



Haute Eating: 10 Questions for Aquavit's Chef Marcus Jernmark

By Tracey Ceurvels on October 12th, 2010



Over the summer I attended the Crayfish Festival at Restaurant Aquavit: a crayfish smorgasbord plus a pound of peel & eat crayfish all paired, naturally, with aquavit made for an *haute* Scandinavian lunch. Now that fall is here, I will be returning to enjoy Chef Marcus Jernmark's Scandinavian cuisine that's both traditional and contemporary: duck pastрами with poached stone fruit, house aged venison salad with västerbotten cheese and black truffle, hazelnut crusted arctic char and Berkshire pork with succotash, poached figs and foie gras broth.

While Marcus Samuelsson may have put Aquavit on the culinary map, Chef Jernmark, who took over in the spring after Samuelsson's departure, is making his own mark—with outstanding results.—Tracey Ceurvels

Haute Living: What's new at Aquavit?

MJ: Our fall menu and our new Saturday brunch. We're entering a new field with our Saturday brunch that's very exciting. The mushroom season is also starting up, which is one of my favorite times of the year.

HL: What are some of your favorite dishes at Aquavit?

MJ: Definitely our pheasant with wild mushroom butter, milk poached garlic and brussels sprouts, and our halibut confit that's served with baked fennel, beer-braised octopus and mussel aspic.



HL: Where do you like to dine when you're not working?

MJ: I work all the time so it's hard to get away. But I really enjoy Le Jardin, a solid French restaurant that has great food, a beautiful garden space and the people who work there are very friendly. Azul in the East Village is also one of my go-to places for a good steak.

HL: What's your ideal meal?

MJ: At the moment it would consist of a Pellejansson, which is an open-faced sandwich that has bleak roe, sour cream and red onion and covered with a thin blanket of beef Carpaccio, which is then covered with raw egg yolk. I had this in Sweden last week and I've been craving it ever since.

HL: Where do you like to dine for a special occasion?

MJ: Somewhere outside the city, by a body of water. It's the most ideal dining setting that I can imagine.

HL: What's your favorite NYC neighborhood?

MJ: Probably the West Village: you have a lot of nice, small restaurants, boutiques, a vibrant scene at any time of the day, a great mix of people and good transit.

HL: What do you like to do in the city on your days off?

MJ: I'm baby-proofing my life right now: what that means is putting up shelves, comparing prices on diapers, and waiting on my expecting wife.

HL: Your favorite vacation destination?

MJ: Jerez de la Frontera (in Spain). It's a nice little city with great tapas, little bodegas where you can see the Sherry ageing in soleras, and a vibrant culture. Sitting at a cafe, drinking a strong coffee or a glass of Sherry and eating bocadillos (small sandwiches), that's the perfect escape for me. And wearing a straw hat for the duration of the visit—that's very important.



HL: What's your most memorable meal?

MJ: The 15-year anniversary dinner at 28+ in Gothenburg. I had just started culinary school; I had no previous knowledge so this was a meal that impressed me, where I admired each of the 16 courses. It was pure enjoyment. I wasn't at the point yet where I had to analyze every ingredient. Now when I go out, I automatically analyze a restaurant's menu, the dishes, the setting, the service. But when I had this epic meal, I hadn't been exposed to the intense learning that followed.

HL: What are your five favorite ingredients?

MJ: Horseradish, vinegar, salt, langoustine and artichokes.

Aquavit is located at 65 E. 55th St; 212-307-7311