



YANKEE INGENUITY
Puritan & Company's
lamb belly with Moxie
glaze; below, confit
duck leg with black-eyed
peas and a duck egg

BOSTON

MASS. APPEAL

A Mayflower descendant puts a contemporary twist on Olde New England **BY JOLYON HELTERMAN**

BOSTON'S DINING SCENE is lousy with eateries giving perfunctory nods to the region's history, yielding an endless buffet of pasty "chowdahs," saccharine baked beans and ersatz, warmed-over clam bakes. By contrast, newcomer Puritan & Company forgoes the museum approach in favor of a modern take on foodstuffs that Bay Staters actually ate—swordfish, bluefish, johnnycakes, Parker House potato rolls and even Moxie, a beloved local brand of syrupy cola—in a modern space with exposed ducts and distressed-oak floors in Cambridge's Inman Square. Every meal ends with a gratis square of cake as a tribute to the Puritan Cake Co., the restaurant's early-1900s namesake, which once occupied the premises.

"Massachusetts cuisine is a style that doesn't get the sort of respect it deserves," says chef-owner Will Gilson, whose family has lived in the state for 13 generations. "I had to put something down on paper, so I called my



food 'urban farmhouse.' But it's really just the dishes and ingredients I grew up with, seen through a modern prism."

Sure enough, the swordfish here gets cured as pastrami and plated with mustard gelato. The Moxie becomes a glaze slathered onto tender braised lamb belly. To accompany rare Wagyu steak, Gilson resurrects the veggies served in a traditional Yankee boiled dinner—rutabagas, potatoes, carrots—with a clever riff that might be called *not-boiling-them-to-death*. Then there's hardtack, a simple type of biscuit named as much for its taste and texture as its

MELISSA OSTROW

➤ nonperishability, which the Pilgrims brought along on their trans-Atlantic voyage. Suffice it to say, the hardtack crackers served with Gilson's bluefish pâté represent a well-deserved update.

While it's near impossible to find a chef these days who doesn't pay lip service to localism, for Gilson it's not a trend but instead another nod to his heritage. Herbs and greens for Puritan & Company come from the Herb Lyceum, his parents' farm in nearby Groton, where Gilson was raised. Eighty percent of the beer list hails from New England, including a craft brown ale brewed in Portland, Maine, that features locally sourced honey, ginger, hops and barley.

Even the restaurant's décor speaks to authentic New England: In place of tricorn hats and bayonets are 19th-century kitchen gadgets and a host stand created from a 1920s gas stove. "That's actually the stove I used to cook on with my grandmother when I was 3, standing on top of a chair," says Gilson. Most of the vintage items, in fact, were salvaged from his family's home.

"I grew up in very much a New England household," he says. "We made apple pies. We ate boiled dinners. We grew a lot of the food, and then we cooked it. In the end, I'm just trying to pay homage to the way some of us ate growing up."

BEHIND BAR A lively crowd samples the goods at Puritan & Company's minimalist drinks counter



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MEAT OF THE MATTER

A charcuterie spread at Belly; inset, general manager Fanny Katz



THE TASK OF AMONTILLADO

Fortified wines stand up to the spice and salt of charcuterie

As the cured-meats craze reaches fever pitch in Boston, popular watering holes like Belly, a wine bar in Cambridge's hopping Kendall Square neighborhood, are beefing up their booze options for pairing with salumi platters. Bright beaujolais, tannic orange wines and bracing Spanish sherries have all made appearances, but Belly general manager Fanny Katz recommends "The Diener": an amalgam of dry amontillado, raisin-y Lustau PX, and two kinds each of vermouth and bitters. Named for a sherry-loving regular, it pairs best with the house-made duck prosciutto.



THE DIENER

- › 1½ oz. Lustau dry amontillado
- › ¾ oz. Cocchi vermouth
- › ¾ oz. Punt e Mes vermouth
- › ¼ oz. Lustau PX (optional, but recommended)
- › 2 dashes Bittermens Xocolatl Mole bitters
- › 2 dashes Angostura orange bitters
- › 1 piece orange peel

Combine the ingredients in an ice-filled mixing glass and stir until very cold. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Squeeze the orange peel to release its oil into the glass, then drop it in as garnish.