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SLOW FOOD FAST

Mike Lata's Recipe for Coddled Eggs With Chanterelles and Crab

Buttery mushrooms and sweet crab meat top gently cooked eggs and a creamy soubise in this recipe from chef Mike Lata of FIG and the Ordinary in Charleston, S.C.

By KITTY GREENWALD

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LEAVES OF SASS | Pleasantly bitter chicory requires nothing more than olive oil, lemon and a little salt to make a satisfying side salad for this dish. PHOTO: STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, FOOD STYLING BY JAMIE KIMM, PROP STYLING BY STEPHANIE HANES

THE CHEF: MIKE LATA



Mike Lata MICHAEL HOEWELER

His restaurants: FIG and the Ordinary, both in Charleston, S.C.

What he is known for: Seasonal, straightforward cooking that helped make Charleston a destination food town. Trumpeting the Low Country's bounty and prolific coastline.

"MY INSPIRATION comes from local ingredients," said Charleston, S.C.-based chef Mike Lata. "But to be honest I'm a bit of a Europhile." Since moving to the state's Low Country 17 years ago, Mr. Lata has used the region's outstanding produce and fresh fish the best way he knows how: by applying the classical technique he learned in kitchens around the U.S. and in France.

In this recipe for coddled eggs topped with sautéed chanterelle mushrooms, crab meat and croutons—Mr. Lata's second *Slow Food Fast contribution*—he lines the ramekins the eggs cook in with a rich base of puréed Carolina Gold rice, heavy cream and Parmesan. This quick version of a French soubise is just the thing to soak up the golden, oozy yolks.

A lemony chicory salad brings a nice sharp edge to the plate. Sweet crab meat and peppery chanterelles, sautéed together in butter, provide textural contrast to the coddled eggs, while homemade croutons add crunch. If chanterelles are no longer available at your local market, shiitakes or most any other fresh mushroom will make a fine substitute. And while Mr. Lata has access to beautiful crab meat right now on the South Carolina coast, if you don't in your part of the country, feel free to skip it. "You can change the garnishes and still have success," the chef promised. Though French by design, it's a dish that travels well.

Coddled Eggs With Chanterelles and Crab

Total Time: 30 minutes **Serves:** 4-8

- 5 tablespoons diced onion
- 4 tablespoons butter
- ½ cup cooked Carolina Gold rice
- 1½ cups heavy cream
- Kosher salt
- ½ cup finely grated Parmesan
- 8 eggs
- ½ cup roughly torn bread
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ pound chanterelle mushrooms, quartered
- ½ pound crab meat (optional)
- Finely grated zest and juice of ½ Meyer lemon
- ½ tablespoon minced parsley
- 6 cups chicory leaves

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Bring a pot of water to a boil over high heat. Meanwhile, in a medium sauté pan over medium-high heat, sauté onions in 2 tablespoons butter until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add rice and cream, and season with salt. Cook until cream thickens slightly, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a blender and purée until smooth. Season with Parmesan and salt.

2. Place 8 ramekins in a roasting pan. Ladle about 2 tablespoons puréed rice mixture into each ramekin, then crack an egg over each. Pour boiling water into pan so it comes halfway up ramekins' sides. Transfer to oven and bake until egg whites just set, about 10 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, set a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Swirl in 2 tablespoons olive oil. Once hot, add bread and sauté until golden brown all over, about 4 minutes. Transfer fried croutons to a paper towel-lined plate. Pour off excess oil from pan and wipe clean. Return pan to heat and add remaining butter. Once butter foams, add mushrooms and sauté until browned and tender, about 5 minutes. Add crab, if using, and sauté until warmed through, 1 minute more. Season with lemon juice to taste, parsley and salt.

4. Toss salad with remaining oil, a squeeze of lemon juice, lemon zest and a pinch of salt. Top baked eggs with crab-mushroom mixture and croutons. Serve with salad alongside.