



"Lamb two ways" was all the menu said for the first course. I stopped reading, assuming the food at this "Meet + Eat" wine tasting dinner at Two Boroughs Larder was going to be relatively standard fare, and turned my attention to my guest instead.

Then the dish came. This was no ordinary lamb dish as I didn't recognize any part of the dish as being a part of lamb. This was lamb heart tartare on parsley pesto paired with lamb sweetbreads, tempura battered and fried with a ramp aioli. The second course was squid ink gnocchi with olive oil-poached calamari, fava beans, and topped with tuna bottarga, followed by a third course of swordfish torchon in a duck glacé with garbanzo beans and garnished with fried duck tongues. For dessert, a lemon blueberry cobbler with Carolina Gold rice ice cream.

The culinary publishing world—my world—is inevitably (and almost always favorably) overflowing with epicurean adventures and flavorful meals. It takes a lot to stand out, in other words, and my meal at Two Boroughs did more than that. It grabbed me with its creativity and daring experiments with wild game (using the entire animal). It exhibited deft culinary skills yet stayed focused on a

Walter, is their media mascot (by default because he's so damned lovable) and can often be found outside the restaurant greeting guests and stealing kisses from all the ladies. He's even the inspiration behind some of the merchandise. Tee shirts with his corgi face read, "Walter Saves...room for dessert," and growlers you can fill up with your favorite brew to take home are printed with the message "Walter's Pissed!"

The name of Two Boroughs Larder may be easy to define, but it's harder to define Keeler's cooking style. He finds inspiration from travels to San Francisco and Seattle, evident in some of his Asian influences, such as pho noodle bowls filled with pork belly and a soft-boiled egg. He reads cookbooks obsessively—the first one that changed his thinking about food was *Au Pied de Cochon*, and he cherishes *Beyond Nose to Tail*, which explains his whole-animal approach to cooking. He doesn't cook traditional "Southern" dishes because he's not originally from the South, but his dishes can certainly be labeled Southern by default since he uses local and regional ingredients (he also serves one

photos by Jennifer Hitchcock

Take Comfort

Warm Up With These Innovative Yet Familiar Dishes from Chef Josh Keeler at Two Boroughs Larder *by Katherine Connor*

recipes by Chef Josh Keeler

simple, clean cooking style. And it successfully did all of this with an unpretentious, neighborhood approach. I left that evening thinking two things: one, I would like to snack on fried duck tongues while sipping Gamay wine again (and again), and two, who was Josh Keeler and where did this restaurant come from?

The name Two Boroughs Larder originated from its location and purpose: "Two Boroughs" because the building straddles Elliotborough and Cannonborough and "Larder" because it's stocked to the gills with specialty pantry items, including vintage cooking equipment, assorted wooden antique trays, gourmet meats, small batch wines, and craft beers. Chef Josh Keeler hails from rural Pennsylvania by birth, went to culinary school in Vermont, then cooked in Philadelphia for restaurateur Stephen Starr's empire. Keeler's wife, Heather, has a restaurant background as well. Wishing for better weather and a warmer community, they settled in Charleston and two years later opened up their first restaurant. Josh runs the back, and Heather handles the store and front of house. It's a full family operation. Their Welsh corgi,

of the best scrapple and biscuit sandwiches I've ever had in the South or anywhere else for that matter). He claims his cuisine is not international but rather American, as it's a melting pot of a lot of different influences. His food also reflects his philosophy. He wants to push people outside their comfort zones and doesn't want complacent customers. For instance, his burger was such an incredible hit that he had to take it off the menu! He worried that the burger might end up the only item patrons would order and therefore might keep them from exploring the more unique menu offerings. (Now the burgers are available one night a week, while they last.)

So who is Chef Keeler? While I may not be able to pin him down as a chef, that's what keeps me going back to the restaurant—to continue to challenge my palate and experience more culinary adventures. We asked him to contribute a few recipes to share with our readers with the idea of "winter comfort foods" in mind. I should have known that his version of pot pie would be entirely deconstructed, flipped on its head, artfully executed, and mind-blowingly delectable. Try it and see what you think. And in the meantime head to "The Boroughs" for something, anything, but the standard fare.



HAY ROASTED PHEASANT WITH BRUSSELS SPROUTS. OPPOSITE (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT): CO-OWNER HEATHER KEELER FILLS UP A GROWLER WITH CRAFT BEER; THE SLEEK YET COMFORTABLE INTERIOR, ITS SHELVES STOCKED WITH GOODIES; VENISON TARTARE WITH TOASTED BENNE SEEDS.





