

Las Vegas' top chef shows you how to make a four-star meal—in your kitchen, tonight!

gourmet

Las Vegas has come a long way from the days of the 99-cent shrimp cocktail and all-you-can-eat junk-food buffets. Of course, the real draw here is gambling, but if you're looking for a sure bet, trade the gaming table for a white-tableclothed dinner table at world-class restaurants like those at the luxurious Wynn Hotel.

There, Executive Chef Grant MacPherson has been slowly but surely changing the face (and taste) of dining in Sin City, luring visitors to plunk down a thick wad of bills for one of his culinary feasts as readily as they would for a high-stakes wager. Honing his skills on five continents, for the Scotsman has produced his masterful creations the world over at top hotels including Raffles, ➔



RECIPES BY CHEF GRANT MACPHERSON • WRITTEN BY HEIDI DVORAK • PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL MILNE



red snapper tempura
with root vegetable slaw
and grain mustard aioli

the Four Seasons, the Ritz-Carlton and Regent, and won numerous awards (including the 1992 Culinary Olympics Gold Medal in Germany) before opening the kitchens at Las Vegas' prestigious Bellagio hotel in 1998 and the Wynn in 2005.

MacPherson spends his days at the hotel's 20 restaurants overseeing 1,300 employees, creating menus, tasting new dishes and making sure his high-quality global ingredients are the stars of his signature Vegas food show. "I search out the best Brazilian papayas, Costa Rican pineapples, Fiji apples and vine-ripened tomatoes," he says. "I incorporate cuisines from all over the world—especially the clean, subtle tastes of Cantonese cuisine and the fresh, distinct flavors of Provençal."

While MacPherson may seem an unlikely chef to turn to for healthy meal tips, his recipes are surprisingly doable. At home he cooks for his wife, Cheryl—director of restaurants at the Bellagio—and their sons, Graham, 5, and Connor, 2. On top of that, they entertain four or five couples almost every Sunday at their Las Vegas home by—what else?—cooking dinner.

In the following recipes, MacPherson shows you how to recreate four of his epicurean delights in your own kitchen. Don't let the number of ingredients make you fold. (After all, this *is* a gourmet meal.) MacPherson guarantees that his palate-pleasing components are easy to prepare and pay off big-time when your guests beg for seconds.

MacPherson achieves the perfect balance of gourmet and healthy in his autumn menu. But two fish selections? Ah, but there's a method to his madness. Both are high in omega-3 fatty acids yet offer completely different taste sensations. "I like the simplicity of fresh fish without using massive amounts of oil," he says. "My halibut is lightly coated with polenta, so you still get the flavor without it being totally encrusted. And although there seems like a large amount of oil for the snapper, very little gets absorbed, because

it's fried quickly. I also use fresh herbs. They're magical with fish."

His celery soup is packed with dietary fiber and boasts the flavors of fresh herbs and seasonal veggies. And the vanilla bean ice cream, as an accompaniment to the sautéed apples, lets you indulge your sweet tooth without guilt.

red snapper tempura with root vegetable slaw and grain mustard aioli

Serves 4

grain mustard aioli

1 egg yolk
1 tablespoon grain mustard
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 cup canola oil

1. Combine all ingredients in a blender.
2. Puree to the consistency of mayonnaise and set aside.

root vegetable slaw

1 turnip, julienned
1 carrot, julienned
1 parsnip, julienned
4 ounces snow peas
3 shallots, minced
4 ounces Napa cabbage, shredded
½ clove garlic, minced
salt and pepper to taste

1. In a bowl, combine all prepared vegetables. Mix in the aioli and toss.
2. Season with salt and pepper and set aside.

red snapper tempura

3½ ounces flour
½ ounce cornstarch
1½ ounces baking powder
7 ounces cold water
1 teaspoon vegetable oil
4 cups corn oil
4 three-ounce red snapper fillets
basil leaves for garnish

1. Combine all dry ingredients in a bowl.
2. Gradually whisk in cold water, followed by vegetable oil, until a smooth batter is achieved.
3. Heat corn oil in a deep frying pan. Dip the snapper in the tempura batter and fry

for about 2 minutes on each side or until golden.

