

# IN NATURE

## THE FALL CRISP SALAD



Best Appetizer  
CATIE Awards 2025





# Synopsis

Step into the vibrant essence of autumn with our enchanting entry, "In Nature - The Fall Crisp Salad." Designed to harmonize with the stunning new wing of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles, this appetizer celebrates the beauty of the season while embodying a commitment to local and organic ingredients.

"In Nature - The Fall Crisp Salad" is a homage to the seasonal bounty that surrounds us. Served as a celebration of fall, inviting guests to experience the rich tapestry of flavors and colors that inspire and connect us to the beauty of our environment.





# The Concept

Our entry, "In Nature - The Fall Crisp Salad," embodies a celebration of seasonal abundance, meticulously crafted for the discerning palate of the Natural History Museum esteemed donor clientele. Due to the pre-plated nature of the dish, the client emphasized the importance of it mirroring the natural table scape, carefully curated for a facility dedicated to exploring and understanding the natural world.

We envisioned a stunning presentation on stoneware plates, reflecting the earthy aesthetics of the natural world. The salad transforms into a vibrant mosaic tapestry, showcasing an array of organic, fresh seasonal vegetables, each carefully selected to highlight the essence of fall. Envision a vibrant symphony of colors and textures: crisp greens intermingling with fiery orange citrus segments and deep red fig hearts, complemented with icewine-poached pears and a texture of nutty crunch from local seeds and nuts—all artfully arranged to provide an eye-catching centerpiece that enhances the overall table scape.

Understanding the sophisticated tastes of our audience—donors who have "seen it all"—we focused on delivering a dish that is both innovative and satisfying. Every layer of flavor is thoughtfully curated, emphasizing the freshness and quality of local produce. With a subtle yet distinctive dressing (Pear Cider Vinaigrette) that harmonizes the elements. "In Nature - The Fall Crisp Salad" engaged the senses and created a memorable dining experience, truly reflective of the rich relationship between nature and culinary artistry.





