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RECIPE
Model Milk

Eat, drink and be merry Calgary

Preface

The idea behind Model Milk is simple: comfort food made using high-quality produce.

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Spotting Model Milk is easy. Outside the former dairy is a white cow-head sculpture that juts out above its entrance on 17th Avenue in Calgary's Red Mile district. Behind the front door the restaurant is rustic and alluring: exposed brick walls, weathered wooden beams and industrial pendant lamps, under which co-owner and executive chef Justin Leboe (above) works away in his open-plan kitchen.

"I wanted to create an intimate dinner-party atmosphere," he says chopping onions for his signature sautéed calamari dish. The 41-year-old Vancouverite honed his skills at The French Laundry near San Francisco, Daniel Boulud's New York restaurant and various establishments in Bermuda before moving to Calgary in 2007 to work as an executive chef at the then-new Rush restaurant.

"The experience at Rush taught me how to build something from scratch. Soon after came the time for me to open my own restaurant," says Leboe, who started Model Milk in 2011 when Calgary's food scene was still young and not much diversified. "It was like a blank canvas: I could do anything." The food philosophy here is simple: a regularly shifting menu serves



Recipe

Calamari fricassée Serves 2

Ingredients

150g calamari
10g garlic, chopped
10g onion, chopped
40g pancetta, diced
3g lemon zest
40ml olive oil
5g parsley, chopped
5g mint, chopped
30g edamame beans
30g croutons
10g butter
Salt, pepper, lemon juice

The method

- 1 Cut calamari into strips.
- 2 Sauté pancetta till crispy.
- 3 Add garlic, onion and calamari; flash fry.
- 4 Add rest of ingredients and fry to cook calamari.
- 5 Season with salt, pepper and lemon juice.



modern takes on comfort food made from high-quality ingredients, "without screwing them up before they hit the plate", as Leboe puts it.

Since opening, the venture has not only helped shake up the city's staid food scene but also won a clutch of industry accolades. Model Milk was among Canada's best new food spots in 2012 and in 2013 Leboe was named chef of the year at the annual Pinnacle Awards.

With a capacity of 80 (20 more can be seated in the private dining room upstairs) the venue bustles with customers lured here by the decadent Southern-style chicken and waffles, the calamari fricassée with edamame beans or the succulent lamb rump – just a few of the recurring dishes on offer. "We've done about 200 alterations and additions to the menu but we've had these pretty much since day



Recipe

Roasted lamb rump Serves 2

Ingredients

2	160g lamb rumps
1	large aubergine
1	bunch mustard greens
100g	yoghurt
60g	hazelnuts
60g	black malt
40g	green olives
150g	olive oil
	Salt, pepper, lemon juice

The method

- 1 Season and sear lamb until sealed.
- 2 Transfer to a medium-temperature oven and cook to preference.
- 3 Lightly char aubergine on the grill.
- 4 Blend with hot water, adding oil and salt.
- 5 Grill mustard greens until soft.
- 6 Sauté mustard greens with butter and salt.
- 7 Crust lamb with black malt and slice.
- 8 Plate, add olives, aubergine and hazelnuts.
- 9 Garnish with yoghurt, drizzle with lemon juice and add salt and pepper to taste.



one. Diners keep on asking for them," says the chef.

Besides managing Model Milk, Leboe is also a consultant for hospitality group Concorde, where he oversees the menus at three other Calgary chains: Double Zero pizza, Clive Burger and National. Next January will see the opening of Leboe's French-style bistro in the building adjacent to Model Milk, which will offer snacks and a cellar full of European wines.

"What do I want to eat today: this is what chefs have to ask themselves rather than what do I want to *cook* today. The former satisfies the belly; the latter only the ego," says Leboe as he scatters fresh mint on calamari. "After 27 years in the industry it can easily become about your ego – but it has to be about the food." — (M)

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