4. Transfer fish to a paper towel to drain excess oil.
5. To serve, dish slaw onto four plates and place one fillet on top of each. Garnish with basil leaves.

puree of celery soup with chicken confit and roasted hazelnuts

Serves 4

chicken confit

1 teaspoon orange zest, chopped
1 teaspoon lemon zest, chopped
3 thyme sprigs
2 garlic cloves, crushed
2 skinless chicken thighs
2 cups peanut oil
1 onion, diced
1 green apple, diced
salt and white pepper to taste

1. Combine orange and lemon zest, thyme sprigs and garlic cloves in a small bowl.
2. Add chicken thighs, cover bowl and marinate in the refrigerator overnight.
3. Rinse chicken thighs, dry thoroughly and set aside, discarding marinade.
4. In a small pot, combine oil, onion and apple and bring to a light simmer. Add the thighs and cook slowly for approximately one hour or until tender.
5. Cool and pull all the meat off the bone. Reserve the meat. Season with salt and pepper to taste and set aside.

celery soup

10 ounces celery stalks, diced
4 ounces yellow onions, diced
4 ounces leeks, diced
½ ounce garlic, chopped
3 ounces Idaho potatoes, diced
1 quart chicken stock (homemade or prepared)
salt and pepper to taste
parsley leaves, for garnish
roasted hazelnuts, for garnish

1. In a heated pot, sweat the celery, onions, leeks, garlic and potatoes until translucent.
2. Add the chicken stock and bring to a

puree of celery soup
with chicken confit and
roasted hazelnuts





**polenta-crusted halibut fillets
with sweet corn relish and
mushroom vinaigrette**

simmer for 45 minutes until all vegetables are soft.

3. Transfer soup to blender and puree until smooth. Add salt and pepper to taste.
4. Serve in four individual soup plates, and top each with chicken confit. Garnish with hazelnuts and parsley leaves.

polenta-crusted halibut fillets

with sweet corn relish and mushroom vinaigrette

Serves 4

sweet corn relish

1 cup sweet corn kernels, roasted
½ cup sun-dried tomatoes
3 tablespoons shallots, diced
4 tablespoons chicken stock
1 teaspoon chives, chopped
salt and pepper

Combine all ingredients in a bowl and season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

mushroom vinaigrette

4 ounces button mushrooms
1 cup olive oil
1 tablespoon shallots, diced
1 clove garlic, minced
2 tablespoons sherry vinegar
1 tablespoon grain mustard

1. In a pan, sauté mushrooms in olive oil until tender. Add shallots and garlic. Cook until aromatic.
2. Using a slotted spoon, transfer mushrooms, shallots and garlic to blender and mix with sherry and mustard until creamy.
3. Season to taste with salt and pepper and set aside.

polenta-crusted halibut fillets

4 five-ounce halibut fillets
2 cups dry polenta (cornmeal)
salt and pepper to taste
½ teaspoon olive oil
snipped chives, for garnish

1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. Lightly dredge halibut fillets in cornmeal, salt and pepper.
3. In a skillet, heat oil and fry the fillets for about 3 minutes on each side or until golden.
4. Transfer fillets to a baking pan and place in the oven for 4 to 5 minutes or until cooked through.
5. Spoon relish onto four plates with crusted halibut fillets on top of each.
6. Garnish with vinaigrette and chives.

sautéed granny smith apples

with vanilla bean ice cream, caramel jus and mint leaf garnish

Serves 4

mint leaves

10 mint leaves
2 tablespoons sugar

1. Cut each leaf lengthwise.
2. Roll in sugar and bake in a 350° oven for 5 minutes. Remove from oven and set aside.

sautéed apples

3 granny smith apples, peeled and cored
1 tablespoon butter

1. Cut apples into quarters and remove point ends.
2. In a skillet, sauté apples in butter over medium heat until soft.
3. Remove apples from pan and reserve. Leave juices in the pan.

caramel jus

1 ounce sugar
3 tablespoons water

1. Add sugar to the skillet you used for the apples and stir until sugar caramelizes.
2. Add water and stir over medium-low heat until caramel dissolves and a sauce is achieved.
3. To serve, divide the apple pieces evenly onto four plates. Top each with a scoop of ice cream, drizzle with caramel jus and garnish with mint leaves.





sautéed granny smith apples with
vanilla bean ice cream, caramel jus
and mint leaf garnish