



Duck egg spaghetti, uni, guanciale, lemon

Chef/Partner Ryan Hardy, Charlie Bird, New York City

Yield: 1 serving
Menu price: \$24; food cost/serving: 40%

Guanciale lardons	5 g
Egg spaghetti ▼	75 g
Uni butter ▼	30 g
Lemon, juice of	1/2 each
Scallions, thinly sliced, green parts only	pinch
Freshly ground black pepper	as needed
Uni tongue	1 each

1. Cook guanciale in a sauté pan until lightly crispy and then drain on a towel.
2. Boil spaghetti in salted water until *al dente*, about 2 to 3 minutes. Toss with uni butter, lemon juice, scallions, ground pepper and a splash of pasta water to emulsify together.
3. Twirl spaghetti with a pasta fork and garnish with an uni tongue and top with rendered guanciale. Grind fresh black pepper over top and serve immediately.

EGG SPAGHETTI

Yield: 1285 g

00 flour	500 g
Semolina flour	350 g, plus as needed
Eggs, whole	350 g
Egg yolks	85 g

Combine flours in a large mixing bowl, whisk eggs and then combine. Knead by hand until dough is formed, smooth and elastic, about 8 to 9 minutes. Roll until 1/16-inch thick and cut into 1/16-inch thick noodles. Dust with more semolina and refrigerate until ready to use, up to 3 days.

UNI BUTTER

Yield: 746 g

Uni tongues	250 g
Butter	450 g
Lemon juice	40 g
Salt	6 g

Mix ingredients together in a food processor and reserve refrigerated or frozen until needed.

SHOWING THEIR SUNNY SIDE

Eggs lend delicate strength to starters **by Maisie Wilhelm**

“The egg is one of the most versatile ingredients that a cook can get their hands on,” wrote Ian Knauer, in his book *Eggs* (All Day Press, 2013). “It is both fatty and lean, adds richness and lightness, can be used separated or whole. Any cook worth his salt will always, always have eggs in his kitchen.”

Knauer’s statement is echoed by chefs everywhere. A chef’s love of eggs is near universal; it could even be considered a requirement for the job.

“Lots of chefs have waxed poetic about eggs,” says Danny Bowien of Mission Chinese in New York City and San Francisco, and Mission Cantina in New York City. “Eggs are easily overlooked because they’re just eggs, but they are still really awesome to utilize.” And with so much versatility, eggs often become the workhorses of a kitchen.

At Mission Cantina, Bowien’s menu showcases small tacos with inventively reimaged classic ingredients. A standout is his soft scrambled egg tostada with trout roe, sea urchin and pickled jalapeño (\$13, recipe, plateonline.com). His inspiration? “When I eat sushi, I always end with sea urchin and *ikura*, and then get *tamago* (a lightly sweetened omelet),” he says. That was the basis of this dish, which combines two types of eggs with the sea urchin. “Somehow, I think those three things pair really well together.”

DELICATE IN THE SHELL

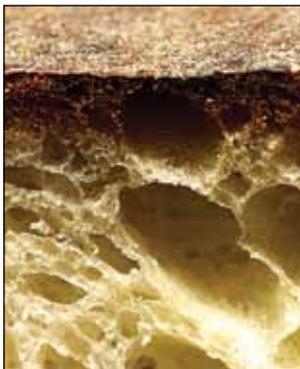
“As a chef, I like eggs in many dishes,” adds George Mendes, of Al-dea, his Portuguese-American restaurant near Manhattan’s Union Square. “I like their simplicity, freshness, creaminess and versatil-



Early spring vegetable charlotte, \$14, Executive Chef Pete List, Beatrice & Woodsley, Denver. RECIPE, p. 84.

ity. I love a fried egg with a crispy skin and a runny yolk. I like creamy poached eggs with a custardy texture—we eat a lot of poached eggs with vegetables at Aldea. The applications are endless.”

Mendes often starts his tasting menu with a series of small bites that include quail eggs. “I like eggs as a starter course—a soup, an oyster, a fried croquette or a pickled quail egg,” which he dyes pink with beet-infused pickling brine. “It’s a one-bite snack; playful.”



In addition to these amuses bouches, the dinner menu at Aldea features a farm egg scrambled with *bacalhau* (\$8, recipe, p. 83), an interpretation of a classic dish from Portugal, where eggs traditionally have been paired with salt cod in a number of ways.

“This is a take on ‘*bacalhau a Bras*,’

Mendes said, “which is a very peasant Portuguese dish of salt cod in a classic presentation of scrambled eggs with string potatoes, parsley and black olives.”

