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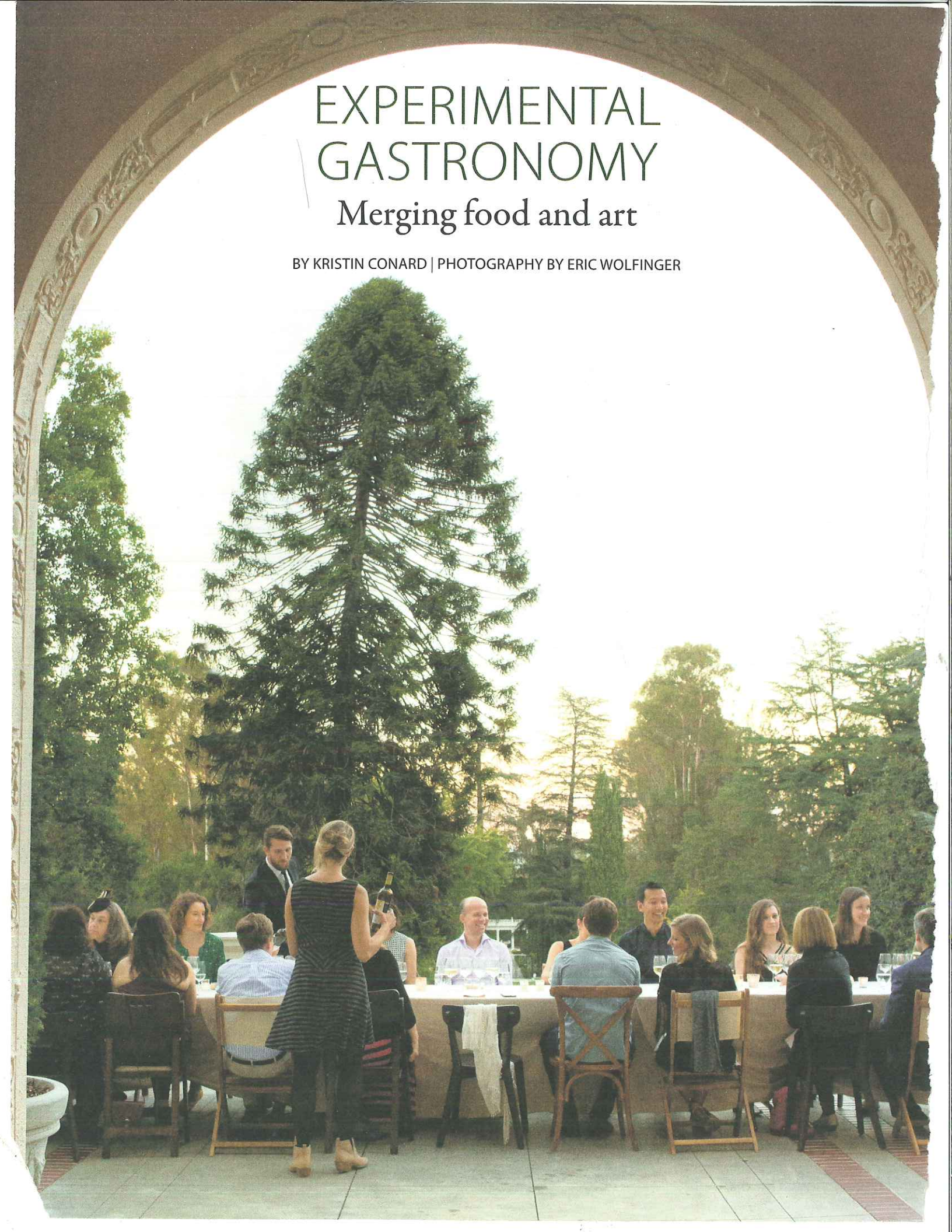
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EXPERIMENTAL GASTRONOMY

Merging food and art

BY KRISTIN CONARD | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC WOLFINGER





Garden herb sorbet and bitter cacao from Pastry Chef Stephanie Prida (Manresa) served on a shovel plate by Joe Pintz

Food and the act of eating play a vital role in human existence, from practical nourishment to building community. Food can also be inspiringly creative and connect us with people around us and with the natural world. In Silicon Valley, innovative chefs not only excel at the craft of cooking but also make edible art, supported by equally innovative growers in nearby fields and farms.