SUNBURST TROUT POT PIE.
OPPOSITE (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP):
JOSH AND HEATHER TAKE A QUICK
BREAK TO GIVE WALTER SOME
LOVIN'; ROASTED BROCCOLI WITH
PRESERVED LEMON AND FRESH
MINT; TBL'S LARDER BRIMMING WITH
SPECIALTY FOODS AND CULINARY
ITEMS FROM ACROSS THE SOUTH.

Two Boroughs Recipes

SUNBURST TROUT POT PIE

10 sunchokes (also called Jerusalem artichokes)
1 celery root, peeled and rough chopped
2 teaspoons salt
½ stick butter, plus extra for brushing on puff pastry
¼ cup olive oil, plus extra to finish the dish
1 pound mushrooms (Mepkin Abbey oyster mushrooms if available), root removed
1 box puff pastry (available in freezer section of grocery store), defrosted
3 tablespoons grapeseed oil, divided
2 8–10-ounce fillets trout, pin bones removed and cut into 4 pieces
4 parsnips, peeled and chopped into 1-inch cubes
12 cipollini onions, peeled and cut into fourths (pearl onions can be substituted, but leave whole)
Salt and pepper to taste

1. Peel the sunchokes and place them in cold water so they do not oxidize.
2. Place sunchokes and celery root in a saucepot with just enough water to cover them. Add 2 teaspoons salt and butter. Bring to a boil and then simmer until tender. Drain the liquid and reserve the celery root and sunchokes.
3. Purée the vegetables until smooth, adding a little water to the blender as needed to get a creamy consistency. With the blender running, drizzle ¼ cup of olive oil into the vegetables. Strain the sauce through a fine-mesh sieve. Reserve for later use.
4. Gently tear the mushrooms vertically into smaller pieces—if they are small, leave them whole.
5. Using a small ring cutter, cut eight different sized circles out of the pastry dough. Place the circles on a lined baking sheet. Brush the tops with melted butter and bake in a 375-degree oven until golden brown.
6. To cook the trout, heat a cast iron skillet to medium heat. Add 2 tablespoons of grapeseed oil to the pan and add the trout skin side down (cooking from the bottom up, never turning the fish over). As the fish starts to cook, it will become less pink. Serve trout with a little bit of pink on the flesh side still visible.
7. In a sauté pan, heat 1 tablespoon of grapeseed oil on medium heat. Add parsnips first and sauté for 2 minutes. You want a little bit of color but no black spots. Next add onions and sauté until tender. Finally add mushrooms and cook so they are caramelized nicely and have a little crispness to them. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
8. Heat celery root sunchoke purée. Place 3 ounces in the middle of a serving bowl and spread to an even circle. Arrange vegetables in three clusters. Remove fish from pan and place atop one of the clusters of vegetables. Take one bigger-sized puff pastry and one smaller one (for aesthetics) and place them atop the other two clusters of vegetables. Drizzle the dish with olive oil and sea salt to finish.

Yield: 4 servings

VENISON TARTARE

1 cup benne seeds (sesame seeds)
4 parsnips
Vegetable oil for frying
¼ cup cornichons
2 shallots, peeled and finely chopped
1 bunch mint, a few sprigs reserved for garnish
1 pound venison meat (ask your butcher for tartare-ready meat)
1 cup Meyer lemon juice or standard lemon juice
4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
4 egg yolks (optional)
Salt and pepper to taste
2 teaspoons sea salt, for plating
Equipment: ring mold to shape tartare, meat grinder (optional)

1. Toast benne seeds in 350-degree oven until evenly light brown.
2. Rinse parsnips, peel, and cut into ½-inch thick slices. Preheat fryer or Dutch oven with vegetable oil to 250 degrees. Blanch shaved parsnips in oil for 2 minutes. Set on a paper towel to remove grease and reserve for a second round of frying later. Heat the grease to 350 degrees.
3. Pulse cornichons in food processor until finely chopped. Remove and reserve.
4. Chiffonade 6–7 larger mint leaves. Reserve a few small mint leaves for garnish.
5. To grind the meat (or you can cut by hand), cut your meat into 1-by-3-inch strips. This will make grinding the meat more manageable. Load the meat into the hopper of grinder and grind one time through into a mixing bowl. Wrap and reserve. (To knife chop instead of grind, cut the venison into thin sheets, from there cut those sheets into strips, then the strips into small cubes. Keep running your knife over the meat until it is chopped finely and there are no large chunks. Be careful not to smash and mush the meat.)
6. Put the ground venison into a mixing bowl and add lemon juice, egg yolks, olive oil, cornichons, shallots, and mint. Mix with the back of a spoon, creaming the whole thing together. Add salt and pepper to taste.
7. To plate the tartare, place four ounces on each plate in a ring mold, making sure it is level and even. Before removing the ring mold sprinkle the top with the toasted benne seeds, making sure it is thinly but evenly covered. Fry the parsnips in the 350-degree oil until golden brown. Sprinkle parsnips with sea salt and serve with tartare.