Traditionally, it’s served as a hearty lunch or dinner, but Aldea patrons receive a daintier portion from Mendes as an early course. “We refined it and put it on a smaller scale,” he explains. “It’s the same preparation, but served in a hollowed egg shell with a spoon. You feel like a kid eating it.”

Serving delicate egg dishes in the shell is a hallmark of many tasting menus.

While working at The French Laundry, Erik Anderson, recently of The Catbird Seat in Nashville, prepared hundreds of shells for Thomas Keller’s famous egg



Bacalhau a bras, \$8,
Executive Chef/Owner
George Mendes,
Aldea, New York City.
RECIPE, p. 83.

THERE'S SOMETHING VERY ELEGANT ABOUT A SILKY CUSTARD. When you combine maple, truffle and thyme, it gives the dish a weird, kind of cool forest flavor. — Erik Anderson

starter course—egg custard with truffle *ragoût*, served in a painstakingly sawed-off egg shell.

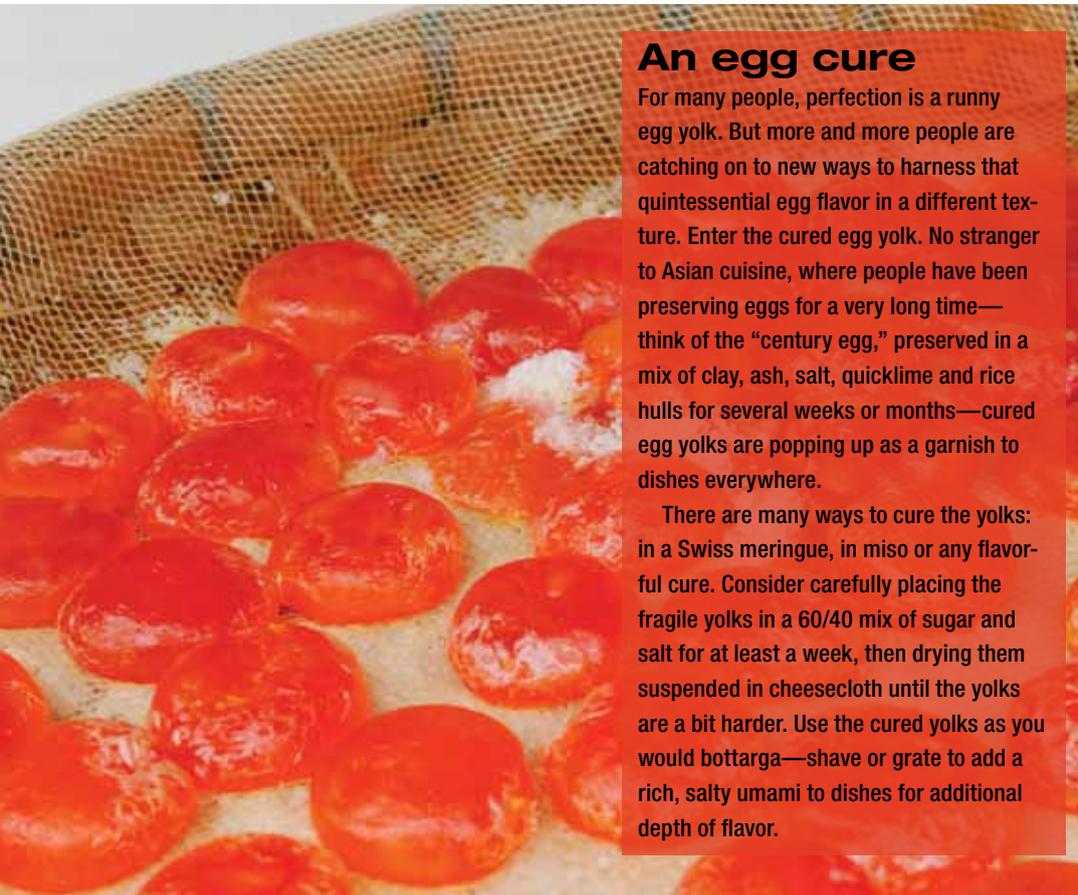
“It’s a vehicle for two to three bites that are super-flavorful,” Anderson says. Paying homage to the time he spent there, he created a maple thyme custard, also served in a delicate shell, for his tasting menu. “There’s something very elegant about a silky custard. When you combine maple, truffle and thyme, it gives the dish a weird, kind of cool forest flavor.

