

Triple play

A trio of pork ingredients adds punch to a casual-theme makeover of a white-tablecloth entree



Menu inspiration comes from many places, not the least of which is stealing good ideas from peers.

But adapting an idea to the nuances of a particular concept or the realities of an individual kitchen is tricky. The connection between a white-tablecloth creation and a casual-theme opportunity isn't always obvious.

This is the first of a series of articles in which *Plate* will adapt an innovative dish to fit the needs of a broader foodservice audience.

THE INSPIRATION

Our “inspiration piece” is an ale-braised bone-in pork loin chop with spinach, prosciutto and smoked gouda mousseline created by Chef David Daniot for the 2002 Taste of Elegance competition, sponsored by the National Pork Board. Daniot, executive chef for the Edgewood Country Club in Commerce Township, Mich. (see bio), capitalized on a trend appearing

more frequently on today's menus—multiple forms of a single protein in one dish.

Danoit's interpretation integrates a premium bone-in pork chop with a mousseline of pureed tenderloin and prosciutto (see recipe, opposite page).

For the makeover, we conscripted Daniel Bendas and Dean Small, partners with Synergy, a California-based food and restaurant consulting firm. Their assignment: Adapt Daniot's recipe two ways—one for an upscale, casual-theme chain (*a la* Cheesecake Factory); and another for a casual independent restaurant.

CONSIDERATIONS

Small describes Synergy's evaluation process as a matrix: “It's all parts and pieces that you have to take into consideration,” he says. “Part of it is culinary expertise—does the restaurant staff have skill set and disciplines in the back of the house to execute? Sometimes just following the recipe is not enough. You have to have the infrastructure in place.

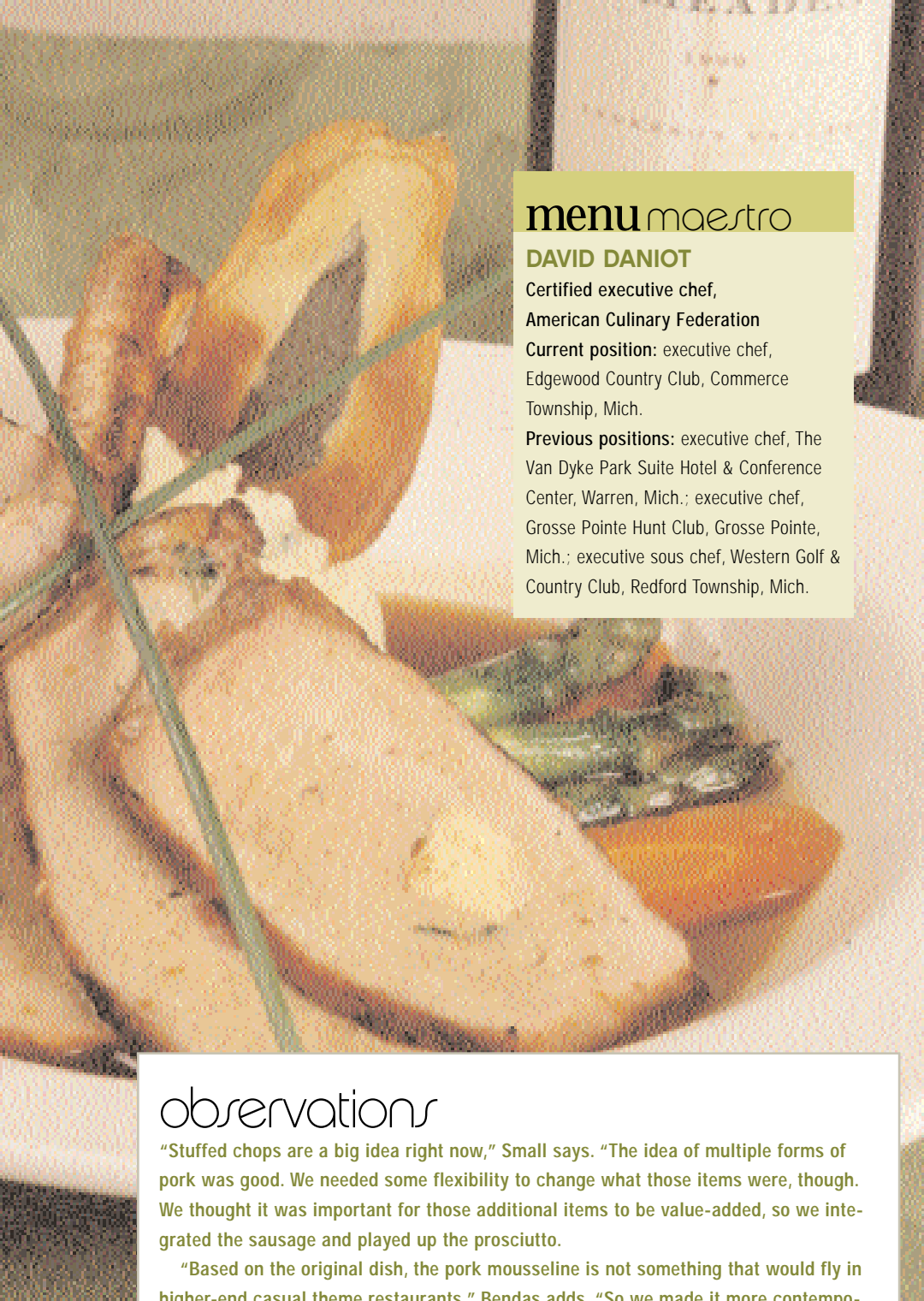
“We also look at what's currently in their inventory,” he continues. “You don't



