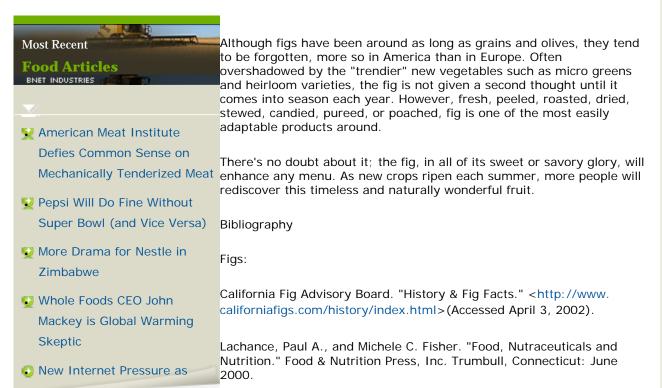


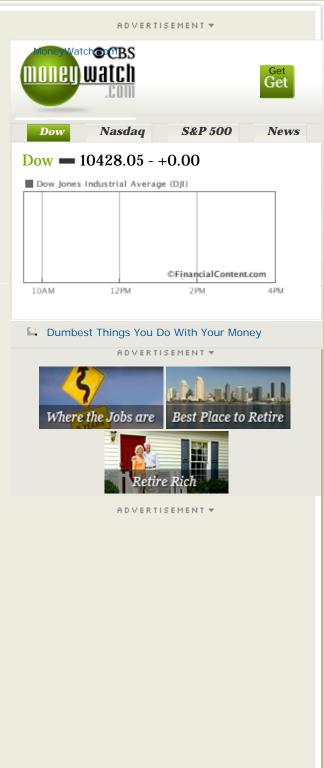


Art Culinaire, Fall, 2002



In addition to providing a healthful source of nutrients, figs have other beneficial uses. A milky-white liquid bleeds out of the stems when they are cut. This fluid is called the fig latex and has antibacterial and anti-parasitic properties. Homeopaths or naturalists can use this latex. In the food service industry, the fig latex is also used for rendering fat and tenderizing meat. In addition, as an ingredient in junket, it helps coagulate cheese as well and is considered a thickening agent for many other foods. Oddly enough, it is this very latex that prevents gelatin from setting when combined with figs.





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Root, Waverly. Food. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980.

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Being of formidable size, Michael Cimarusti can appear intimidating at first glance. Actually, he's just an affable guy who has an obsession with cooking--and anything fishy. At the Water Grill, his goal is to revive L.A., gastronomically speaking. After all, in a city of "see and be seen," where waistlines and wrinkles are constantly scrutinized, people do have to eat. It also helps that the popular Zone and Atkins Diets are fish f-friendly--a very important accommodation in restaurants in L. A.

Most chefs might feel constrained by focusing so heavily on fish. However, for Cimarusti, there is nothing limiting about having a menu heavily accented with all things fishy. Tentacles and claws are great mediums to stage his ability and style.

Cimarusti acquired most of his training in New York City. Perhaps the most significant position he held during his "growing" years was at the original Le Cirque, when owner Sirio Maccioni still worked the door. He eventually opened Circo, the first addition to the Maccioni restaurant group. Here, he cooked in the brigade of Sylvain-Portay and later, in that of Sottha Khun. He eventually realized his desire to go to work with some of the culinary legends in Europe.

The dream of working in French kitchens eventually became a reality. Both Michael and his wife, Cristina, a pastry chef, spent a year in France traveling together and learning with great chefs. On Michael's first day at L'Arpege, three-star Michaelin Chef Alain Passard announced to his staff, "No one should speak anglaise to the Americane." Michael understood that he would never fully absorb the French experience if language were a barrier.



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