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Citrus segments

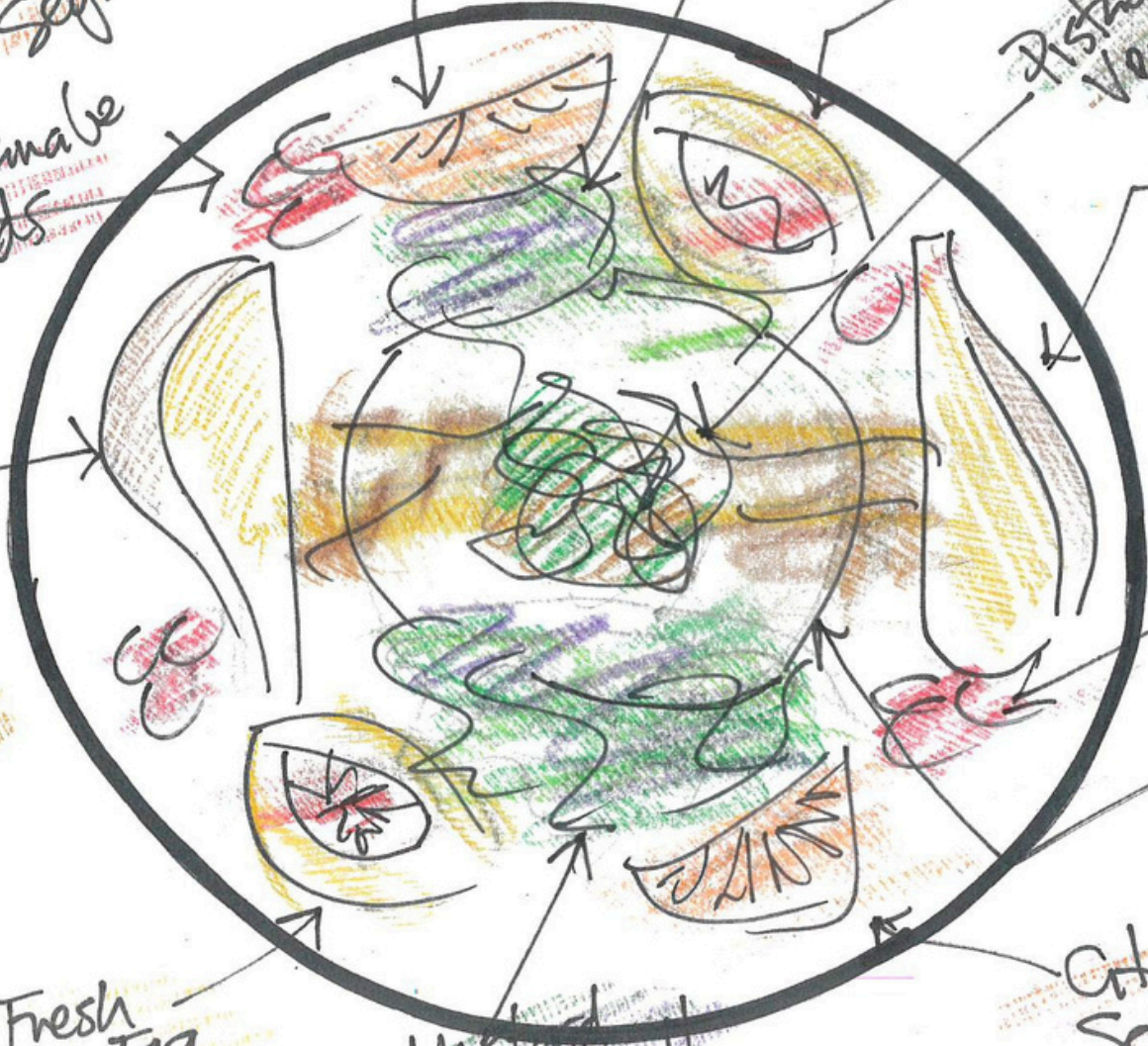
Mustard Frill

Fresh Fig

Pistachio Verde on top

Pomegranate Seeds

Poached Pears



Pomegranate Seeds

Poached Pears

Middle Fresh Burrata

Fresh Fig

Mustard Frill

Citrus Segments



# Qualities Apropos

## The Star of The Show - Ingredients

Mustard Frill, Curly Endive, Wild Rocket, Fig Hearts, Smoked Pecan Salsa Verde, Burrata, Poached Pears, Pomegranate Seeds, Citrus Segments, Molasses - Pear Cider Vinaigrette, Ciabatta Toast

**Seasonal Relevance:** This appetizer highlights the beauty of the fall season through its selection of seasonal ingredients. By showcasing vibrant colors and fresh produce available at this time, the salad resonates with the themes of nature and change, aligning perfectly with the museum's focus.

**The Design - Pre Plated Culinary Artistry:** A Chef's artistic medium is the plating of food. The dish's artistic presentation on stoneware plates reflects the intricate beauty of the natural world. Its mosaic-like arrangement of colors and textures not only appeals to the eye but also enhances the overall table scape, creating an elevated dining experience suitable for distinguished guests. The culinary team understands the challenge that the guests eat with their eyes first.

**Reflections of the Museum's Mission - Organic and Local Sourcing:** The use of organic, locally sourced ingredients underscores a commitment to sustainability and ecological awareness—values that resonate deeply with the museum's mission. This not only supports local producers but also reflects an understanding of the interconnectedness of food and the environment.

**Sophisticated Flavor Profile:** Crafted to please a discerning palate, the salad combines a variety of tastes—crunchy, earthy, and tangy—providing an intriguing culinary experience that meets the high expectations of donors and attendees.

**Engagement with Nature:** The dish not only serves as a meal but as a conversation starter, inviting guests to appreciate and reflect on the natural elements present in the food. This aligns with the museum's educational mission, promoting awareness about natural ecosystems and seasonal cycles.





# The Production

At the heart of our planning process was a dedicated focus on acquisition and purchasing. Recognizing that our event was scheduled for a Thursday, we aimed to highlight the local and seasonal qualities of our ingredients. A full week prior, our executive chef and executive sous chef embarked on a journey to the Santa Monica Farmers Market, engaging directly with farmers to communicate our specific needs and ensure that sourcing would not be an issue. They returned the following Wednesday to personally inspect and select the freshest produce.

