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# plate

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## Revisiting the Mediterranean



A Portuguese **RENAISSANCE**  
**BASQUE-ING** in rich stews  
New plays on **PORCHETTA**

Dried fruits and pistachio wrapped in phyllo (bisteeya), \$8.50, Chef-Owner Sameh Wadi, Saffron Restaurant & Lounge, Minneapolis. RECIPE, p. 86.



# SHELLING OUT

Take a crack at authentic Mediterranean desserts with pistachios, walnuts and chestnuts  
by Matthew Frank

The cuisines of Mediterranean Spain, Italy, France, and Portugal are rife with flavors both delicious and oxymoronic. Where but the Mediterranean can we find dishes that embody the exotic and the familiar, the innovative and the traditional? In the region's melding of cultural influences, there lies a cuisine of beautiful collision; cuisine that borrows a little from one culture, and a little from another, and finding that, on the palate, this is a fusion that proves strangely singular, and certainly sym-

biotic. Through this cuisine, we receive taste-messages from history—from the Phoenicians and Arabs, the Romans and Turks, the Venetians and Alexander the Great (the latter of whom was said to have introduced Europe to the banana). Alexander's cravings notwithstanding, this symbiosis is exemplified in the region's desserts and, specifically, in

those sweet dishes that utilize the holy trinity of the Mediterranean nuts: pistachios, walnuts and chestnuts.



Oil	as needed
Salt	as needed
Fennel pollen	as needed
Baby frisée, heads, trimmed	2 each
Watercress, bunch, stems removed	1 each
Calabrian chilies, pickled, thinly sliced	1 TBS
Parsley, chopped	1 TBS
Chervil, chopped	1 TBS
Tarragon leaves, chopped	1 TBS
Chives, cut into 1/2-inch batons	1 TBS
Salt and freshly ground black pepper	as needed
Sherry vinaigrette ▼	1 1/2 TBS

1. To make *confit*, rub pork cheeks evenly with 1 cup porchetta seasoning mix and cure for 45 minutes. Rinse cure off cheeks, pat dry and arrange in a pan that will hold them in 1 snug layer. Cover with duck fat and set in a 275-degree F for 2 hours or until quite tender. Reserve warm until ready to serve or refrigerate, covered in fat, for up to 10 days.

2. To make crispy pork skins, trim pork skin of any imperfections or nipples and place in a pot of water. Bring to a boil and cook, nearly boiling, for 1 hour or until skin is very tender. Drain and chill skin, then scrape off fat. Put pork skin in a food dehydrator at 165 degrees F for 24 hours. Deep-fry pork skins at 375 degrees F and season with salt and fennel pollen and reserve.

3. In a bowl, combine frisée, watercress, chilies and fresh herbs. Season lightly with salt and pepper and dress with sherry vinaigrette. Take warm pork cheeks out of duck fat and drain excess fat. Arrange 2 pieces of pork cheeks on each serving plate and top with frisée salad and small pieces of crispy pork skin.

#### PORCHETTA SEASONING MIX

Yield: 1 C

Lemon zest, minced	2 TBS
Rosemary, fresh, chopped	2 TBS
Sage, fresh, chopped	1 1/2 TBS
Garlic, chopped	1 1/2 TBS
Fennel seeds, toasted, crushed	3 1/2 TBS
Bay leaves, toasted, ground	6 each
Kosher salt	3 TBS

Black pepper, coarsely ground 2 TBS

Combine all ingredients and reserve.

#### SHERRY VINAIGRETTE

Yield: 1 1/4 C

Sherry vinegar 1/4 C

Balsamic vinegar 2 TBS

Shallot, chopped 1 TBS

Dijon mustard 4 TBS

Salt 1/2 tsp, plus as needed

Freshly ground black pepper as needed

Extra virgin olive oil 3/4 C

Combine first 6 ingredients in a blender and purée. With motor running, slowly add oil to emulsify. Adjust seasonings and reserve.



## grandfinale

### Dried fruits and pistachio wrapped in phyllo (bisteeya)

Chef-Owner Sameh Wadi, Saffron Restaurant & Lounge, Minneapolis

Yield: 8 servings

Menu price: \$8.50; food cost/serving: 25%

Apricots, dried 1/4 C

Sour cherries, dried 1/4 C

Sultanas, golden raisins 1/4 C

Figs, black, dried 1/4 C

Candied ginger pieces 4 each

Ras el hanout 1 tsp

For these recipes and more, visit [PLATEONLINE.COM](http://PLATEONLINE.COM)

Gewürztraminer (or other aromatic, sweet wine) 1 C

Pistachios, toasted, crushed 1 C

Phyllo sheets 8 each

Clarified butter 1 C

Cinnamon 1 TBS

Powdered sugar 1/4 C

Yogurt 1/4 C

Orange blossom honey 2 tsp

Pistachios, toasted and ground into powder 2 TBS

Pistachio oil as needed

1. In a medium saucepot, combine dried fruits, candied ginger and *ras el hanout* with wine and stew over low heat until fruits are soft. Cool completely in liquid, then roughly chop fruit, stir in pistachios and reserve.

2. Brush phyllo sheets with clarified butter and layer 4 pieces on top of one another, in two stacks. Cut both stacks into 4 squares. Place a small amount of filling in middle of each square and fold over to resemble a flower or another desired shape. Place in a 350-degree F oven and bake until golden brown, about 12 minutes.

3. Mix cinnamon and powdered sugar and reserve in a small strainer. In a bowl, mix yogurt and orange blossom honey and reserve.

4. To serve, place a spoonful of orange blossom yogurt in the middle of a plate, place *bisteeya* on top and garnish with cinnamon sugar, ground pistachios and a drizzle of pistachio oil.

### Walnut and plum crostata with plum jam and cinnamon basil gelato

Pastry Chef Kimberly Schwenke, 312 Chicago, Chicago

For main recipe, see p. 66.

#### CROSTATATA DOUGH

Yield: 30 Oz

All-purpose flour 3 C

Butter 12 Oz

Sugar 1/3 C

Salt 2 tsp

Ice water 1/2 C

Combine dry ingredients in mixer. Cut in butter. Add ice water and reserve, chilled.