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Lobster and Juniper

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This recipe is based on a noble product, which we are lucky to be able to cook: no part of it should be omitted. When I designed this dish, I was fortunate to meet botanists with whom I could collaborate. For example, Fabrice Gabriel has often proposed wild plants with remarkable flavour and changing with the seasons. And a juniper vinegar gave me ideas for flavour associations. In particular, the wild juniper that he brought us from Alsace had a vegetal bitterness that seemed to me well paired with that of grapefruit; the acidity of this citrus also seemed convenient to equilibrate the dish (indeed, lobster, like langoustines, has some “sweetness”).

In order to create a joyful dish, we decided to treat the various parts of the lobster differently, associating each with a different juniper preparation. Technically, the way we cook the lobster is key. Of course, the quality of the crustacean contributes to the success of the recipe, but the particular consistency of the tail flesh is made possible thanks to the blowtorch (it could also be obtained using a deep freeze, but with a different result). Then, the siphon is important for the sabayon, not only because it makes the preparation much easier and faster, but also because the consistency that can be achieved is quite different from that of sabayon of the older times. And finally, making “debyes”, i.e., grinding gels in liquids (aqueous solutions, like here, or “oils”), is important because of the special soft consistency that can be achieved.

For the guests, there is fun with this dish, because all parts of the lobster are dissociated, and it provides more pleasure than having a simple plain lobster. At the restaurant, the guests are invited to use their fingers (and this is why part of the lobster is prepared on a juniper branch). The lobster claw comes second, with more sourness and bitterness, after the sweetness of the body. And finally, the sabayon is comforting.

**Lobster**

1 lobster (800 g)
250 g brown butter

**Process:**

Kill the lobster by inserting a sharp knife through the head.
Then heat the shell with the blowtorch, so that it turns red, and dip it immediately in ice for 20 minutes before breaking the shell and recovering the flesh.
Divide the flesh into segments and poach for 5 minutes at a temperature of 45 °C.
Cook the lobster over hot coals and store. Just before serving, reheat in brown butter.

**Juniper Gel**

270 g sugar (sucrose)
30 g juniper berries
5 g corn starch
1 g agar-agar
240 g white vinegar

**Process:**

Mix the berries with sugar, corn starch and agar-agar, and bring to the boil while stirring.
Keep the mixture in the refrigerator for 1 hour.
When the gel is set, make a “debye” by mixing it with the vinegar.

**Grapefruit Caramel**

1 kg of grapefruit pulp
250 g cream
200 g white vinegar
5 g agar-agar
100 g lemon juice
350 g sugar (sucrose)

**Process:**

Make a caramel with lemon juice and sugar.
Deglaze with the cream and the vinegar.
Mix this caramel with the grapefruit pulp and agar-agar.
Heat to 80 °C, then store in the fridge for 1 hour.
When set, mix with the lemon juice to make another debye.
Lobster Sabayon
120 g lobster bisque made using the head
75 g water (for the bisque)
4 g salt
163 g egg yolks
250 g butter

Process:
Make a bisque from the lobster head and water.
Make a sabayon with the egg yolks, the water, salt and butter.
Add the lobster bisque to the sabayon.
Put the mixture in a siphon.
Adjust two N₂O cartridges one after the other.
Store at 60 °C.
At the last minute, siphon it into cups.

Juniper Oil
950 g neutral oil (sunflower)
500 g juniper berries

Process:
Mix all the ingredients together, and filter with a sieve.

Juniper Cream
750 g cream
30 g juniper berries
20 g white vinegar
9 g salt

FIGURE 125.1 The “Lobster and juniper” dish served in our restaurant in Paris.
Lobster and Juniper

Process:

Macerate the berries in cream for 30 minutes.
Mix all the other ingredients with this cream.
Filter.
For the final touch, serve the various parts in three different bowls (Figure 125.1), the medallion on a juniper branch, the claw along with juniper sauce and juniper oil, the grapefruit caramel and the juniper debye, and finally, the head in sabayon.
The guests are invited to use their fingers to taste the three parts of the dish in this order.