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IN MY KITCHEN

François Payard

At home, the pastry chef pops espresso (made from pods), cooks tempeh, sneaks Häagen-Dazs and puts a premium on neatness



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Francois Payard at home in New York ADAM GOLFER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

December 17, 2011

François Payard is a busy man. Last Wednesday, he and his partner, restaurant developer Marlon Abela, signed a contract for the third New York FPB (François Payard Bakery), opening near Columbus Circle next spring; they're also hoping to debut a flagship Payard restaurant on the

Upper East Side. Recently, Mr. Payard showed us around his home kitchen, with deferential asides to his wife, vegan pastry chef Fernanda Capalbio. A third-generation pastry maker from Nice, Mr. Payard began his American career as the pastry chef for Le Bernardin and Restaurant Daniel, and now presides over a small empire that includes restaurants in Las Vegas, Japan and Korea, and the François Chocolate Bar at New York's Plaza Hotel. When he's not working, he collects wine, contemporary art and antique French pastry molds, and cooks in the orderly kitchen of his apartment, a stone's throw from the United Nations.



Korin knives ADAM GOLFER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

My pet peeve is having too many things on the counter. I have five Masanobu VG-10 Korin knives, one KitchenAid blender, a mixer and a toaster. We freeze our bread—don't tell any French people—and we toast it fresh every day. My favorite bread for toasting is the miche.

I removed my big refrigerator for more counter space. If you're single or a couple without kids, try an under-counter refrigerator.



Miche bread ISTOCKPHOTO

The worst thing I ever ate was a specialty in Bora Bora called fon fanou. It's the whole dead fish, and they marinate the skin in sea-salt water. It's so pungent. I smelled it coming. It's not that the taste is off, it's the smell that kills you.

On my kitchen shelf, I always have chickpeas, lentils, quinoa, black rice and beans, because Fernanda's vegetarian.

At our dining table, we have Philippe Starck Ghost chairs, but I don't like them.

I'm going to decorate my next restaurant with huge glazed lava stone urns from Toulon. The countertop at Daniel, where I used to work, is all lava stone. It's a beautiful, vibrating color.



Mr. Payard's jars of nuts and other dry goods ADAM GOLFER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

When I cook, I need the right ingredients: good olive oil, Sherry vinegar, a very good balsamic vinegar and French sea salt. I also need everything neat. I want it to look when I'm finished exactly how it looked when I started. I'm very French and very orderly. I see a mess

every day in the restaurant. When I go home, I need everything my way.

When I have French friends over, we serve meat. I really like to have everything ready. I've done too many meals where I don't have time to enjoy my guests because I'm in the kitchen, so I always serve family-style. I also like preparing canapés while we talk. That's why I have the large counters.

If I'm with people I don't know well, I'll just serve Champagne. I don't like strong alcohol so much, except cognac.

I love making canapés for company, or soup shooters, like a pea or asparagus soup in a shot glass. Or polenta, grilled on both sides, or a phyllo cup with pea purée and ricotta salata.

I find great inspiration in magazines. What I'm looking for is not really the recipe, but more the marriage of flavors. I love the Australian magazine by Donna Hay—she's incredible—and I also read Australian Gourmet Traveller, Le Figaro's cooking magazine and the French magazine Prima.

I'm a salad guy. In summer, I make an incredible tomato salad with a little vinaigrette and fresh vanilla beans. You never see that on menus, but it goes together very well. I love a big salad. I think it's because I'm from the south of France, where in the summer we only eat salad for lunch. The problem is I get hungry after.

The newest ingredient I'm using at home is tempeh, which Fernanda introduced me to. I do a lot of things with it, including tomato sauce. I didn't grow up with it, but if it's good, it's good.



Vanilla beans ISTOCKPHOTO

My everyday coffeemaker is a vintage yellow Illy. It uses pods, which I like, because it keeps the coffee fresh. In the morning, boom: I take one or two espresso and I go to work.

I was not supposed to be a pastry chef. My older brother was working with my [pastry chef] dad and had so many problems that when I asked to work with my dad, he said, "No way. Why don't you do catering instead of pastry?" So I did an apprenticeship at 13, then a summer job near my

grandfather in Vence and my mentor, pastry chef Charles Ghignone, took me under his wing, almost like I was his son. I didn't finish college but I'm very street smart.

It's difficult for me to choose just one chef I'd like to have cook a meal for me. I go to Laurent Tourondel's house all the time, Francis Reynard, Francois Latapie, Eric Ripert. Chefs are all the same at the end of the day: We have the ego, it's what drives us. But together, it's not rivalry. It's all about a good time.

