



Elderflower Smoked Halloumi; Rhubarb Relish; Lightly Pickled Radish, Rhubarb 'Glass' With Radish Sprouts; Pea Shoots and Edible Flowers.

The Modernist Vegetarian



Eddie Shepherd

27 year old Manchester based Eddie Shepherd creates culinary masterpieces that follow his own dietary convictions as a vegetarian, taking vegetarian cuisine to a new level.

Eddie Shepherd is a vegetarian in a meat-driven industry. He admits being vegetarian has made it harder to start out in this field as most restaurant menus feature meat and fish as major constituents. Having to prepare and cook meat and not be able to taste the dishes could have put Eddie at a disadvantage in a competitive industry. Instead he has used this as his point of difference and chosen to put vegetarian cuisine firmly in the spotlight.

It was not his degree in philosophy from Stirling University that led him down the

path to being a Chef. It was having to pay for the degree. He took his first kitchen position to pay his way through University. 'I was already a very keen cook at home and interested in food', Eddie explains '...but being vegetarian I had never really thought it would be possible to be a professional chef.' Luckily for Eddie a Head Chef saw his potential and asked if he was interested in moving into a Chefs position in the restaurant. Eddie jumped at the chance and found that not only was he talented in this area, but he also loved being in the kitchen. 'From then I think I knew this was a passion I wanted to really pursue', he says.

With no formal qualifications or schooling in this area, Eddie followed in the footsteps of many a famous Chef and learnt his craft in restaurants. His dedication led him to study the scientific side of cooking from home in his own time. 'I have been lucky to work with some great companies and food

scientists that really helped me to progress a lot', he admits.

The first time he worked in a good vegetarian restaurant he had a revelation – that you could actually do great food without meat. Spurred on, he started to work on his own dishes and recipes and research and read up, experimenting with both ingredients and new techniques. This is what led him to the modern side of





cooking that he now specialises in and he has crafted out his own niche style.

'I essentially do modern vegetarian food, at times using techniques and ingredients associated with modern or 'avant-garde' gastronomy (often referred to as 'Molecular Gastronomy' although I don't like the term)', elucidates Eddie. 'Personally I think, when used creatively and intelligently, modern cooking techniques and ingredients can be important tools in creating beautiful cuisine, but in the end the deliciousness of the finished product is the most important thing.'

It is the combination of culinary technology and fresh produce that gives Eddie his flair in creating exciting vegetarian dishes, ranging from delicacies such as a mushroom and nutmeg filo wrap with lemon dill spheres and blueberry puree to a grape Amuse Bouche consisting of carbonated anti-griddle seared grapes with purple grape glass and fennel sugar strands. The inventive flavours are topped only by Eddie's flair for presentation, creating dishes that need to be both seen and savoured.

When creating new dishes Eddie finds that some come together very quickly, while other ideas require substantial

research. 'Generally it starts with an idea either about a flavour or texture combination and then I look at how I want to include that in a dish or what I want to build around it', he explains. 'Sometimes new technology or ingredients come into it to help me to create something unique

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and use ingredients in new ways.' He clearly enjoys the creative process in developing something delicious but also interesting.

That said, Eddie still has a 'go to' meal at home for nights when there has been no time to properly prepare. 'I try to keep some basics in the freezer ready for that', he says. 'Sometimes I make batches of home-made pizza dough and freeze it so if I'm stuck for time or ingredients I can still knock up nice pizza.'

Eddie currently does mostly freelance work and recipe development which has led him to this point; about to launch a book and an online shop which cover the things he is passionate about. He spent the last couple of months finishing his e-book *Modernist Vegetarian* which will be out soon, and an online shop complements the book. He also participates in live cooking demonstrations at food festivals ranging from Tatton Parks in Cheshire to London Olympia. Of the latter he says 'London Olympia was a bit of a scary one because of the sheer size of the place and how busy shows there are.'

Eddie admits that he is acutely aware of how much there is still to learn. 'I make no claim to be a brilliant or properly matured chef. I am still young and early in my career, constantly learning and creating'.

The Blog
www.veggiechef.co.uk
 The Book
www.Modernist-Vegetarian.com
 The Shop
www.Modernist-Chef.com

TOP LEFT Goats Cheese Parfait, Avocado and Dill Pollen Puree, Yuzu Soured Goats Milk Froth, Dill Oil. With Crushed Pine Nuts, Cucumber, and Preserved Lemon Zest TOP RIGHT Grape Amuse Bouche

SMOKED GRIDDLED AUBERGINE WRAPPED LEMON AND BLACK PEPPER GOATS CHEESE WITH CROUTON, BALSAMIC REDUCTION AND ORANGE SAUCE.

SERVES 10 AS A STARTER OR CANAPÉ

Goats Cheese

125g Goats cheese
Zest of 2 lemons
1 teaspoon of cracked black pepper

Smoked Griddled Aubergine

2 Aubergines
1 Finely chopped red chilli
Chopped Fresh Parsley
*Polyscience Smoking Gun
*Oak Smoking Chips

Croutons

Cut 6cm wide circles of good

quality bread about 1cm thick using a pastry cutter.

Orange sauce

150ml Cointreau
50ml Dry White wine
600ml Orange Juice
Thumb sized piece of ginger cut into thin strips
*2g Xanthan gum
Salt

Balsamic reduction

200ml good quality Balsamic Vinegar



Goats Cheese

Mix the goat cheese, lemon zest and black pepper together in a bowl. Roll the cheese mix into 10 small sausage shapes and store in the fridge.

Smoked Griddled Aubergine

Slice down the length of the Aubergines to get strips ½ a cm thick. Place these in a colander and toss with two tablespoons of salt. Leave to sit for an hour to draw out the bitterness. Rinse the salt off the slices and place them in a bowl. Toss with a splash of olive oil, finely chopped red chilli, a sprinkling of fresh parsley and salt and pepper.

Pop the Aubergine strips on a hot griddle pan for one to two minutes on each side until just cooked through. Place into a large bowl and cover with clingfilm then use the Polyscience Smoking Gun loaded with oak smoking chips, to fill the covered bowl with smoke. Sit this bowl covered for one minute.

Place one of the pieces of rolled goat cheese at the bottom of each of the warm, smoked Aubergine strips and roll them up and pin in place with cocktail sticks. Pop them in a hot oven for one minute to make sure they are hot when served.

Croutons

Fry the 6cm circles of bread in olive oil on medium heat, for 1 minute on each side until golden. Sit the cooked croutons on kitchen roll to allow excess oil to drain.

Orange sauce

Simmer the Cointreau and white wine and reduce for two to three minutes. Add orange juice, ginger and a pinch of salt. Continue to simmer the sauce until reduced by half. Strain through a fine sieve and allow to cool, then blend in Xanthan gum and transfer the sauce to a squeeze bottle.

Balsamic reduction

Bring the Balsamic to a boil in a saucepan then drop the temperature to simmer and allow it to reduce by three quarters until a syrup consistency. Let it cool and place in a squeeze bottle.

To serve

Sit each of the smoked aubergine and goat cheese parcels on top of a crouton in the centre of the plate and alternately dot the orange sauce and balsamic reduction around the plate