



A member of the kitchen staff at Oceans Two helping to prepare the meal.

Chefs bring out creativity

by David Hinkson

Innovation and creativity, plus fantastic flavour, were the order of the night as the first **Art of Cuisine** dinner was held at the Oceans Two resort in St Lawrence Gap, Christ Church.

The event last week was part of a week-long culinary showcase put on by the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA), featuring United Kingdom-based Barbadian chef, Jason Howard, and some of his renowned associates from the international culinary

arena, including: American chef Jason Licker, Marco Maestoso from Italy, Angel Betancourt from Venezuela, Sabastian Wussler from Germany, and Miles Watson from New Zealand. Oceans Two's resident chef, Michael Harrison, also displayed his talent.

The overall aim of the showcase, which also featured workshops for local chefs and "field trips" for the visiting chefs in which they sought out items to cook, was to show the quality and versatility of local produce, and to "discover new products and rediscover some that have been lost to history", as Howard said

at the inaugural press briefing.

The first course was Bajan black belly lamb and tropical fruit egg. When the waiter showed up with a bowl containing two eggshells cut in half, and a small jug of hot water which he poured on them, causing steam to rise, he certainly opened our eyes! He presented us with what looked like raw eggs. What a big surprise awaited us. The "egg yolk" was pureed mango, which Howard said the chefs had gathered in their travels around the island earlier in the week, the "egg white" was a coconut-flavoured rum, and the steam helped blend the flavours together. The eggshells were resting in a bowl full of seaweed gathered from the beach behind Oceans Two that same morning. The chef added that he used "a simple tool that was over 100 years old" to cleanly extract the chicken egg from the shell.

The second course focused on seafood: thinly sliced cured marlin – a fish usually sold and prepared in steak form – with an avocado puree, pickled gooseberry caviar (yes, that fruit was arranged to resemble the high-priced delicacy), with sweet potato, and locally grown herbs, which chef Marco Maestoso said earlier "were so good we could eat them straight from the ground".

The third course comprised fruit and vegetables, including roasted yellow meat breadfruit which had a terrific flavour, along with smoked tomato and grilled watermelon, and what the chefs called a "lemongrass air" – a bubbly liquid made from lemongrass used to garnish the breadfruit. Oh, and did I mention the seasoning for this dish was arranged in the shape of the Oceans Two logo?

There was a choice of two entrees, including a well marinated beef steak with amazing flavour – perhaps owing to the scotch bonnet glaze and salted plantain butter that formed part of the package – and the fried sweet potato that garnished it was equally



The beef main course.

delightful.

Chef Howard had previously spoken about "roasting a sweet potato for three hours" when he talked about new ways to use everyday ground provisions, and he brought that to the table as the vegetarian option. He added some coconut to it and by all indications patrons enjoyed that meal too.

Dessert was equally fascinating, as it comprised a citrus Pavlova with orange pastry cream, sorrel powder, mango foam and passion fruit gel.

The chefs proved their point: We have some great local produce available that can be used in highly innovative and creative ways. As Howard said, we just need to market it more effectively, not only to visitors, but we must also reintroduce these foods to the upcoming generation, using different preparation methods to make them more appealing if necessary.

The staff at Oceans Two also deserve commendation for their great hospitality and the quick and efficient way in which they rearranged the entire dining area after the rain came. The staff assembled for the dinner, including general manager Paul Collymore, all chipped in and moved the tables and chairs under a tent.

The second dinner took place last Thursday evening at Daphne's Restaurant on the west coast of Barbados, while the **Art of Cuisine** concludes with high tea at the Crane Beach Resort on Sunday at 4 p.m.



The tropical fruit egg presentation. The steam helped to get the "egg" to the right consistency.