Yield: 4 servings

ROASTED BROCCOLI

1 head broccoli di ciccio (can find at farmers markets) or regular broccoli
1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1/3 cup fish sauce (Red Boat or Squid brand)
1 preserved lemon peel, thinly julienned (recipe below)
Coarse sea salt
Espelette pepper
4 sprigs fresh mint

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees with cast iron pan inside for at least 15 minutes.
2. Cut broccoli head into florets about 2 inches in size and slice florets in half.
3. In a mixing bowl, toss broccoli with olive oil to coat evenly.
4. Add broccoli to heated cast iron pan and place in oven. Make sure broccoli is spread out evenly in pan and pan is big enough not to crowd broccoli. Roast in oven for approximately 10 minutes.
5. Remove pan from oven. Broccoli should be golden brown and edges should be crispy to the touch. Let cool on stovetop for 2 minutes.
6. Add butter and fish sauce, tossing to coat broccoli evenly. Add julienned preserved lemon to broccoli. Toss together and place in bowl.
7. Garnish with sea salt, a sprinkle of pepper, and a few mint leaves.

Yield: 2–4 servings

PRESERVED LEMONS

12 Meyer lemons (can substitute standard lemons)
1 cup kosher salt
4 bay leaves
Equipment: 1 large canning jar with lid, hand juicer

1. Scrub all lemons under cold running water. Cut 6 lemons in half and juice into bowl. Set juice aside.
2. Slice remaining 6 lemons from top to bottom, stopping ½ inch short of bottom. Turn ¼ turn and slice again, leaving 4 lemon segments attached at base.
3. Place salt and sliced lemons in a bowl, thoroughly packing salt into lemons.
4. Pack the salted lemons and bay leaves into clean canning jar.
5. Pour reserved lemon juice into jar to cover. Seal with lid.
6. Place covered jar in a cool dark place for at least 2 weeks and up to 1 month before using. Can be stored in refrigerator for up to 6 months. Great with chicken, pasta dishes, and with fresh salads.

HAY ROASTED PHEASANT

For spice rub:
1 tablespoon Aleppo pepper
1 tablespoon whole cloves
1 tablespoon juniper berries
1 tablespoon fennel seed
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
Equipment: spice or coffee grinder

Place all spices in spice grinder or coffee grinder and grind into fine powder.

For coffee jus:
4 ounces country ham (chopped extra fine)
8 ounces cold-pressed coffee (or 4 ounces brewed)
16 ounces low-sodium chicken stock
1 bay leaf
1 sprig fresh thyme
1 sprig fresh oregano
1 tablespoon butter
Salt and pepper to taste

1. In a saucepot at medium heat add chopped country ham and slowly render until crispy and fat is released.
2. Strain off ¾ fat, leaving crisp ham in pot. Deglaze with cold-pressed coffee.
3. Reduce coffee by 2/3 and add stock. Add bay leaf, thyme, and oregano to pot and slowly simmer until reduced to 1½ cups liquid (approximately half).
4. Remove sauce from stove and pour through fine-mesh strainer.
5. Stir in butter. Salt and pepper to taste.

For pheasant:
3 ounces schmaltz (rendered duck or chicken fat)
1 whole pheasant (including neck and giblets)
Salt
4 handfuls hay, soaked in clean water for at least 15 minutes (find at pet store or organic farm)

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Remove schmaltz from fridge and let soften to room temperature.
2. Remove neck and giblets from inside pheasant and set aside.
3. Salt pheasant liberally inside and out and place on a plate in refrigerator uncovered overnight or at least a few hours.
4. Remove pheasant from fridge and rub with prepared spice rub. Brush entire bird with rendered schmaltz, evenly coating it on all sides.
5. Drain soaking hay and place two handfuls in bottom of Dutch oven. Place rubbed pheasant on top of hay and pack other two handfuls of hay around the pheasant. Place in 400-degree oven for 15 minutes. After 15 minutes, turn oven down to 300 degrees and continue roasting for approximately 30 minutes.
6. Check the temperature of the pheasant every 15 minutes. Once pheasant reaches 145 degrees,

remove it from the oven. Let rest in hay. The hay has insulating properties and pheasant will continue to cook after it is removed from oven. Let rest for at least 15 minutes.