In our kitchen, we set out to create a symphony of flavors. We infused our pecans with a delightful smoky essence using bourbon maple smoked chips. Meanwhile, our poached pears were crafted with ice wine, a touch of honey, and an array of carefully chosen seasonings, resulting in a rich and complex taste.

To ensure a cohesive presentation, our executive chef prepared a sample salad at our facility, which we meticulously photographed. This image was laminated and served as our guiding template for plating 200 salads for the event. Each plate featured 17 thoughtfully curated elements, requiring the collaborative effort of eight chefs working in two consecutive shifts to ensure timely perfection.

On the day of the event, we instructed our staff to hand-carry each plate, setting them on the tables in anticipation of our guests' arrival. Two captains monitored the floor, ensuring that every detail met our high standards and was arranged with precision.

The true reward came when our clients expressed their admiration for the salads, praising their beauty and the exceptional freshness of the ingredients. Moments like these remind us of the artistry and care that go into our craft, affirming our commitment to excellence.





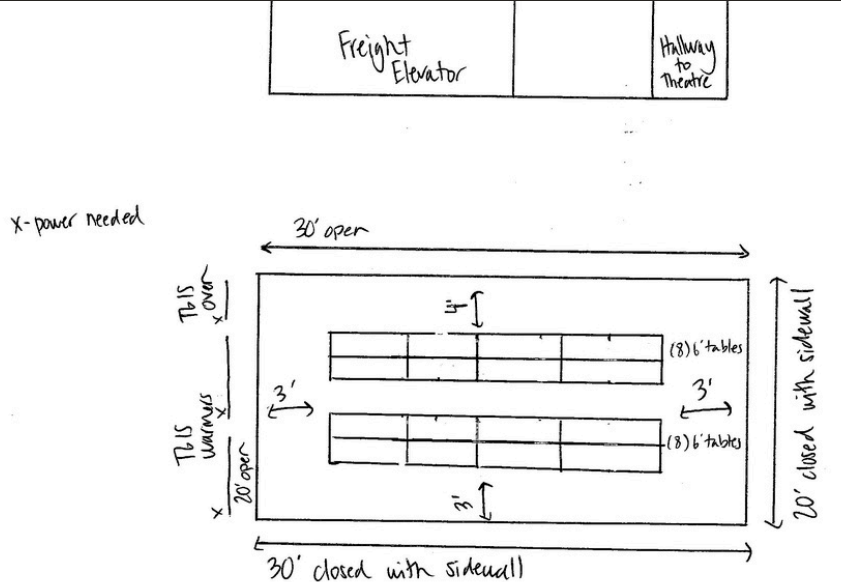
# Challenges & Obstacles

Crafting a masterpiece, much like the iconic film "The Godfather," is not solely the vision of a director; it is the result of a dedicated team of talented individuals working in harmony to create magic behind the scenes. This principle resonated deeply as we prepared for our event.

We established a satellite kitchen on a bare asphalt surface, which presented its own unique set of challenges, notably the absence of adequate lighting. To navigate these obstacles, we collaborated with our rental vendor to design a tent that would provide sufficient plating space and lighting, allowing us to complete the salads on a tight schedule while remaining dry and illuminating our culinary creations.

The client underscored the importance of the salad being preset, integrating it as a crucial element of the overall design. This meant that the presentation had to not only captivate the eye but also resonate with the theme of the event. Yet, we knew that beauty alone could leave guests feeling unfulfilled. Therefore, the salad needed to be a breathtaking visual delight while also offering a harmonious blend of flavors and textures that would tantalize their palates.

In the end, the success of our production depended on the collective passion and dedication of our team, all striving to create a dish that was truly ethereal, both in its presentation and taste. Together, we transformed culinary artistry into a memorable experience that resonated with our guests.





