

# Vibrant Victuals

Candles flicker as a twilight breeze rustles through the towering bamboo in one of Old Louisville's most colorful secret gardens—the patio at 610 Magnolia. Here you will find bits of color in the flowers of summer dresses, in vases and in mossy planters. But the real carnival of color moves about on trays of delectable hors d'oeuvres, sumptuous entrees and dainty desserts, finally disappearing into the mouths of some very lucky diners.

If you are entertaining this summer, 610 Magnolia's chef, Edward Lee offers a few pointers on how to capture the magic of 610's flavor. Lee has continued the tradition at 610 Magnolia since acquiring the restaurant with business partner Brook Smith in 2003. Lee's food presentation must live up to the restaurant's reputation as one of the country's best.

When it comes to color, Lee believes Mother Nature provides the perfect palette. "Color in a dish should come from nature, not coloring agents. Vegetables and herbs provide most of the colors we need for our dishes," he said. Lee is inspired by the hues of each season, and his food presentation style reflects the diverse color in each one.

"It is always such an amazing sight to see the vibrant greens of spring. Summer rolls around and I see red everywhere from the ripe tomatoes to the lush berries. These colors should spill over onto the dishes you create. In fall and winter, I look towards the earthier shades of browns and I look towards spices like saffron and chilies to provide the beauty of deep reds," he explains.

If your dish naturally lacks color, consider garnishing or adding an ingredient that makes sense. If you follow Lee's advice, artificial color shouldn't be necessary, and color will not only enhance the visual appeal, it will enhance or complement the taste as well.



Lee explains, "Color should be necessary, don't color a dish just for the sake of color. Make sure it contributes to the flavor combination of the dish." This may sound like a no-brainer. After all, most amateur chefs would never garnish a cheesecake with scallions, or a soup with raspberries and chocolate swirls. But consider making the choice between a fresh basil leaf and a scallion on your pasta. This might take more careful consideration.

But that doesn't mean you should be afraid to try something unusual. Like most interesting artists, creative chefs take advantage of the element of surprise. Lee's gazpacho (see p6) is a lively example.

"This variation of the traditional gazpacho is lovely because it is so unexpected. You hear gazpacho, and you think red, but this eye-catching yellow is almost neon it's so fresh. The garnishes just scream of spring," he said.

How you choose to prepare your ingredients can make the most of their color impact. As Lee prepares his prawn creation (above), he intensifies the contrast between the hot red of the tomato and the cool green of the avocado.

"This dish is about concentrating colors and flavors. The ripe tomato gets even more intense by slowly cooking it, so does its deep red color," he said. "The avocado pudding adds a texture and creaminess, and finally the bright red prawns gives the eyes something appealing to look at."

The general public can now experience an evening at 610 Magnolia without a special invitation. The Old Louisville legend is now open on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays for dinner only. Private events can be scheduled the rest of the week. **whk**

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# Yellow Tomato Gazpacho with Chili Oil and Colorful Garnishes

## Gazpacho:

4 ripe yellow tomatoes  
1 yellow bell pepper, seeded and diced  
1 medium cucumber peeled, seeded and diced  
1/2 cup Vidalia onion finely diced  
1 teaspoon lemon juice  
1 teaspoon champagne vinegar  
3 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil  
pinch of salt & white pepper

## Chili Oil:

1/4 cup olive oil  
1 teaspoon red peppercorns  
1 tablespoon dried chili flakes

## Garnishes:

baby purple cauliflower cut into small florets  
varied baby mesclun greens  
baby variegated sage  
snipped chives

Combine the gazpacho ingredients into a blender and puree on high speed until all the ingredients are well combined. Reserve in the refrigerator and let stand for at least six hours.

## For the chili oil:

Warm the olive oil over low heat until the oil reaches 250 degrees. Turn off the heat, add the peppercorns and the chili flakes and let sit overnight at room temperature. Strain and discard the solids. Store the oil in an airtight container.

Divide the gazpacho between four chilled bowls. Drizzle a little chili oil over each soup. Garnish with the varied greens and cauliflower florets. Serves 4.

*Yellow bell pepper and baby variegated sage are just a few ingredients that make 610 Magnolia's interpretation of gazpacho a culinary and visual novelty.*

