

G FORCE | CLARK FRASIER

The Boston Globe

Sustainable praise



Ron Manville
Mark Gaier (left) and Clark Frasier of Arrows and MC Perkins Cove in Ogunquit, Maine, were named Best Chefs in the Northeast by the James Beard Foundation. (Ron Manville)

By Joan Anderman

Clark Frasier and Mark Gaier like to joke that they're the Susan Luccis of the food world: perennial nominees for a James Beard Foundation Award, the field's most prestigious honor. This year — the pair's seventh time in the running — the jokes came to an end when the chef co-owners of Arrows and MC Perkins Cove in Ogunquit, Maine, won Best Chefs in the Northeast. "It's like somebody finally hands you that diploma. It's a wonderful stamp of approval," says Frasier, whom we reached at Arrows. He was working on a new menu that makes bountiful use of the restaurant's two-acre garden and greenhouse, house-cured meats and fish, and homemade cheeses.

Q. Why do you think this year was your year to win?

A. There's been so much talk recently about sustainability and farm-to-table and as people start to think about that seriously and deeply, they realize that Mark and I have been practicing that for almost two decades. It's like, oh gosh, maybe we should recognize these guys for what they've done.

Q. You and Mark were pioneering locavores. What spurred you to embrace a grow-your-own food philosophy?

A. A lot of it, I would have to say, was just out of necessity. We had farmers in the area but they weren't really growing what we wanted, beautiful greens and really nice vegetables, and we had all this land, so it was a no-brainer.

Q. Is there something on the new menu that you're especially excited about?

A. We're doing a cool citrus terrine, which is this incredible plate of tangerine jelly with cutouts of blood orange and Meyer lemon and then cured halibut and babyboat scallop sashimi, with a radish vinaigrette. We're also doing a Peking duck appetizer in three courses. It's the real deal.

Q. You've got a cookbook coming out next year called "Maine Classics." What is a Maine classic?

A. It's an interesting concept, because we're trying to highlight traditions and how they've been reborn in the last several decades with a resurgence in small artisanal bakers and cheese makers and fishmongers. The book is divided into the land, sea, forest, farm, root cellar, and dairy, and there are lots of stories in it, some about things that people don't expect, like how the rum and slave trade affected food and how captains who left Maine harbors brought things back from the Orient. Fusion food isn't new.

Q. What's your guilty pleasure?

A. I have very high cholesterol, which I work very hard not to have, but every once in a while I succumb to having foie gras.

Q. No, I mean what kind of junk do you eat?

A. I like hot dogs. That's my downfall. I had one yesterday and then I had two more. They're just so full of flavor. And I love sauerkraut. We also had spicy baked beans and potato chips. Then of course I was like, why did I do that?

Joan Anderman can be reached at anderman@globe.com

Interview was condensed and edited. ■