7. Remove pheasant from hay and wipe off any remaining hay. Serve with coffee jus.

Yield: 4 servings

STUFFED RABBIT

For rabbit stuffing:
3 sprigs thyme, finely chopped
3 sprigs rosemary, finely chopped
2 sprigs parsley, finely chopped
½ bunch chives, finely chopped
Rabbit heart and liver
2 onions, minced
Pinch salt
1 garlic clove, minced to paste
1/3 cup white wine
2 rabbit thighs, diced in 1-inch pieces
1½ cups breadcrumbs
1 egg
¼ cup raisins, soaked in warm water for 1 hour

1. Mix chopped herbs in bowl and set aside.
2. Season rabbit heart and liver. Sear in pan over medium-high heat until golden brown, about 1 minute. Set aside and let cool.
3. Sweat onion with pinch of salt until soft, about 3 minutes. Stir in garlic and continue to sweat about 1 minute. Add wine and reduce until very dry, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool.
4. In medium-sized mixing bowl, combine thigh meat, breadcrumbs, and egg. Mix in onions and garlic.
5. Drain raisins and stir them into meat mixture. Then add half of the chopped herbs and mix to combine.

For roulade:
1 pound Pancetta, thinly sliced
Whole rabbit, boned
Rabbit stuffing

1. Lay pancetta slices in overlapping layers across a large piece of plastic wrap to create a rectangle. Place rabbit, skin side down, across center of pancetta rectangle.
2. Spoon rabbit stuffing in a 2-inch strip down the center of the rabbit starting from long end. Roll up rabbit and pancetta into a tight roll using the plastic wrap as a guide. Use additional plastic wrap as needed. Tie butcher's twine around rabbit 3 or 4 times crosswise and 1 time lengthwise to secure the plastic wrap.
3. Prepare an ice bath that will fit entire rabbit.
4. Heat a large stock pot of water to simmer. Submerge the plastic-wrapped rabbit into the simmering water and cook for 25 minutes to set its shape.
5. Remove the rabbit from the hot water and transfer it to the ice bath to stop the cooking.

6. When rabbit is completely cool, about 10 minutes, remove plastic. Tie butcher's twine around rabbit 3 or 4 times crosswise and 1 time lengthwise.

To roast the rabbit roulade:

1. Heat a large roasting pan on the stove.
2. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Lightly coat the roulade in extra virgin olive oil and season with salt and pepper.
3. Sear meat in the roasting pan on all sides.
4. Place pan in oven for about 35 minutes or until internal temperature reaches 150 degrees.
5. Remove from oven and allow to rest for 15–20 minutes before slicing.

Braised Cabbage for Stuffed Rabbit:

1 head garlic
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
1 cup rye breadcrumbs
1 head savoy cabbage
2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons white miso
1 cup dry white wine
½ cup water
6 ounces Parmesan rinds (can find in Whole Foods cheese section)

1. To roast garlic: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lay a flat peace of aluminum foil onto work surface and place garlic in center. Drizzle 1 tablespoon of olive oil on garlic and wrap entire head in foil. Place package in oven and roast until soft (30 minutes). Unwrap and let cool. Once cool, squeeze garlic into clean bowl. Make sure to remove any pieces of skin that may get in garlic.
2. For rye breadcrumbs: Heat a sauté pan over medium heat with 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Add breadcrumbs, stirring to distribute oil evenly. Cook in pan, mixing continuously until golden brown. Once browned, remove from heat and place on paper towel-lined plate to cool.
3. Clean savoy cabbage by removing dark outer leaves until you get into the dense compact leaves. Cut cabbage into 2-inch strips.
4. Heat pan on stove over medium heat. Add butter and melt. Add roasted garlic purée and miso. Cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes.
5. Add sliced cabbage to pan, tossing to coat in miso-garlic-butter mixture. Once cabbage begins to wilt add 1 cup white wine, ½ cup water, and Parmesan rinds.
6. Bring mixture to a simmer and cook, stirring often until liquid has thickened and cabbage is tender, approximately 30 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning. Sprinkle with rye breadcrumbs and a drizzle of olive oil to serve.

Yield: 4 servings