stabilizer  
1,028 g milk  
369 g heavy cream  
3 g salt  
149 g Cabot clothbound cheddar

**Method:** In bowl, whisk together sugar and glucose powder until combined. In separate bowl, whisk together milk powder and ice cream stabilizer. In heavy-bottomed pot, bring milk, heavy cream and salt to 70°C. Whisk in sugar/glucose powder mixture; bring to 80°C. Whisk in milk powder/ice cream stabilizer mixture; bring to 85°C. Remove pot from heat; add cheese. Use immersion blender to emulsify. Strain; cool over ice bath. Mature base overnight in refrigerator before churning.

## EINKORN LIMONCELLO MADELEINE

Rose Lawrence, Baker/Pastry Chef  
Red Bread ([eatredbread.com](http://eatredbread.com))  
Los Angeles

85 g einkorn flour, milled fine  
1½ t. baking powder  
¼ t. sea salt  
80 g pure cane sugar  
Zest from 2 Meyer lemons  
2 large eggs  
1 t. vanilla paste  
1 T. limoncello  
50 g 100% hydration vigorous  
sourdough starter  
85 g unsalted butter, melted,  
cooled + additional to coat  
madeleine molds

1. In first bowl, mix flour, baking powder and salt.
2. In second bowl, combine sugar, lemon zest and eggs; beat mixture until thick, fluffy and pale-yellow, 8-10 minutes.
3. In third bowl, mix vanilla paste, limoncello and starter. Beat into egg mixture until just combined.
4. Add flour mixture in three batches, mixing until combined fully before adding more. Slowly drizzle butter into dough while mixing on low until incorporated.
5. Divide batter evenly among pans. Fill each mold ¾ full. Chill batter, covered, for 30 minutes.
6. Preheat oven to 350°F. Prepare pan with butter and light dusting of einkorn flour. Bake 12-13 minutes, until edges are golden-brown and cakes peak in center.
7. Allow to cool completely on wire rack. Dust with sugar or dip in chocolate.



## VACHERIN, PARIS-BREST

French-born, French-trained Sylvain Marrari, executive pastry chef at Fisher Island Club, Fisher Island, Florida, says that a new generation of pastry chefs, along with social media, has helped give new energy to old-school desserts. “And in response to demands from the new dining public for desserts that are substantially less sweet than 40 years ago, chefs adapt.”

His reinterpretation of a vacherin glace retains the classical meringue base, so it is recognizable and also reminds him of his childhood sweets binges. Now, though, in modernizing the classics, he has fun introducing flavors and shapes that inject new life into a warhorse of the French pastry repertoire.

Lending his touch to another classic, Marrari riffs on the Paris-Brest choux paste ring traditionally filled with praline-flavored crème chantilly. He renames it Paris-Miami, incorporating some of the bright tropical flavors of the city he now calls home.

## TIRAMISU

Brandon Malzahn, corporate pastry chef for Fabio Trabocchi Restaurant Group—Fiola, Casa Luca, Fiola Mare and Sfoglina—Washington, D.C., likes to play with the classic tiramisu, a staple of Italian restaurants from downhome rustic to upscale white-tablecloth.

“As good as the espresso-drenched sponge cake and mascarpone cream layered dessert is, this staple of the Italian sweets kitchen was due for an update,” he says. “I have always loved the creaminess of the dessert, but felt that what it lacks is textural contrast. So in my version, I set out to reconceive the dessert with one thing in mind—texture.”

To accomplish this, Malzahn creates a super-thin caramel-flavored tuile dusted with cocoa powder and sets it atop the coffee-soaked moist sponge encircled with pearls of whipped orange mascarpone. Marsala appears in his version in a gelato, a final element that marries the traditional flavors of the original with the modern sensibility of a pastry chef presenting plated desserts in a festive restaurant setting.

“Growing up eating mascarpone at Italian restaurants since my youth, I always found that the versions I tasted were served in a glass or just as one big square piece,” he says. “I gave thought to changing it, and after much experimentation with different styles of vessel shells and square plates, I settled on the current version, which combines orange, caramel and coffee, elevating and lightening what can be an overly rich dessert.”

As innovations keep tongues wagging and foodies talking, and provide pleasure to the dining public, they could themselves become classics, ripe for reinvention in the hands of the next generation of pastry chefs. As a 19th century French critic observed, *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose* (the more things change, the more they stay the same). So, too, in the world of pastry. ■

ABOVE LEFT: Fiola Tiramisu from  
Brandon Malzahn.  
ABOVE RIGHT: Saba Jangjawa’s  
tubular éclair.

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