# Recipes

## FALL CRISP SALAD - THE ELEMENTS

MUSTARD FRILL, CURLY ENDIVE, WILD ROCKET, FIG HEARTS, SMOKED PECAN SALSA VERDE, BURRATA, POACHED PEARS, POMEGRANATE SEEDS, CITRUS SEGMENTS, MOLASSES - PEAR CIDER VINAIGRETTE, CIABATTA TOAST

### **\*\*FRUIT\*\***

8 EA FIGS, FRESH (QUARTERED)  
3 EA ORANGE, NAVEL (SUPREME/ SEGMENTS)  
1 EA POMEGRANATE

### **\*\*ICEWINE POACHED PEARS\*\***

4 EA PEARS, BOSCH  
(PEELED AND BOTTOMS TRIMMED FLAT)  
1 BTL (187ML) ICEWINE  
2 CUPS WATER  
2 CUPS SUGAR, WHITE  
1 TSP LEMON ZEST  
1 TSP LEMON JUICE  
2 EA CINNAMON STICK  
3 EA CLOVES, WHOLE  
1 EA STAR ANISE  
1 TSP VANILLA EXTRACT

### **\*\*GREENS\*\***

1 EA ENDIVE (LEAVES, CUT 1" BIAS)  
1 EA RED MUSTARD FRILL  
4OZ ARUGULA, WILD

### **\*\*DAIRY\*\***

10 EA BURRATA CHEESE (2OZ)

### **\*\*CIABATTA TOAST\*\***

1 LOAF CIABATTA BREAD (SLICED 1/8" THICKNESS)  
2 OZ PARMESAN CHEESE, SHREDDED

### **\*\*SMOKED SALSA VERDE\*\***

3 CUP PECANS, BOURBON MAPLE SMOKED CHIPS  
1/2 EA RED ONION  
1 CLOVE GARLIC  
2 T LEMON JUICE  
1/2 TSP LEMON ZEST  
1/4 CUP MINT, CHOPPED  
1 TSP THYME, CHOPPED  
1/4 CUP OLIVE OIL BLEND  
2 T HONEY  
1 T SHERRY VINEGAR  
TT SALT

### **\*\*POMEGRANATE MOLASSES\*\***

4 CUPS POMEGRANATE JUICE  
1/2 CUP OF SUGAR  
1 T FRESHLY SQUEEZED LEMON JUICE

### **\*\*PEAR CIDER VINAIGRETTE\*\***

1 EA BOSCH PEAR  
(PEELED, CORED, COARSELY CHOPPED)  
5 T CHAMPAGNE VINEGAR  
1 TSP DIJON MUSTARD  
1/2 TSP SALT, KOSHER  
1/4 TSP BLACK PEPPER, GROUND  
5 T EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL



# Recipes

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## **METHOD:**

### **\*\*FOR THE ICEWINE POACHED PEARS\*\***

1. PEEL THE PEARS MAKING SURE YOU KEEP THE STEM INTACT. TRIM THE BOTTOMS OF THE PEARS TO HELP KEEP THEM FLAT AND STAND UP STRAIGHT.
2. IN A MEDIUM STOCK POT ADD THE ICEWINE, WATER, SUGAR, LEMON ZEST, LEMON JUICE, CINNAMON STICK, CLOVES, STAR ANISE AND VANILLA EXTRACT AND PLACE OVER MEDIUM-HIGH HEAT.
3. ONCE SIMMERING, ADD THE PEARS AND POACH, UNCOVERED, FOR ABOUT 25 MINUTES, UNTIL TENDER. NOTE THE COOKING TIME MAY VARY SLIGHTLY DEPENDING ON THE SIZE PEARS YOU USE. USING A SLOTTED SPOON, REMOVE THE PEARS FROM THE POACHING LIQUID, PLACE IN A SHALLOW BOWL AND SET ASIDE.
4. RETURN THE POACHING LIQUID TO A SIMMER AND REDUCE BY 2/3RDS, WHICH SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 20 MINUTES.
5. THE SYRUP IS READY WHEN IT IS THICK ENOUGH TO COAT THE BACK OF A SPOON. REMOVE THE CINNAMON STICK THE POACHING LIQUID AND AND STRAIN THROUGH A FINE STRAINER.
6. SLICE THE PEARS IN HALF, CORE OUT CENTER AND CUT INTO 6 SEGMENTS EACH PEAR. RESERVE IN LIQUID UNTIL READY FOR PLATE UP.

