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# plate

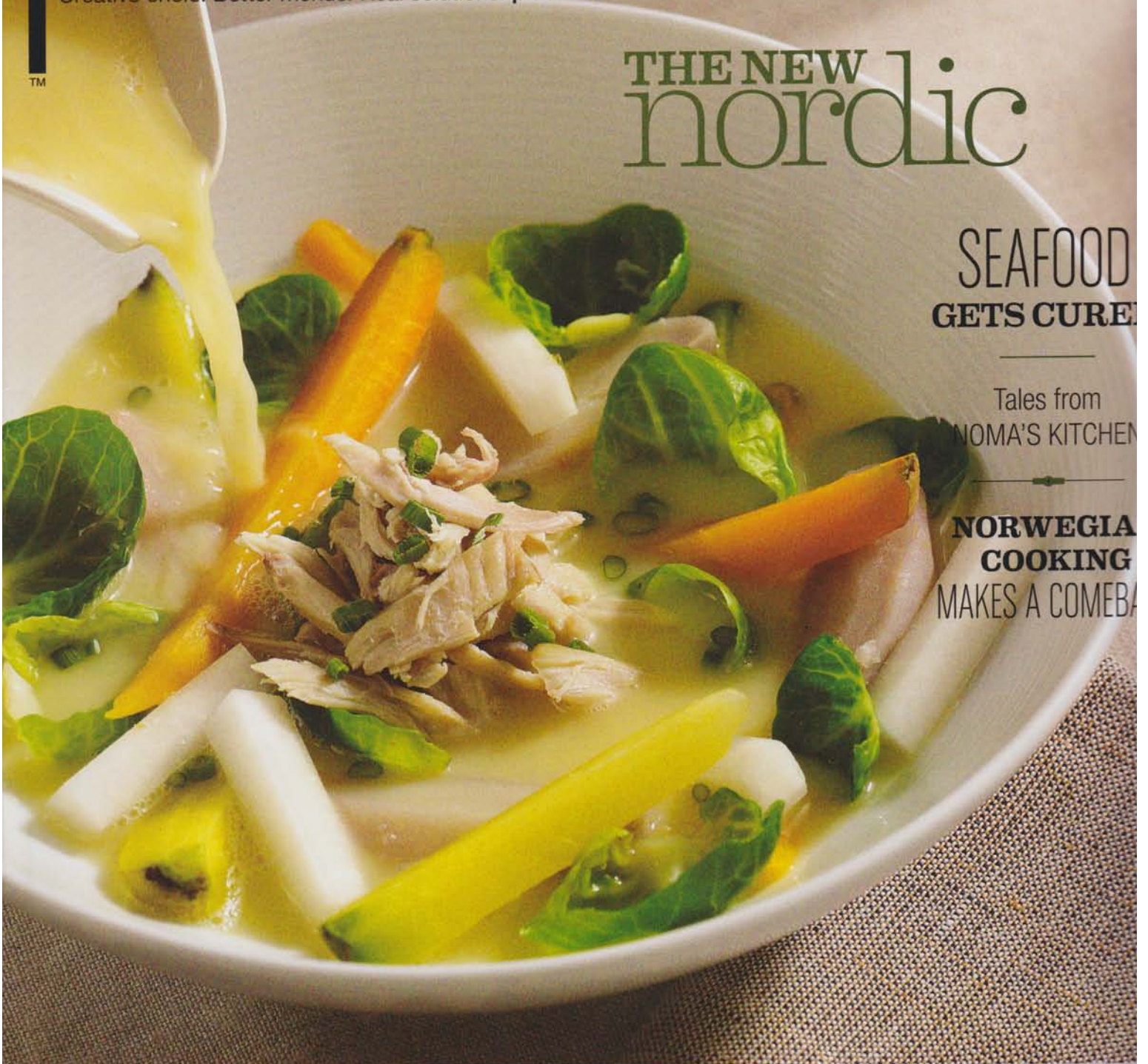
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## THE NEW nordic

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NOMA'S KITCHEN

NORWEGIA  
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# A torte sport

Fruit, custard and cream fill these decadent pastries

by Katie Robbins



When renowned pastry chef Sherry Yard traveled to Europe to study her craft, she ventured on an unexpected path.

