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FOOD

Our favorite things to eat this very second, from soup to bar nuts.

Salad CORTON

239 W. Broadway, nr. White St.
212-219-2777

It's no secret that salad is the bane of any ambitious chef's existence. People want it, you have to have it, but what can one possibly do with the same old tired greens and listless roughage? Well, if one is Paul Liebrandt, one can emulsify black garlic; purée carrots with saffron; sculpt yellow fingerlings into tiny, round marbles; bind beets and sunchokes in a nage of vegetables and butter; rub Asian-pear slices and spinach leaves with oil and oven-dry them at 185 degrees; pan-toast red-pepper powder mixed with olive oil until it turns the texture of crunchy sand; and gift-wrap a ball of onion soubise in tender Shanghai-cabbage leaves. "From the Garden: Young Vegetables, Fruits and Herbs of the Season," the mildly pretentious sobriquet of Liebrandt's gorgeously constructed "salad," is his inspired homage to Michel Bras, the French chef credited with first subjecting innocent vegetables to this form of torture. The effect is not only beautiful but surprising, and utterly satisfying. When was the last time you said that about a heap of mesclun?

Newfangled Dessert CORTON

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In this rusticated, unglamorous dining era, the key to a truly grand dessert is to make it appear not very grand at all. Robert Truitt, the pastry chef at Drew Nieporent's new restaurant, Corton, achieves this difficult trick with his inspired, justly hyped confection the caramel brioche. Truitt begins with a simple slab of house-baked brioche caramelized in honey and clarified butter, set down on a slick of coffee mousse. Then he adds the rest of the elements, one by one. They include scoops of brioche ice cream, banana purée, and passion fruit cream, the last of which sits in the center of the toast like a sweet, decorative version of toad in the hole. There are tiny slips of dissolving sweet-wine gelée, too, a nugget of tangy Stilton, and a chocolate nougatine, which sits at an angle on top of the dessert like a Sunday hat. The result is a delicate amalgam of comfort, ingenuity, and style that is pretty to look at, technically ingenious, and, most important of all, delicious to eat.



Corton's "From the Garden."