want to bring in too many new products, so we look at what products already exist that they can work with.

“You have to consider the equipment package. What can they logistically execute? We also look at overall flow and how the dish comes together on the line. What are the established ticket times? Is this dish going to create a bottleneck?”

“Finally,” Small says, “we look at the little things like food cost and prep time.”



National Pork Board

menu maestro

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Van Dyke Park Suite Hotel & Conference
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Ale-braised bone-in pork loin chop with spinach, prosciutto and smoked gouda mousseline

David Daniot, executive chef, Edgewood Country Club, Commerce Township, Mich.

Yield: 5 servings

MOUSSELINE FILLING

Lean pork cubes	1 1/2 lb
Eggs	2 each
Heavy cream	10 oz
Prosciutto ham, finely diced	2 oz
Pork tenderloin, medium dice	2 oz
Chopped spinach, cooked	1 1/2 oz
Smoked gouda cheese, shredded	2 oz
Salt, pepper, Worcestershire sauce to taste	

1. In a chilled food processor, blend the lean pork until very finely pureed. Add the eggs, blend, then add the cream and seasonings.

2. Transfer filling to a bowl and fold in remaining ingredients. Keep cool at all times. Refrigerate, covered; reserve.

FOR THE CHOPS

Bone-in center-cut 12-oz pork chops	5 each
Onion, rough cut	1 each
Celery ribs, rough cut	2 each
Carrots, peeled, rough cut	2 each
Bay leaves	1 each
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste	
Dark stout beer, 12-oz bottle	1 each
Pork stock	as needed

1. From the butcher, order chops with a pocket. Fill a pastry bag fitted with a round tip with the mousseline filling and pipe about 3 ounces of the filling into each chop.

2. In a hot skillet, sear the chops on both sides. Place the chops in a roasting pan with the onions, celery, carrots, bay leaves, salt and pepper. Add the beer and enough pork stock to cover the chops half way.

3. Cook at medium-high on range top heat until the chops reach an internal temperature of 145 degrees F. Let chops rest for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, reduce the remaining liquid to 1/3, and strain for sauce.

4. *To serve:* Drizzle each chop with reserved sauce. slice and fan chop. Plate with garlic mashed potatoes, cut carrots, and seasonal vegetables sauteed in pork stock.

Menu price: \$17.95; food cost/serving: \$4

observations

“Stuffed chops are a big idea right now,” Small says. “The idea of multiple forms of pork was good. We needed some flexibility to change what those items were, though. We thought it was important for those additional items to be value-added, so we integrated the sausage and played up the prosciutto.”

“Based on the original dish, the pork mousseline is not something that would fly in higher-end casual theme restaurants,” Bendas adds. “So we made it more contemporary to hit on current trends—smoked bacon, crusted products, etc. Andouille sausages and cheeses are always popular.”

“Ale-braising doesn’t work for everybody,” Small says. “If you’re a microbrewery, it enables you to leverage your product. But if not, it’s probably not going to work and might be too limiting. You’ve got to look at what your restaurant is known for and work that into the development process.”