I like to escape to the North Fork of Long Island, where it's quiet and peaceful. After a long week, the last place I want to go is the Hamptons. I don't want to see everybody. I want to wear what I want, to decompress.

My secret vice is junk food, but Fernanda doesn't allow me to eat chips. I have to lose weight but I still eat ice cream. In my freezer right now is Häagen-Dazs Dulce de Leche, but I also love pistachio.

Wine is very important to me. In my wine case, I have 1959 Lynch Bages, some Saint-Émilion. I love Bordeaux. I have American wines too. I drink mostly French and American. I don't know enough about Italian wine.

Ideally, my everyday tableware would be glazed lava plates from France. I particularly like the very light green color. In New York, I love Crate & Barrel. It's great value for the price.



Bernardaud Frivole dinnerware ADAM GOLFER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

For more formal dinnerware, I use the Bernardaud pattern Frivole. I've recently changed my style a bit. Now I like everything in white. I always like to have a centerpiece on the table, and I love flowers, orchids in particular.

I've always been a good eater. I was not a skinny boy. My mom doesn't know how to cook but my dad was a great cook. He was the chef for the

town hall when they had special events and visiting dignitaries.

The most adventurous eating I ever did was with Todd English in Bangkok. We tried everything, including baby bees and worms. It's like anything in life: You try it and if you don't like it, it's OK. Some people eat crocodile, and some people eat chicken or rabbit.

Sandwiches are better in America than in France because in France, it's all about the bread. In the U.S., you get an incredible thing, like Katz's deli brisket with the pickle, and it's like a meal.

In France, it's all about the little bread, the ham and cheese, the cornichon, always the same thing.



Sauces and spices on the counter ADAM GOLFER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

If I could eat anywhere, I'd go to Paraty, Brazil, where the view is even more beautiful than in the south of France. We took a boat to a little island and ate fresh fish on a rock formation in the middle of the sea called Restaurante do Hiltinho. It was like a dream, like eating at an aquarium. At the end of the day, the food is never more than 50 percent of your experience.

When I'm invited to someone's home I always bring Champagne and dessert. That's a very European thing to do, and everybody in America should do it.

I love to give things away. The last time I moved I gave away 200 pounds of clothes, and my contractor bought all of my furniture. When I go to see him, it's like going to my own house.

To relax I ride my motorcycle, which is a great freedom. I ride my Yamaha VMax every day, and I also have a Ducati.

—Edited from an interview by Jackie Cooperman

Pea Purée and Ricotta Salata in Phyllo Cups

This light canapé combines the sweet taste of peas with the salty notes of ricotta salata, enveloped in flaky phyllo dough. You can make your own phyllo cups, or buy frozen ones. Makes 20 cups.

Ingredients

Fine sea salt
2 cups fresh or frozen peas
2 tablespoons crème fraîche
1/4 cup grated ricotta salata plus 6 ounces whole ricotta salata
Freshly ground white pepper
20 phyllo cups (see recipe below)

What To Do

1. Bring a large pot of water to boil. Salt the water, add peas and cook until done, 3-4 minutes for fresh peas and about 1 minute for frozen ones. Drain peas and immediately place them in bowl of a food processor. While peas are still hot, purée until completely smooth. Pass purée through a fine mesh strainer to remove skins.
2. In a bowl, stir purée, crème fraîche, grated ricotta salata, salt and pepper until completely combined.
3. Fill a pastry bag or a resealable plastic bag with pea purée. Cut a 1/2-inch opening in its tip and pipe purée into the phyllo cups, filling them to the top. Grate whole ricotta salata on top of purée. Arrange on a serving platter and serve at room temperature.

Phyllo Cups

Stored in an airtight container, the cups will keep for up to a week. Makes 24 cups.

Ingredients

5 phyllo sheets

1/2 cup melted clarified butter

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

2. Brush 1 sheet of phyllo with clarified butter. Keep remaining phyllo covered with a towel to prevent it from drying out. Place another sheet of phyllo on top of the first sheet and brush it with clarified butter. Repeat process with remaining sheets. Do not butter top sheet.

3. Once all sheets are stacked and buttered, cut phyllo in 20 circles with a 2-inch round cutter. Place circles inside the cups of a flexi-pan mold or a mini-muffin pan and bake until golden brown, 10 minutes. Remove from heat, let cool slightly and unmold by gently twisting the cups out of the molds. They will not stick because of the butter used, but they will be delicate.

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