

THE *10* MOST *PALATE-PUSHING,* *SLAM-DUNK* *DELICIOUS* DISHES IN BOSTON RIGHT NOW

by ALEXANDRA HALL

photographed by MATT THOMAN

There are two kinds of people in the world: The kind who are silly enough to believe there are only two kinds of people in the world, and the kind who know it's far more complicated than that.*

Great food is pretty much the same. There are two kinds: The kind that sticks to the status quo (and yes, there are many superlative classic dishes in town doing just that), and the kind that always reaches for something new. In other words, the complicated kind.

The latter type, thanks to its ever-changing and always-evolving nature, is a moving target. Palates change. Trends get stale. Chefs' whims evolve, ingredients go out of season, and new techniques and flavor/texture combinations get invented to replace the current ones. Just when you think you've got your favorite new craving pinned down, it wiggles out from under you. It's a Sisyphean quest, admittedly. But for those of us who crave what we find (and eat) along the journey, we don't mind one bit.

On the other hand, who knows? Today's newfangled riff could easily be tomorrow's classic. The following ten** inventive dishes are each cooked up with true innovation and guts but also exhibit the integrity of thoughtful restraint. Such a balance equals staying power. That said, right at this moment, I can only guarantee they'll be around till current menus cycle into something else. Hey, like I said: It's complicated. Thankfully, your task is simple: Go eat them right now, while you can.

**I pilfered this thought from one of my heroes, author Tom Robbins.*

***Listed in no particular order.*



**SWORDFISH
PASTRAMI WITH
PUMPERNICKEL,
PICKLES,
AND MUSTARD**

*Will Gilson,
Puritan & Co.*

At first, it sounds like the definitive fish-out-of-water story: Seafood can't handle the full force of spices like coriander, black pepper, and mustard seed like meat can, right? Nonsense. It can when it's swordfish belly that's been cured in salt and sugar for 24 hours before getting spiced, then cold-smoked, cooked in a sous vide, and ultimately transformed into something extraordinarily close to velvet in texture. But then comes the next chapter of our tale. "On its own, swordfish is a peppery-smoked fatty fish," says Will Gilson, who's been experimenting with different forms of fish charcuterie for going on several years. "It needs elements that push and pull." And that's where the plot thickens, thanks to other mitigating elements—all of them tweaks on a classic pastrami tableau: a pumpernickel purée (the rye lends depth and just enough heft), pickled veggies (sauerkraut's far kinder cousin), and finally the foil to all those intensities—a soothing quenelle of mustard gelato. "Straight mustard would overpower it," says Gilson, whereas the gelato's cool creaminess is more subtle. It's a surprise ending, to be sure. "[Diners] either love it," he says, "or hate it." Anyone with even a quasi-adventurous palate will count themselves in the first camp.

End of story.

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