“Our concerns were that we wanted the dish to taste good and keep number of ingredients and steps down,” Small says. “The original was a bit of problem because appeared to be carved on the line, which means it has to be finished *a la minute*. That’s a problem for most operators with any type of volume, because it slows down the line.”

the results*

"Our goal was to simplify the prep and plating so it could be finished at the time of service," Bendas says. "In both cases, the sauces can be pre-made and the chops can be pre-stuffed, even pre-browned. So the dish can be done within a reasonable ticket time and not have to be held, which would hurt the quality of the final product."

"Conceptually, I think these could work in a broad range of restaurants," Bendas adds. "The adaptation might come in the portioning, and manipulate your food costs from that perspective. A Houlihan's or a Friday's might not be able to make a 12-ounce portion cost-effective, so maybe they go with a 9- or 10-ounce portion."

Butterflied pork rib chop with andouille crust and bourbon apple sweet potato hash

Yield: 4 servings

ANDOUILLE CRUST (15 OZ)

Cajun andouille sausage	12 oz
Panko Japanese bread crumbs	3 oz
Blackened redfish seasoning	1 TBS

1. Cut the sausage into 3/4-inch to 1-inch pieces and place in food processor. Process sausage to a fine consistency.

2. Add breadcrumbs and seasoning. Pulse food processor to just blend ingredients and obtain a uniform, coarse, crumb texture. Refrigerate, covered; reserve.

SEASONED FLOUR (8 OZ)

All-purpose flour	6 oz
Blackened redfish seasoning	2 TBS
Paprika	1 TBS
Ground black pepper	2 1/4 tsp
Garlic salt	2 3/4 tsp

1. Place all ingredients into a suitable bowl and thoroughly blend together, without lumps. Reserve.

TO PREPARE THE CHOPS

10-oz pork rib chops	4 each
Seasoned flour (recipe above)	as needed
Basic eggwash	as needed
Andouille crust (recipe above)	as needed

1. Using a sharp knife, French (trim all meat and fat) from the bone portion of each chop, above the eye. Butterfly each chop evenly, to the bone, so the chop halves lay flat on a work surface.

2. Bread each butterflied chop, flat, using a standard procedure (seasoned flour, egg wash, then andouille crust), so that all chop

surfaces, except the bone, are evenly and uniformly coated with the andouille crust. If not cooking immediately, refrigerate, covered; reserve.

3. Pan-fry each chop in clarified butter or vegetable oil, starting with the butterflied side down. Brown the first side, then turn and lightly brown each second side.

4. Place the pan into a convection oven preheated to 350 degrees F. Bake until the chops are fully cooked, but still moist, about 8 to 10 minutes.

Serving suggestion: Mound half a portion of a bourbon sweet potato hash (recipe, p. 68) on the plate. Stand or rest chop on the hash. Spoon the remaining hash on the plate. Garnish with chives and serve with a medley of grilled seasonal vegetables.

Menu price: \$12.95; food cost/serving: \$4.27

menu maestros

DEAN SMALL

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Previous positions: director of menu development, El Torrito restaurants; development team, Heartland Market.

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Previous positions: corporate regional chef, Houlihan's; v.p. foodservice, Nanco Food Group

*All components can be pre-prepared, then finished at the time of order, helping chain restaurants produce the product without having to hold products hot, causing a deterioration in quality over time.





*The chops can be pre-cut by the supplier or done in house, depending upon the operator's preference, offering options with respect to product cost and in-house capabilities.

*Generally, while seemingly more complex in terms of number of recipes (including the side dish), the execution of the dish on the cook's line during the heat of battle is much easier, especially when you consider that the dish is cooked to order, rather than held hot until needed.

*While still using three pork products, the dish offers a contemporary option that targets many current popular dining trends: crusting the chop with the andouille crumbs; the use of a colorful, popular accompaniment in the sweet potato hash (which may feature applewood-smoked bacon, a very popular ingredient that incorporates smoking, a popular cooking technique).

*"Sweet potato hash is a big side dish trend these days," Bendas says.

