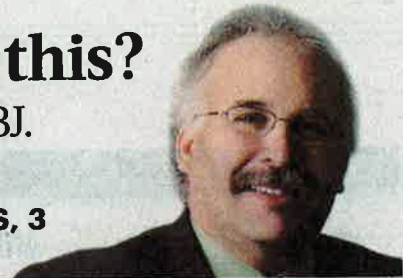




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TABLE TALK

Cafe Calatrava adds flavor to art exhibit

The Milwaukee Art Museum's mission is to make great works of art accessible to everyone.

Its Cafe Calatrava does the same with food.

"We want the food to reflect the exhibition, but it can't be stale or unapproachable," said Micah Kaufman, chef de cuisine.

Its upcoming menu is a perfect example. The Calatrava chefs are working on a regional menu to match the upcoming exhibit "Uncommon Folk: Traditions in American Art."

"We're grabbing onto the craft, artisanal aspects of the exhibit," Kaufman said.

"It's a way to keep the museum experience fresh."

MICAH KAUFMAN,
Cafe Calatrava

The process started months ago when Kaufman and sous chef Jamie Nelson met with the exhibit curator, Margaret Andera, to learn more about it. Turns out, the museum has one of the largest collections in the world of work by untrained creators, including folk and self-taught art. Folk art includes regional, traditional arts such as quilting and whittling. In this case, the exhibit and the menu will focus on the American Southwest, Appalachia and Wisconsin.

Kaufman said he's excited about dishes such as cider-braised pork belly, hot ham and rolls, cast-iron pan trout, maple miso chicory salad and vegan chili. The menu will feature a selection of sausage from Milwaukee-based Bolzano Artisan Meats and Wisconsin cheeses.

The only thing on the menu that has appeared at Cafe Calatrava before is a southwestern chipotle chicken wrap. From Appalachia, the chefs have created "chow-chow," a pickled relish with green tomatoes and cabbage.

"A lot of the Appalachian traditional



SCOTT PAULUS

Micah Kaufman (right), with Jamie Nelson... "We're grabbing onto the craft, artisanal aspects of the exhibit."



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cuisine has that town fair or town festival element," Nelson said.

The menu includes pasties, pastries stuffed with beef and cabbage that will include the chow-chow relish. Pasties were practical dishes for workers because they were easy to transport and

could be eaten with one hand.

"The items that were crafted in the 'Uncommon Folk' exhibition were purposeful and necessary," Kaufman said.

As they perfect the folk menu, Kaufman and Nelson are already starting to think about the menu for the next exhibit on Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky.

Just as new exhibits keep bringing people back to Cafe Calatrava, the rotating menu keeps people coming back to the Art Museum, Kaufman said.

"It's a way to keep the museum experience fresh," he said.

You can read more restaurant news in her Table Talk blog at www.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/blog/table_talk.