

1. Your opinion about increasing trend of “cooking with a twist”

If you want my opinion on "cooking with a twist", let's start by defining what the "twist" means. Cooking styles are generally classified by a number of criteria. Taking for example the regional classification of food, you would differentiate Italian cuisine from French cuisine, from Lebanese cuisine and Japanese cuisine etc. Taking cooking styles for classification of food you would differentiate slow food from fast food.

There are infinite ways to classify cuisine, and in every one of these recognizable ways, if you introduce an ingredient, a presentation technique, or a cooking technique from another style, then that would be breaking from the characteristics of the style, and would be considered cooking with a twist.

My opinion on that is very clear, before allowing yourself to customize an already existing classical style of cooking; you should have mastered this style, become accustomed to its ingredients, tastes, spices, and preparation techniques. Only then can your intervention be deemed acceptable and recognizable.

2. How can you describe it?

Refer to above

3. What are the specifications that defer it from the traditional Lebanese cuisine?

Traditional Lebanese cuisine is a classical style that has been developed and perfected throughout hundreds of years. Traditional Lebanese cuisine has its star items such as hommos with tahina, aubergine with tahina, kebbe both raw and cooked, tabboule, moghrabieh, frikeh etc.

To introduce new or different ingredients to these traditional recipes is very tricky, because these dishes un-altered are initially favorites and have become synonymous with Lebanese culture. What I have done with the hommos for example is the following; Pesto sauce is typically Italian and based around fresh basil. I have added to the recipe fresh Lebanese wild thyme, as well as mint and other local fragrant herbs, I have also altered the cheese variety that goes into the making of the paste. I call the outcome Lebanese Pesto, and adding it to the good old Humus bil Tahina gives a mouth watering outcome, without changing the existing taste of the original recipe. Another one of my dishes revolves around kibbe. We have grown accustomed to eating raw meat kibbe. I have asked myself that if the Japanese have successfully created a global culinary trend around sushi and maki, then why not try a raw fish kibbe in Lebanon. The outcome has also turned out to be a great success.

4. Any example?

Refer to above

5. What about fusion cuisine?

Many have misused this word for promotional and commercial purposes, in attempts to bring new patrons to their restaurants. In its definition we can very much relate it to what has been said above, where one is fusing different styles or ingredients to come up with something new. For me I prefer renaming both to revisited cuisine.

6. What clientele do both target?

Clients of revisited cuisine are individuals who are willing to challenge their pre-conceptions of a specific classical type of cuisine. Those individuals are usually highly cultivated and well travelled individuals who have a sophisticated palate, and are able to distinguish and appreciate the different ingredients that go into every dish. These are the clients that I love cooking for!