

CULINARY CURRENTS[®]

Into the woods

Pine provides outdoor flavor and fragrance to meats in upscale dishes

BY ERICA DUECY

The piney scent wafting through some upscale dining rooms is not artificial air freshener: Numerous chefs around the country are using Douglas fir, blue spruce and other pine varietals to flavor their food. The culinary applications range from sautéing scallops in pine-infused oil to slow-roasting venison on pine boughs.

Lachlan Mackinnon-Patterson, chef and co-owner of Frasca Food and Wine in Boulder, Colo., uses needles from the state tree, the blue spruce, as a flavoring for lamb. He purées the needles with grapeseed oil to make a paste and then rubs it on lamb loins. The lamb is cooked sous vide, then removed from its cooking pouch and brushed clean of any leftover pine paste. Just prior to service, the cooked lamb loins are seared, then sliced and plated with caramelized potatoes, black trumpet mushrooms and lamb jus.

The classic pairing of rosemary and lamb was Mackinnon-Patterson's jumping-off point for creating the dish, he says. "Rosemary goes great with lamb, and pine has that similar, really resinous quality," he says. "I decided just to go for it." The \$30 entrée is very popular when it runs occasionally on the menu, Mackinnon-Patterson says.