



Photo by Kyle Fitzpatrick

PACIFIC FOOD TIME: ART AS AN APPETIZER

by Kyle Fitzpatrick on February 8, 2012

This past weekend, we got to experience a sensational collision of food and art—one that could have only been born from the brains behind Pacific Standard Time: *Art As An Appetizer*. The gathering was an intimate joining of cool Los Angeles food people, a handful of art enthusiasts, and iconic Southern California artists at Beverly Boulevard's Playa restaurant. Here, we sampled a secret menu (more on this later) of food and drink inspired by Pacific Standard Time artworks through the eyes and taste buds of chef John Rivera Sedlar and mixologist Julian Cox, with the help of artist/mezcal producer Ron Cooper. This is something you have to check out, guys. Like, *you HAVE to check this out ASAP.*

The event started with a sampling of three stellar cocktails, all using artist Ron Cooper's Del Maguey mezcal. The first drink was *Ball Drop*, based off of Cooper's own 1969 art-meets-physics video of metal balls being dropped on sheets of glass; *next was 47 Chevy*, from Oscar Castillo's documentary-style photography followed by *Untitled*, Larry Bell's enigmatic light and glass sculpture. Cox used these artworks as points of departure for how the three drinks would taste and look, imitating the feel and flavors of each piece. *Ball Drop* was a full drink with mezcal, gin, and lime, cut with a dropped ball of a fresh raspberry and an aftershock of cayenne pepper. *47 Chevy* was by far the most attractive drink with a pansy placed over lavender foam and crushed ice, oozing into a smokey yellow concoction of passion fruit and lemon. Bell's *Untitled* was a fun approach to a cocktail with vermouth, oloroso, and sharp mezcal lining the bottom of a glass, sliced by a grapefruit peel. Perhaps because *Ball Drop* was our first drink, or perhaps because it was inspired by Cooper's own artwork or the cayenne pepper tingled so much on the lips, it was definitely our favorite.

But all three drinks are fabulous thanks to mixologist Julian Cox's handiwork. And an insider's note for you: run-R U N-out and buy yourself a bottle of Cooper's Del Maguey mezcal. As he said before a toast to the occasion, drinking (his) mezcal is such a religious experience that you can skip church on Sunday. If that isn't reason enough to raise a glass, we have no idea what is.

Before eating, we sat down to hear a few words from Chef Sedlar, who spoke about his process of creating food inspired by art. He took a peek at many, many, many Pacific Standard Time artworks and selected three that were varied and representative of the things that the citywide celebration stands for, but that also lend themselves quite well to culinary inspiration. And, naturally, they all were served on plates that displayed and played with the food it was inspired by. First? Beatrice Wood's *Fish Platter*. Wood's piece is exactly what it sounds like: a platter that looks like a fish. The Santa Monica Museum of Art piece became the base for a multi-fish appetizer, featuring thinly sliced scallop, salmon, and other fish garnished with kumquats, crisp red seaweed, and—the best—the air of cilantro (AKA, cilantro foam).

The next was based off of Ruscha's *Los Angeles County Museum of*

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Art On Fire, a clever piece that inspired an equally clever dish: fire-grilled breast of chicken. The chicken was served below Ruscha's artwork on a plate sitting with greens and an "incendiary salsa" mirrored by a very delicate poached egg in a bed of bacon, both underlined by light goat cheese and dotted with cherry tomatoes. This dish was absurd: the chicken was the most deliciously juicy grilled chicken ever cooked, representing the "cooked" and charred LACMA, perfectly paired with the before-the-fire egg, that you could use to dip your chicken into. It was best to stir it all up—chicken, egg, salsa, greens, cheese, and tomatoes. You're going to want several more servings of this dish but, alas, dessert!

The dessert was a cool sorbet assortment based on Carlos Almaraz's painting *Beach Trash Burning* on view at the Fowler Museum's *Mapping Another L.A.* Flavors included a yellow roasted pineapple mezcal, red hibiscus pomegranate, and green poblano chile lime served with a nutty sweet and spiced shortbread cracker. The chile sorbet was a bit of a taste-bud shock, much like the visual shock of the Almaraz painting, and was a thought provoking end to a meal. The "sorbet splashes" inspired conversation about the nature of dessert and, consequently, how genius Chef Sedlar is to draw this dish from a painting about burning trash.

Art As An Appetizer has to be the most exciting art happening in Los Angeles in a very long time because, duh, what other event has a chef, mixologist, and artist/mezcal connoisseur joined together to make art-inspired food and drink? No one! The experience is a huge delight and, lucky for you, our little secret is now yours: in order to get in on the Pacific Standard Time food fun, all you have to do is present proof of museum attendance to one of the *many* Pacific Standard Time exhibitions in town, or even sharing this post on your phone to access the menu (which, otherwise, is secret to everyone else in the world who visits participating restaurants). Be sure to check it out at [Playa](#) and [Rivera](#) from now until March 31st. The price is about \$\$ on the Yelp scale, which is a steal considering *you are eating art*. See you there!

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