

Gourmet pigs

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Sunday, February 12, 2012

Pacific Standard Time at Playa. Food and Drink as Art.

Cooking is an art, but now food, cocktails, and art are really coming together with the "secret" Pacific Standard Time menu at Playa and Rivera. This special menu is part of the huge collaboration throughout Southern California that is [Pacific Standard Time](#), celebrating the birth of the LA art scene and the art movement in LA from 1945 to 1980. Chef John Sedlar from Playa and Rivera told them that they needed to include cuisine as part of this effort, and so the PST menu was born. From now until the end of March, just ask the staff for the PST menu - a three course prix fixe menu served on prints of iconic PST artwork.

I was invited to check out the special menu last week at [Playa](#) in West Hollywood.

The first course is the Crudo assortment served on "Fish Platter" by Beatrice Wood. The dish consisted of "Fresh and smoked seafood with kumquats, fresno chiles, lime, red seaweed."



Fish Platter, ca. 1970, Beatrice Wood, San Francisco, 15 1/2 x 23 3/4 x 3 in. Scripps College, Claremont, California. Gift of the artist and Mrs. Herb Mann ©Beatrice Wood Center for the Arts/Happy Valley Foundation

Just like the art scene, Sedlar explores the diversity of seafood from a lightly flavored hamachi with kumquats to scallops with Vadouvan (curry powder) and seared tuna with crispy seaweed.



Black Bean

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The crudo was served with a *copita* of Chichicapa Mezcal - specifically Del Maguey Mezcal Vida. The artist Ron Cooper, who also founded the Del Maguey Single Village Mezcal, spoke of his philosophy to us.



As he nicely put it, compared to single village, small production mezcal, when you have big industrial production (e.g. vodka these days), "there's very little room for the will of the *maguey* (god)."

The second course was the fire-grilled breast of chicken with cobb salad quemada, goat cheese, incendiary salsa. This was served on Ed Ruscha's "The Los Angeles County Museum on Fire" (1968)! OK, I'm a fan of Ed Ruscha so I was pretty excited.



Given the wonderfully tender and moist texture, it seems like the chicken was prepared *sous vide* before grilling.

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For dessert, a trio of Sorbet Splashes: roasted pineapple mezcal, poblano chile lime, and hibiscus pomegranate, served on "Beach Trash Burning" by Carlos Almaraz (1982)



The poblano chile lime was easily everyone's favorite: intriguing, spicy, and refreshing.

Mixologist Julian Cox had also prepared three special cocktails inspired by other artworks. The first was inspired by Ron Cooper's "Ball Drop" (1969) and made with London dry gin, fresh lime, yuzu tincture, velvety falernum, and cayenne. The second: Oscar Castillo's "47 Chevy in Wilmington, California" - mezcal, agave nectar, St Vincent orgeat, passion fruit, fresh lemon, lavender air. The third was inspired by Larry Bell's untitled piece from 1964 - Chichicapa mezcal, Cocchi vermouth di torino, Oloroso, and garnished with a grapefruit peel.



Ball Drop (left) and 47 Chevy (right)

If you like the sours with a bit of a kick, go with the Ball Drop. If you prefer the Manhattan types, the third Untitled cocktail was also quite good.

The three-course menu costs \$34 at Playa and \$44 at [Rivera](#) (why the price difference? I'm not sure. Higher rent?) and the cocktails are \$12 each.

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