Three of those chefs—David Kinch of Manresa, Corey Lee of Benu and Daniel Patterson formerly of Coi—came together to serve a seven-course vegan meal with locally sourced organic and biodynamic ingredients for the Steinbeisser Experimental Gastronomy event at Montalvo Arts Center this past September.

The Experimental Gastronomy events started in 2012 in Amsterdam at the Lloyd Hotel & Cultural Embassy, and the one here in Saratoga was the first in the United States. As described by Martin Kullik, co-founder of Steinbeisser, an Amsterdam-based creative studio, the initiative was started to bring artists and chefs together and radically reimagine traditional dining.

“[This event] forced us to think outside of the box with menu creation and incorporate the unique cutlery and serving dishes created by designers and artists... It was a great opportunity to cook with many of my colleagues and new friends.”

—David Kinch

From the local ingredients to the artistic dishes, this initiative upends our concept of how food can be presented and eaten.

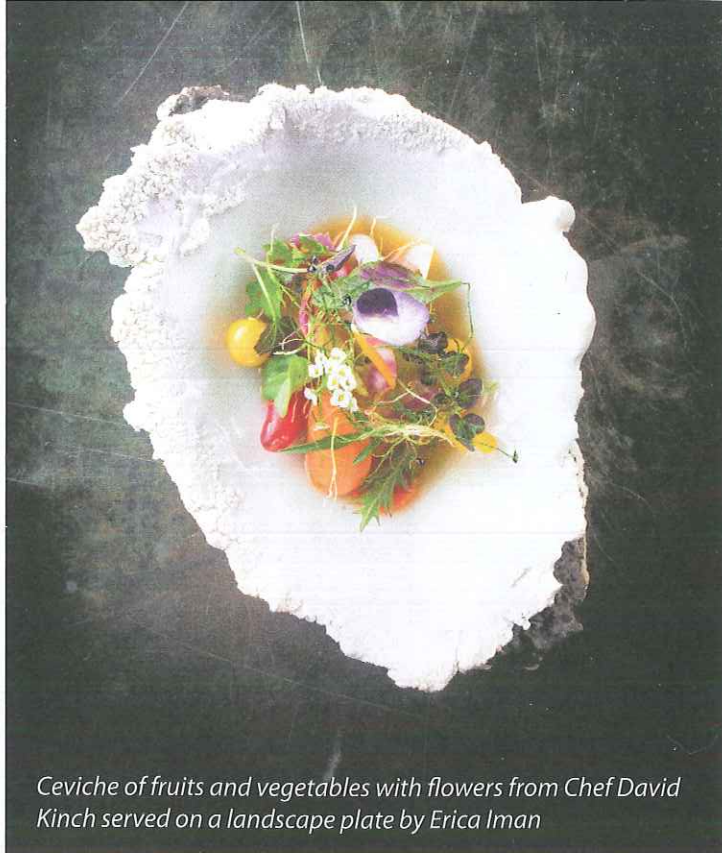
It’s a rare thing when the food of world-renowned chefs, with eight Michelin stars among them, takes a back seat to tableware and cutlery, but that’s what happened. Some silverware in particular was designed to be “so challenging that some of you might become angry as you try to use them,” explained Kullik to the five dozen or so guests before the meal.

Ceramic artists, metal workers, wood carvers and other artists created artwork you might expect to find in a gallery rather than on a dining table. Each piece by the dozen artists was handmade particularly for the event. It could seem as though the designs were solely for their novelty or impossibility to actually use—like the deconstructed ceramic plates used for Lee’s “rice with assorted condiments” or the modified scissors one guest used to eat Kinch’s “ceviche of fruit and vegetables with flowers.”

