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Mousse and Mozart make beautiful music



Hilton executive chef Kevin Prendergast: "I found a lot of Mozart's favourite meals and other foods common to Austria that I've incorporated."

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David George-Cosh, National Post

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Can nourishment and the opera co-exist? Would you mistake an aria di sorbetto for orange sorbet? Is a passaggio part of a soprano's vocal range or a popular pasta sauce? How about pork cheeks? Does

that work?

Hilton Toronto's executive chef, Kevin Prendergast, certainly thinks so. He's hoping his menu, designed around Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, will draw in both the curious and the hungry during the opera's sold-out run this month. The Hilton and the Canadian Opera Company are joining forces for an event that includes both a brief discussion of opera's link with the gastrointestinal system, and then actual consumption of opera-themed goodies.

Some of the delicacies Mr. Prendergast will be serving: smoked trout (the play is set by the sea) with a white asparagus mousse (meant to evoke Mozart's whimsy), and a pistachio-crusting veal filet mignon (bridging Mozart's time and our palate). The chef dishes out what his culinary plans are to David George-Cosh:

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Q: Opera and gourmet food, together at last?

A: Finally! What we're trying to do is tie in events between our hotel and the Four Seasons Centre, which is just a couple minutes away, and blend two different mediums together. When you're at the opera, it's visual and aural but here it's all culinary -- the ultimate package.

Q: On the surface, opera and food don't really seem to mesh too well. To me, anyways.

A: I think it's just the next step. Food and wine, food and beer, and the entertainment segment is the next avenue to be explored and tied in with.

Q: Is there a soprano special I can order?

A: Not really. I've taken some themes from the opera and from Mozart's life to create an interesting menu. This year's the anniversary of Mozart's 250th birthday, so a lot of the items on the menu are themed around Mozart himself with an Austrian theme. During my research I found a lot of Mozart's favourite meals and other foods common to Austria that I've incorporated in this menu.

Q: How exactly do you incorporate scenes from the opera into a meal?

A: Well, there's a sequence in the play where the two couples separate and the men check to see if the women are faithful to them. I've made a dessert item on the menu with four marzipan dumplings, that when you first see them on the plate, you can't tell which one is which until you cut into them.

Q: Do you think people will get that?

A: I hope that people that go to the opera will get it but you never know. It could just be another meal to them.

Q: Are you a fan of Mozart?

A: I do like his music. Just like food, he's become an acquired taste.

Q: Do you even like opera?

A: I'll be honest, I haven't been to one yet but I look forward to going to my first show soon.

Q: Can you see yourself doing something similar for future operas?

A: We did something similar for Wagner's Ring Cycle that just ended and after this we'll do something on the National Ballet's Nutcracker for a few weeks.

Q: Will there be any nuts involved?

A: (Laughter) It would only make sense, wouldn't it?

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