“I had an affinity for Viennese pastry,” she says, explaining why although other young chefs went to Paris, she headed to Vienna. “It’s where the croissant was invented. Why go to where Marie Antoinette exported it to? Go to the source.”

From towering Viennese tortes to Swedish fruit soups, Northern and Central European cuisines offer a rich tradi-

tion of desserts. And around the country, today’s pastry chefs are both lovingly creating classic versions and reinterpreting these confections in inventive ways.

At Wolfgang Puck’s Spago in Los Angeles, where Yard runs the pastry program, one dessert has never left the rotation in over 15 years—the Viennese classic, *kaiserschmarrn*, or “emperor’s mess.”

Though it’s traditionally made as a pancake, Spago’s rendition of *kaiserschmarrn* is like a soufflé—a custardy concoction

of egg yolks, crème fraîche and dark rum, which is combined with flour and raisins before being folded into a meringue of egg whites and baked. “You need to know how to whip up some whites, but the important part is to buy the right ingredients. You can’t use crème fraîche that’s been over-pasteurized,” she says.

To bring more Austrian flair to the dish, Yard plates the *kaiserschmarrn* to look like the mountain outside Vienna or Salzburg (\$16, recipe, [plateonline.com](http://plateonline.com)).

"It's a sea of strawberries topped with mountains of custardy clouds," she says. "And no mountain is complete without powdered sugar."

## Why should I change something that is perfect?

— Kurt Gutenbrunner

### DESSERT FOR BREAKFAST

At Broder in Portland, Ore., Consulting Pastry Chef Alton Garcia describes his Swedish creams as a light but luscious panna cotta served with a raspberry *coulis*. "It's really indulgent, really rich," he says of the elegant dessert (\$4, recipe, [plateonline.com](#)). His *æbleskiver*, or small Danish dessert pancakes, are equally as popular. And while Broder serves the light, eggy delicacies during its lunch and seasonal dinner services, Garcia says the restaurant makes allowances for American customs, also serving the popover-pancake hybrid at breakfast with housemade lemon curd, lingonberry jam

or syrup (\$9, recipe [plateonline.com](#)).

To develop his *æbleskiver*, Garcia sought assistance from the experts.

"We [were] using a complicated recipe, and having a hard time making big batches of it," he recalls. When he complained to a customer, the diner, who has Danish roots, offered a great solution. Now instead of separating the eggs and working the whites, Garcia uses a method similar to that of making cake batter.

"You whip the eggs a long time at the beginning and make a big egg foam before adding flour, milk, clarified butter, and spices," he explains. "It's a whole lot more stable; we can make one batch in the morning and it's light and fluffy."

### MODERN TAKES ON TRADITION

Growing up in a small town on the west coast of Sweden, Emma Bengtsson watched her grandmother spend days prepping meals for family visits.

Now as pastry chef at New York City's Aquavit, Bengtsson reimagines and elevates traditional dishes.

Her update of the classic Swedish rose hip soup, *nyponsoppa* (recipe, p. 94) riffs on the traditional accompaniments of vanilla ice cream and almond biscuits by substituting almond ice cream rolled in crushed biscuits. Bengtsson also adds an interactive twist, plating the *nyponsoppa* tableside. "I send out the soup very hot," she says. "And by the time it is poured, the temperature is perfect and it slowly melts the ice cream on contact."

At Chicago's Blackbird, executive pastry chef Bryce Caron says he resists deconstructing classic dishes and instead takes traditional Scandinavian flavors like anise and plugs them into new, often

### Cherry strudel (*kirschenstrudel*)

Chef Kurt Gutenbrunner,  
Café Sabarsky, New York City

Yield: 6 servings

Menu price: \$12; food cost/serving: N/A

Sour or sweet cherries, pitted (see note)	2 Lb
Sweet breadcrumbs (see note)	3/4 C
Panko breadcrumbs	1/2 C
Almonds, sliced, toasted	2 TBS
Cornstarch, sifted	1 tsp
Vanilla extract	1/2 tsp
<i>Kirsch</i> , cherry schnapps, or cherry liqueur	splash
Butter, softened	2 TBS
Phyllo dough sheets, thawed	5 each
Butter, clarified	6 TBS
Confectioners' sugar	as needed

1. In a large bowl, mix cherries with sweet

breadcrumbs, panko, almonds, cornstarch, vanilla, *kirsch* and softened butter until well-combined.

