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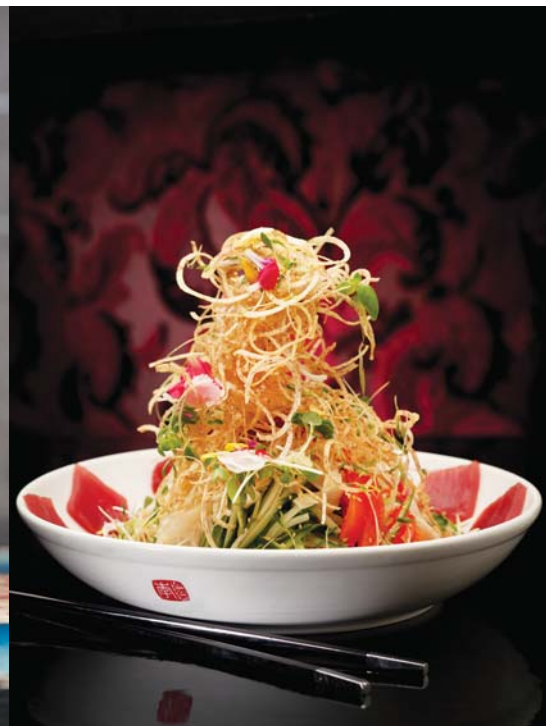
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SO FAR, SO GOOD

FROM FRANCE TO SINGAPORE,
INTERNATIONAL CHEF SUSUR LEE RETURNS
FROM A CULINARY JAUNT TEEMING WITH NEW IDEAS.

WRITTEN BY SUSUR LEE



From Left: Chef Susur Lee's caramelized black cod with Cantonese preserves; Oyster caesar; Singaporean style slaw.

Since I spend a good deal of my time travelling and cooking, I'm not too pressured to hunt for new ideas or dishes – I usually find them in the local ingredients of the countries that I visit, or through the chefs who are sharing the kitchen with me.

This spring, while I was in Singapore, I had an opportunity to exchange recipes and cooking techniques for five days with chef Michel Sarran, who owns and

operates the highly respected Michel Sarran restaurant in Toulouse, France.

I picked up a couple of valuable tips from Michel, especially in the dessert repertoire. Michel is a fan of molecular cuisine, and he taught me a terrific almond-based dessert that is feather-light and has a spectacular colour: we call it the “Jade Madeleine.” In Singapore, Michel and I also improvised a dessert that combined French pastry techniques with the traditional Asian

sweet dumpling. We made a crispy Chinese doughnut filled with rum-and-chestnut purée, served with an espresso coffee sauce. It's a delicious explosion in your mouth!

One recurring observation I made over the last few months, while travelling through North America and Asia, is that dining trends are following global patterns of social activity. People won't select a restaurant based on the food alone; they're seeking a complete and

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAULA WILSON

“RECIPES THAT ARE VERY BUTTERY AND CREAMY REALLY DON’T INTEREST ME THAT MUCH – NOT BECAUSE OF THE EXTRA CALORIES, BUT BECAUSE WHEN YOU’RE TOO FULL, YOU CANNOT TASTE GOOD COOKING.”

– Susur Lee



Lee Restaurant rests along a buzzing King Street West.

integrated experience. Diners are discriminating about the ambience of the room, the décor and lighting, the quality (and volume!) of music, the table settings, the “buzz” at the bar. Consciously and subconsciously, people want sensory pleasures from their dining environment. They’re looking for a “vibe.”


I’ll be opening a new restaurant called Bent in Toronto sometime this summer, and I’m excited about a new menu

concept that I’m calling “Asian bar crudo.” My eldest son, Levi, who has been working with me in the business for two years now, is crazy about seafood, and he’s persuaded me to do more of it.

A raw bar typically serves oysters, but my menu will be more expansive. I’m going to mix and match European and Asian dishes, both seafood and meat. There will be Japanese ceviche and Peruvian sashimi, seafood and

beef tartares, carpaccio and bresaola. I learned several wonderful ceviche and escabiche recipes from Miami chef Douglas Rodrigues last year, when he visited Toronto as my guest chef.

This June, my restaurant Lee will be offering a spring menu that concentrates on fresh seasonal ingredients and local produce. There will be my signature watermelon salad, soft-shell crab, and B.C. spotted prawns steamed in the shell to retain their juices, and served with calamansi-chili-soy dip.

My kitchens, both Lee and the new establishment, will focus on health-conscious dishes that are flavourful and light. Recipes that are very buttery and creamy really don’t interest me that much – not because of the extra calories, but because when you’re too full, you cannot taste good cooking. 



SUSUR LEE
GUEST FOOD EDITOR

International chef Susur Lee is perhaps best-known to Toronto diners for his hot King Street West restaurant Lee, but this culinary mastermind also stands behind Zentan in Washington, D.C. and Chinois By Susur Lee in Singapore. In 2010, he became a sensation on the Food Network’s *Top Chef Master*, where he bested 20 competitors. Chef Susur Lee recently returned from a cooking excursion at My Humble House in Singapore, and a guest stint at the Lucky Rice festival in New York City. Curious epicureans should look out for his next venture, Bent, at 777 Dundas St. West this summer. www.susur.com