To balance the dish, Anderson recommends using any small batch, barrel-aged syrup, though he cautions—“You have to have a perfect combination”—so the dish harmonizes and doesn’t single out the pine or maple. A bacon chip adds crunch and smoke (recipe, plateonline.com).

BEYOND BREAKFAST

Coddled eggs, traditionally a breakfast or brunch dish, make the jump to the dinner menu at Beatrice & Woodsley in Denver.

“It’s always on my mind to put an egg dish on the dinner menu,” says Chef Pete List. “They’re under-utilized at dinner other than the run of the mill places you’d find them.” So he came up with a vegetable *charlotte* with coddled eggs (\$14, recipe, p. 84). “I always liked a *charlotte*. The dish is mostly done as a dessert but I think it translates really well as a savory dish with vegetables.” List was inspired by springtime for this recipe, but says for fall, he would bring a heartier



An egg cure

For many people, perfection is a runny egg yolk. But more and more people are catching on to new ways to harness that quintessential egg flavor in a different texture. Enter the cured egg yolk. No stranger to Asian cuisine, where people have been preserving eggs for a very long time—think of the “century egg,” preserved in a mix of clay, ash, salt, quicklime and rice hulls for several weeks or months—cured egg yolks are popping up as a garnish to dishes everywhere.

There are many ways to cure the yolks: in a Swiss meringue, in miso or any flavorful cure. Consider carefully placing the fragile yolks in a 60/40 mix of sugar and salt for at least a week, then drying them suspended in cheesecloth until the yolks are a bit harder. Use the cured yolks as you would bottarga—shave or grate to add a rich, salty umami to dishes for additional depth of flavor.

slant using rye bread or pumpernickel. Either way, it’s the form of the *charlotte* that’s prominent here.

“Ideally everything is encased in the bread—all the beautiful, roasted vegetables, then the ham on top, and you put the coddled egg on that and fold the ham over the egg. If you do it in a ramekin, you turn it out so the bottom of the dish becomes the top on the plate,” he says. “The *charlotte* can find its place more comfortably on a dinner menu because it’s a more unusual way of serving eggs, which makes it seem more special, and yet hearty enough for a more substantial meal.

Not having to attempt the plating during a brunch rush is another benefit to putting this on a dinner menu. “Eggs get pigeonholed into the breakfast and brunch arena, so there are challenges to

putting them on the dinner menu where it makes sense and people understand it,”

List says. “It can’t look like we’re throwing an egg on it just because,” he says.

EGGS & UNI

Known for his excellent pastas, Chef Ryan Hardy features a starter course of duck egg spaghetti with uni, guanciale and lemon (\$24, recipe, p. 25) on his menu at Charlie Bird in New York City.

Hardy’s choice of duck eggs for the pasta is studied. “Duck eggs are much higher in fat; they’re a much richer egg, super creamy,” he enthuses. “I love using them for pasta whenever I can—and it’s a rarity because they aren’t always easily

available commercially. Unlike chickens, they don’t lay year-round, so the conditions have to be right.”

Luckily for Hardy, the carpenter who helped build the Italian-American restaurant asked him if he might have some use for the surplus duck eggs he had at home. Hardy felt like he’d won the lottery, suddenly dialed into a personal cache of home-raised, quality duck eggs at an affordable price. At his previous post at The Little Nell in Aspen, he was so committed to sourcing high-quality eggs that he bought a farm to supply him with the eggs for all of the restaurant’s pastas.

At Charlie Bird, with the duck egg spaghetti dough ready, Hardy wanted to add a seafood pasta to the menu. He set about recreating a dish he’d had in Naples, Italy, of cuttlefish and zucchini julienned like spaghetti.

“It was so extraordinary, I wanted to duplicate that flavor,” he says. He went with a twist on carbonara with sea urchin and guanciale. “It sung,” he says. “It is a little bit of a surprise to put those two together.”

Hardy tosses pasta with uni butter, lemon juice, scallions, and ground pep-

per, then garnishes it with fresh uni and rendered guanciale. “I love uni,” he says, singing the praise of another favorite ingredient of many chefs, who often refer to the gonads of the sea urchin “roe.”

“Uni’s luxurious, unique, very Southern Italian,” he says. But ultimately it’s the egg that he would have a hard time operating without. “I love eggs,” he says. “They are the glue that binds the kitchen together.”

Anytime Maisie Wilhelm can dip something into a runny yolk, she’s happy.

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— Ryan Hardy, Charlie Bird, NYC