Pork rib chop stuffed with pancetta, prosciutto, arugula and three cheeses

Yield: 4 servings

STUFFING (1 LB)

Olive oil	2 TBS
Pancetta, 1/4-inch dice	4 oz
Fresh garlic, chopped	1 TBS
Yellow onion, 1/4-inch dice	4 oz
Prosciutto, fat trimmed, 1/8- x 1-inch julienne	3 oz
Dried sage	2 tsp
Baby arugula leaves, coarsely chopped	4 oz
Red pepper	1/8 tsp
Freshly ground black pepper	1/4 tsp
Asiago cheese, grated	2 oz
Smoked gouda cheese, shredded	2 oz
Mozzarella cheese, shredded	2 oz

1. Heat olive oil in a saute pan over medium heat. Add pancetta and render until evenly browned and crisp. Add garlic and onion, and saute until tender, about 3 to 4 minutes.

2. Add prosciutto and sage, stir all ingredients, and continue cooking for about 1 minute.

3. Add arugula, red and black pepper, and continue cooking until arugula is completely wilted, about 1 minute. Remove from heat, spread on a tray and chill, refrigerated.

4. Add cheeses, stirring all ingredients to blend. Refrigerate until needed.

HERBED BALSAMIC DEMI (2 C)

Butter, lightly salted	2 oz
Garlic, chopped	1 TBS
Shallots, minced	1 1/2 oz
Dried Italian seasoning mix	2 tsp
Balsamic vinegar	1 C
Pork demi-glace	2 C
Salt	1/4 tsp

1. Melt butter (without browning) in a saucepan, over medium heat. Add garlic and shallots and cook until shallots are tender, about 2 to 3 minutes.

2. Add seasoning mix, stir ingredients, and continue cooking an additional 30 seconds.

3. Add vinegar, bring to a boil, then reduce heat to simmer until a syrupy consistency is obtained, about 4 to 5 minutes.

4. Add demi-glace, return to a boil, then simmer gently for 4 to 5 minutes.

5. Add salt, stirring all ingredients to blend.

TO PREPARE THE CHOPS

11- to 12-oz bone-in pork rib chops	4 each
Stuffing mix (see recipe above)	3 to 4 oz
Salt, freshly ground black pepper	to taste
Vegetable oil or clarified butter	as needed

1. Using a sharp knife, French (trim all meat and fat) from the bone portion of each chop, above the eye. "Pocket" each chop, to the bone, creating a 1 1/2-inch to 2-inch slit, at the top of the chop eye.

2. Stuff each chop, pressing the filling into the entire pocket cavity.

3. Evenly season both sides of each chop with salt and pepper. If not cooking immediately, refrigerate, covered; reserve.

4. Pan-fry each chop in clarified butter or vegetable oil. Brown the first side, then turn and lightly brown each second side. Place the pan into a convection oven pre-heated to 350 degrees F and bake until the chops are fully cooked but still moist, about 12 to 14 minutes.

Serving suggestion: Mound a portion of garlic mashed potatoes in the center of the plate. Garnish with fresh chive "strands." Set the chop, standing, on the plate, in front of the potatoes. Ladle 2 to 3 ounces of the hot demi-glace (recipe above) on the plate, around the pork chop and potatoes. Also serve with crisp baby carrots tossed in a roasted garlic butter.

Menu price: \$13.95; food cost/serving: \$4.60



*The chops can be pre-prepared in advance of service, then finished at the time of order. Also, if necessary, the chops could be pre-browned, then finished at the time of order, further helping meet legitimate ticket times, without holding the finished product hot.



*“We think that the recipes were interesting and leverage a lot of the food trends that we’re seeing out there—how it was stuffed, propping the chop up in the air using garlic potatoes to get some elevation,” Small says.

*“This is a Cheesecake Factory model,” Small says. “They’re going to have a different scope of ingredients in their kitchen and a higher level of skills and equipment to support this.”

*“Speed to getting a pork chop like this out of the kitchen is important. We’re talking about 14 to 16 ounces,” Small says. “You have to bring it up to temp. An item like that doesn’t heat that fast. And getting that filling up to 160 degrees is very important or you’re going to have a HACCP problem. We needed to create something that could be prepared in advance and then finished on the grill or in the broiler.”



*The chops can be pre-cut by the supplier, or done in house, offering options to lower product cost or reduce labor.

*There is no carving required, making plating and finishing much easier.

*While still using three pork products, the dish offers a contemporary option that targets many current popular dining trends: stuffing the chop with the pancetta, prosciutto and arugula; the use of multiple cheeses to offer varying flavor hits, and play on the ever-growing popularity of cheese.