

Food

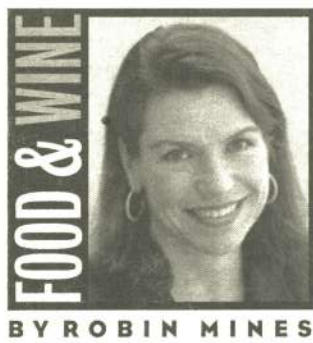
A taste of Morocco in Coal Harbour

At the tender age of 23, he was working towards a business degree by day and managing a Washington, DC nightclub by late, late night. At 31, he was the executive chef of the Rabat Hilton in Morocco — and as if that amount of precocious responsibility wasn't enough, he was appointed food and beverage manager, too.

Dining

BravoBistro
100-550 Denman
604 688-3714 \$\$\$

Today, 38-year-old Casablanca-born Abdel Elatouabi is taking it easy — sort of. Of course, being the proud chef owner of the new BravoBistro at the foot of Denman on the edge of Coal Harbour isn't exactly a walk in Stanley Park (more like the equivalent of a couple of full-time jobs with overtime) but the sheer joy of being his own boss keeps him bright-eyed and bushy-tailed long past the time the rest of us would have collapsed in a twitching, exhausted heap.



BY ROBIN MINES

I love BravoBistro for a number of good reasons, but the cheerful and witty presence of chef Abdel is the biggest one. I'm not alone; since March 18th when he served his first customer, he's been the host with the most for a rapidly expanding clutch of local enthusiasts, who have been known to push tables together and share the wine around with new friends while Abdel drops by for a few minutes' kibitzing.

He'll do the same for you, too, because he's just that kind of people-loving guy. He also wants to make sure that the fish or chicken or steak he's cooked for you is making you happy.

"I love food, I enjoy food," he says, his brown eyes sparkling. "And I'm very picky." He'll be

thrilled if you're just as fanatical.

Frankly, though, you'd be hard-pressed to find anything to grouse about at Bravo. In fact, you're probably going to spend your chat with Abdel picking his brain about his extraordinary dishes. What is that fascinating touch of something or other that makes the mushroom sauce in this classic starter of veal sweetbreads so different? (It's cumin, pink peppercorns and green Madagascar peppercorns.) What's in the Moroccan chermoula that gives his escarole — a tender, meaty white-fish from the Caribbean — such irresistible zing? (It's parsley, cilantro, cayenne, paprika, cumin, white pepper, ginger powder, chili flakes, fresh garlic oil and 'lots of lemon. Lots.' No one ever accused Moroccan cuisine of being boring.)

While the complex flavours of Morocco certainly inform a portion of Bravo's menu, Abdel keeps the rest of it oriented to the West Coast via France and Italy; you'll find things like butternut squash ravioli, potato-wrapped halibut and herb-crusted rack of lamb with saffron ratatouille. The presentation is modern and sophisticated: shapely white square and rectangular plates-on-



Abdel Elatouabi, executive chef, and Darilyn Nemcsok, pastry chef, serve it up at BravoBistro, 100-550 Denman. Photo by Doug Shanks

plates, colourful salsas, baby pea shoot garnishes.

You can push the limits of your charge card just as far as you dare; Abdel's got some premium bottles of wine at laughably-low markups to maximize the temptation factor — but if money is an object you can

have a three-course table d'hôte for \$25 or \$35, complete with a seriously impressive dessert constructed by 23-year-old pastry prodigy Darilyn Nemcsok.

"I think it's important to know your guests," says Abdel with conviction, "to know what they

like and what they don't like, because if you lose your customers, you're going to lose your business" — he snaps his strong fingers — "just like that." Considering his tireless devotion to his customers, I'd say the chances of that ever happening couldn't be more remote. ☺

City Cooks

Recipes

with Simi Sara

...9:00 a.m. and noon weekdays

Citytv

Bikram Singh: Chef, Bombay Se

Pav Bhaji

Ingredients:

250g cauliflower
2 potatoes
100g green peas
100g carrots
50g green peppers
3 cups chopped onion
1 tbsp ginger/garlic paste
3 tbsp pav bhaji masala
1 bunch cilantro
2 tomatoes, chopped
2 cups tomato puree
1 tsp coriander powder
1 tsp cumin powder
400g butter
1 lemon
Salt to taste

Directions: 1. Boil cauliflower, potatoes, carrots and green peas until soft and mushy. 2. Heat butter in a pan. Add 2 cups of chopped onions until golden brown. Add ginger garlic paste to that. 3. Now add the pav bhaji masala, cumin and coriander powder. Add the tomato puree to his mixture and cook until the masala is done. 4. To this, add the boiled vegetables and green peppers. 5. Mash this mix into a paste. Add 1/2 cup of water and cook until all

vegetables blend.

5. Serve hot topped with butter, chopped tomatoes, onion and cilantro. Serve with pao (bread).

Bombay Style Fish Curry

Ingredients:

4 cod loins
1 tsp ginger/garlic paste
2 tbsp oil (mustard)
2 whole red chilies
1/4 tsp mustard seeds
4 - 5 curry leaves
1/4 tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp cumin powder
1 tsp coriander powder
A pinch asafoetida
2 cups tomato puree
150 ml coconut milk
1 bunch cilantro
1 tsp ginger julienne
1 lemon
Salt to taste

Directions: 1. Heat oil in a pan. Add whole red chilies, mustard seeds and curry leaves. Cook until

they crackle. 2. Add ginger, garlic paste and saute until golden brown. 3. To this, add the dry powdered masalas, turmeric, cumin and coriander. 4. Add tomato puree and mix well so that the masalas blend in with the puree. 5. Now add the fish loins, cover and cook for about 5 - 7 minutes on high heat. 6. Once the fish is cooked, add coconut milk and chopped cilantro. 7. Dish out in a bowl, garnish with ginger julienne. Serve with boiled rice and lemon wedges.

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