

KONA KAMPACHI TARTARE + AVOCADO MOUSSE

Serves 4

This appetizer has been on our menu from the very beginning, and is one of our most popular dishes—it's on our tasting menu. Despite the long list of ingredients, it's actually very easy to make, and I guarantee that if you serve this at your next dinner party, it'll be the dish everyone will be talking about. It not only looks impressive—it tastes absolutely incredible, too. I remember playing around with different flavors and textures while I was creating this dish, and while I loved what I was getting as a result, but it still wasn't quite perfect on my palate. One day, while looking for something to finish the dish, I noticed a small mound of leftover toasted pine nuts lying around. And me being me, I just thought, Why not? I threw the nuts in and tried it—it tasted absolutely perfect. Exactly the missing piece I was looking for. The smokiness from the toasting, the sweetness that pine nuts are known for, and their fattiness were all perfect complements for the fish, avocado, and spicy lime sauce.

This fish began as Kona Kampachi, a type of yellowtail raised off the coasts of Hawaii. The company we work with has since moved to Mexico and the fish is now just plain kampachi.

We serve this dish with a spoon that contains a small bud called a Szechuan button, which at first might seem like theatrics. We tell you to place it on your tongue and move it around your mouth and wait for it to start to “pop,” meaning that the button will create a tingling sensation in your mouth, making your palate more ready for all the flavors you're about to experience.

FOR THE SAUCE

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup mild honey
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- 2 tablespoons teriyaki sauce
- 1 tablespoon mustard oil
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE AVOCADO MOUSSE

- 1 avocado, halved and pitted
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 to 6 dashes green Tabasco sauce
- Kosher salt

FOR THE TARTARE

- 10 ounces (2 cups) large-dice kampachi (see headnote)
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons brunoise cucumbers
- Kosher salt
- ½ cup diced avocado
- 1 teaspoon fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

TO ASSEMBLE THE DISH

- ¼ cup pine nuts
- 4 red radishes, julienned

Micro cilantro (optional)
4 (1x¼-inch) sashimi-style slices kampachi
Olive oil
Fresh lime juice
Potato chips
4 Szechuan buttons

MAKE THE SAUCE

1. Combine the olive oil, honey, lime juice, teriyaki sauce, and mustard oil in a small bowl. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

MAKE THE AVOCADO MOUSSE

2. Place the avocados, lime juice, olive oil, Tabasco, and salt to taste into a blender and puree on the highest speed until smooth. You may need to use the bottom of a ladle to get everything started. Transfer to a nonreactive container, cover, and refrigerate until ready to serve.

MAKE THE TARTARE

3. In a medium bowl, combine the fish, olive oil, cucumber, and salt to taste. In another bowl, combine the diced avocado, lime juice (to keep it from oxidizing), and olive oil. Season to taste with salt and set aside.

4. Place a quarter of the diced avocado on the bottom of a 2-inch ring mold. Fill the mold three-quarters of the way with the fish, packing the fish tightly. Repeat with the remaining avocado and tartare—you should fill 4 molds. Transfer the ring molds to a tray and refrigerate until ready to use.

ASSEMBLE THE DISH

5. When ready to serve, in a small dry skillet, toast the pine nuts over low heat, periodically shaking the pan to prevent the nuts from burning, until golden and fragrant, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl and let the nuts cool completely.

6. Unmold the Tartare into chilled bowls by inverting the molds over the bowls. You will have the tartare on the bottom and diced avocado on top. Pour enough of the Sauce to come a quarter of the way up the molded tartare. Garnish with the julienned radish and micro cilantro, and scatter the toasted pine nuts around.

7. For each bowl of tartare, place a quenelle of the Avocado Mousse on a large soup spoon and top with a slice of the kampachi. Drizzle with olive oil and lime juice, and garnish with a sprig of micro cilantro. Place a few potato chips on the side of the bowl.

8. Divide the Szechuan buttons among 4 Asian soup spoons and serve with the bowls of tartare and avocado mousse. Before eating, place the Szechuan button bud under your tongue and wait until your mouth begins to “pop” before eating the dish.