### **\*\*FOR THE SMOKED PECAN SALSA VERDE\*\***

1. SMOKE PECANS: PREHEAT SMOKER TO 225 F. SMOKE PECANS FOR APROX 1 HOUR OR UNTIL THEY ARE BROWNEED AND FRAGRANT
2. COOL THEN CHOP PECANS
3. IN FOOD PROCESSOR, ROUGH CHOP GARLIC, RED ONION, PISTACHIOS AND MINT
4. ADD IN ALL OTHER INGREDIENTS AND MIX UNTIL COMBINED
5. RERVE IN DELI CUP(S) UNTIL READY FOR PLATE UP

### **\*\*FOR THE POMEGRANATE MOLLASSES\*\***

1. IN A WIDE 3-QUART STAINLESS-STEEL SAUTÉ PAN, BRING POMEGRANATE JUICE TO A BARE SIMMER OVER MEDIUM HEAT. REDUCE HEAT TO MEDIUM-LOW TO MAINTAIN A BARE SIMMER AND COOK, STIRRING AND OCCASIONALLY WIPING DOWN THE SIDES OF THE SKILLET WITH A SILICONE SPATULA, UNTIL REDUCED TO ABOUT 2/3 CUP AND JUICE HAS BECOME SYRUPY ENOUGH TO LIGHTLY COAT THE BACK OF A SPOON, ABOUT 1 HOUR 30 MINUTES; ADJUST HEAT AS NECESSARY TO KEEP THE LIQUID AT A BARE SIMMER THE ENTIRE TIME WITHOUT BOILING.
2. REMOVE FROM THE HEAT, LET COOL SLIGHTLY, THEN TRANSFER TO A CLEAN, DRY DELI CUP AND SEAL TIGHTLY. RESERVE FOR PLATE UP.

### **\*\*FOR THE PEAR CIDER VINAIGRETTE\*\***

1. THROW EVERYTHING EXCEPT THE OLIVE OIL INTO THE BOWL OF THE FOOD PROCESSOR FITTED WITH A METAL BLADE. WHIRL AROUND ENOUGH TO BREAK UP THE PEAR.
2. ADD THE OLIVE OIL AND WHIRL TO COMPLETELY EMULSIFY, ABOUT 1 MINUTE OR LESS.
3. TASTE AND ADJUST SEASONING IF NEEDED AND PLACE IN A SQUEEZE BOTTLE. RESERVE FOR PLATE UP

### **\*\*FOR THE CIABATTA TOAST\*\***

1. PREHEAT OVEN TO 350 F.
2. LINE UP SLICED CIABATTA ON SHEET PAN LINED WITH PARCHMENT PAPER AND DRESSED WITH EVOO
3. SPRINKLE PARMESAN CHEESE OVER CIABATTA
4. BAKE IN OVEN FOR APPROXIMATELY 8 MINUTES OR UNTIL GOLDEN BROWN





# Recipes

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## **\*\*FOR ASSEMBLY\*\***

- 1. PLACE BURRATA CHEESE IN CENTER OF PLATE**
- 2. WORK AROUND PLATE IN THE FOLLOWING ORDER (3 OF EACH KIND)  
PEARS->FIGS->CITRUS SEGMENTS**
- 3. ADD 1 TSP OF SMOKED PECAN SALSA VERDE OVER BURRATA CHEESE**
- 4. WORK AROUND GREENS DELICATELY AROUND FRUIT  
ENDIVE (3 EA)-> RED FRILL-> ARUGULA**
- 5. SPRINKLE PLATE WITH POMEGRANATE SEEDS**
- 6. TOP BURRATA CHEESE WITH POMEGRANATE MOLASSES AND SPRINKLE WITH FINISHING SALT**
- 7. DRIZZLE LIGHTLY PEAR CIDER VINAIGRETTE OVER LETTUCE**
- 8. FINISH WITH CIABATTA TOAST**



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