2. On a clean, dry work surface, brush 1 phyllo sheet lightly with clarified butter and dust with confectioners' sugar. Repeat with remaining phyllo sheets and stack into layers. Mound cherry mixture across lower third of long side of phyllo, allowing a 3-inch border. Tightly roll and tuck ends and brush with clarified butter.

3. Transfer strudel, seam-side down, to parchment-lined baking sheet and dust with confectioners' sugar. Bake in center of preheated 450-degree F oven until golden brown, about 15 to 20 minutes. Remove from the oven; cool for 5 to 7 minutes. Dust with confectioners' sugar, slice and serve warm.

Note: Gutenbrunner prefers small, juicy sour cherries. This recipe was adapted for *Plate* from *Neue Cuisine: The Elegant Tastes of Vienna* by Kurt Gutenbrunner (Rizzoli, 2011). For the sweet breadcrumbs recipe, see p. 95.



Rose hip soup, Pastry Chef Emma Bengtsson, Aquavit, New York City. RECIPE, p. 94.

surprising, interpretations, like his white chocolate sponge cake, with caraway custard (\$11, recipe, [plateonline.com](http://plateonline.com)).

"A lot of people think caraway and they think rye bread or sauerkraut," he says, "But it can work in a dessert. It cuts the sweet component of the white chocolate," says Caron, who finishes the dish with buttermilk ice cream, raspberries, and a garnish of dill flowers, which offer a hint of minty freshness. The combination hints at Northern European flavors without mimicking a specific dish. "You've got the buttermilk, which kind of reminds me of Scandinavian fresh cheeses, you've got caraway, you've got dill," says Caron.

When Caron first tried a similar caraway-based dessert during a 2007 stint as Blackbird's sous chef, diners were wary of the unorthodox concoction, but he says the release of the Noma cookbook has made people experimental with Nordic flavors.

#### KEEPING IT CLASSIC

This interest in Central and Northern European cuisine also gave Klaus Rainer the inspiration for his Austrian-style *gas-thaus*. Diners at his other San Francisco restaurants asked, "Where's the *schnitzel* and the *apfelstrudel*?" Those dishes Austria is known for," recalls Rainer.

And so he opened Leopold's, where he cleaves to the classics like his raspberry *Linzer torte* (\$6.25, recipe, [plateonline.com](http://plateonline.com)) and *apfelstrudel* (\$6.25, recipe, [plateonline.com](http://plateonline.com)), which he makes from recipes he guesses are hundreds of years old. For the strudel, Rainer insists on Golden Delicious apples. "They become sweet when they're baked slow," he says.

Though Kurt Gutenbrunner, whose recent *Neue Cuisine* (Rizzoli, 2011) show-

cases the modernized Austrian classics he serves at Wallsé in New York City, is all for updating dishes, when it comes to the classic desserts he serves at Café Sabarsky, he doesn't steer far from tradition. The menu all-stars are staples of the Viennese coffeehouse—*kirschenstrudel* (\$12, recipe, p. 77), *Linzer torte*, and his chocolate *sachertorte*, with apricot jam.

"If you go to Vienna, they're proud of their *sachertorte*" he says. "That's the beauty of Austria. We still do classics very well." "The Viennese still play Mozart," he says. "They didn't change it right? There's nothing to change. Why should I change something that's perfect?"

Katie Robbins loves apple strudel for dessert. For recipes from this article and more, visit [plateonline.com](http://plateonline.com).

#### DOUGH IN THE KNOW

The only tricky part of strudel, says Rainer, is rolling the dough, which can pull and tear apart. To keep his dough pliant, Rainer adds lukewarm water and clarified butter.