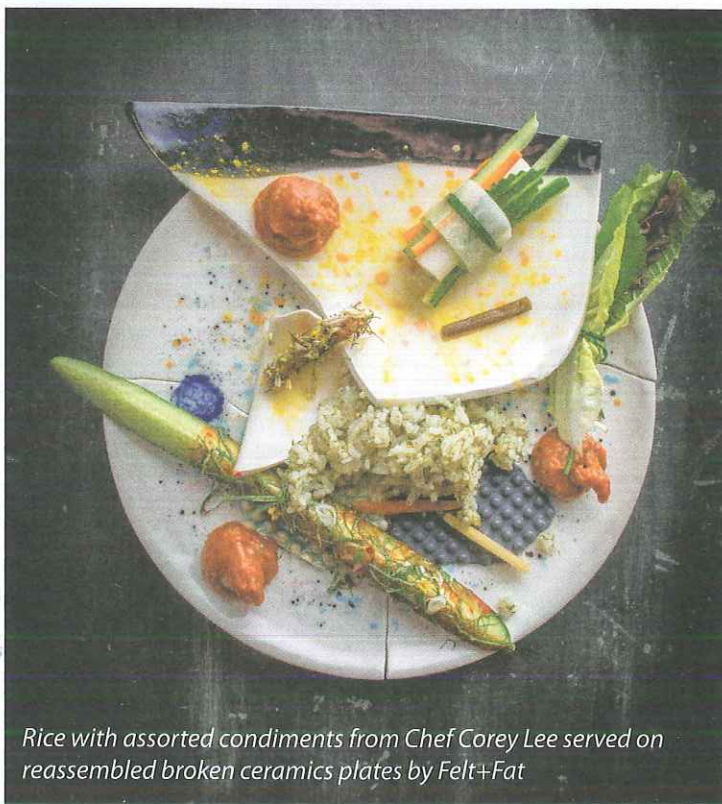
But there was a great deal of thought behind the creation of each element of the dishes that went beyond appearance,



Daniel Patterson, formerly chef at 2 Michelin star Coi, left; David Kinch, chef at 3 Michelin star Manresa, center; and Corey Lee, chef at 3 Michelin star Benu



Ceviche of fruits and vegetables with flowers from Chef David Kinch served on a landscape plate by Erica Iman



Rice with assorted condiments from Chef Corey Lee served on reassembled broken ceramics plates by Felt+Fat



Brian Weissman's shattered and reconnected spoons

showcasing how much of an interplay there can be between art, emotion, food and even science.

Like Brian Weissman who created the shattered and reconnected spoons as “a metaphor for how at a molecular level our foods can combine, alter and even destroy us in such incredible ways that even our DNA is affected.”

When your spoon has sharp metal edges, you're forced to slow down. So as good as the dish is, you have to take your time, and the

flavors develop and deepen: Artistic form meets culinary function.

Weissman's spoons joined together like chain links—which were given to guests in some cases to share with their neighbor—representing “the compounding effects of food on our bodies. By simply linking together the spoons, they became a metaphor for how we eat, what we eat, how much we eat and how it can start to add up.”

Manresa Pastry Chef Stephanie Prida's dish was served on what looked like the blade of a shovel and was eaten with antique optical



*Air-dried hachiya persimmons
(hoshigaki) served on a big cake plate
from culinary artist Andrea Blum*



*"Petit Farcis" pepper
and tomato from chef
David Kinch served
on a sculptured
walnut spoon by
Julian Watts*



Eggplant, shiitake, sesame leaf from Chef Corey Lee served on a landscape plate by Mitch Iburg

devices re-engineered to add spoon bowls and fork tines, which gave an up-close look of the delicately plated dish. Joe Pintz described his inspiration to create the plates as a part of his work exploring “the role that domestic objects play in fulfilling our physical and emotional needs” and the shovel “visually reconnects food back to its source, reinforcing the locally sourced biodynamic theme.”

The challenge of the tableware (some of which can be purchased at jouwstore.com) didn't solely extend to the guests, but also to the chefs. Working together, they first determined the flavors they wanted to use. However, it wasn't until they saw the actual dishes and utensils that they developed the form those flavors would take. As Lee described it, “Seeing the tableware made me realize that the event is not really about food, but rather offering some kind of experience that happened to include food.”

Finding inspiration for a dish from the plates and cutlery used to consume it is a step towards dining as an even more collaborative and active adventure—bringing together the museum world where we simply look at art and the culinary world where we consume it. ✕

Learn more at: Steinbeisser.org/category/journal

Kristin Conard is a Santa Cruz-based food and travel writer who has published work with *Travel + Leisure*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Departures*, *Adventure Sports Journal*, *Destination Weddings* and *Honeymoons* and more.

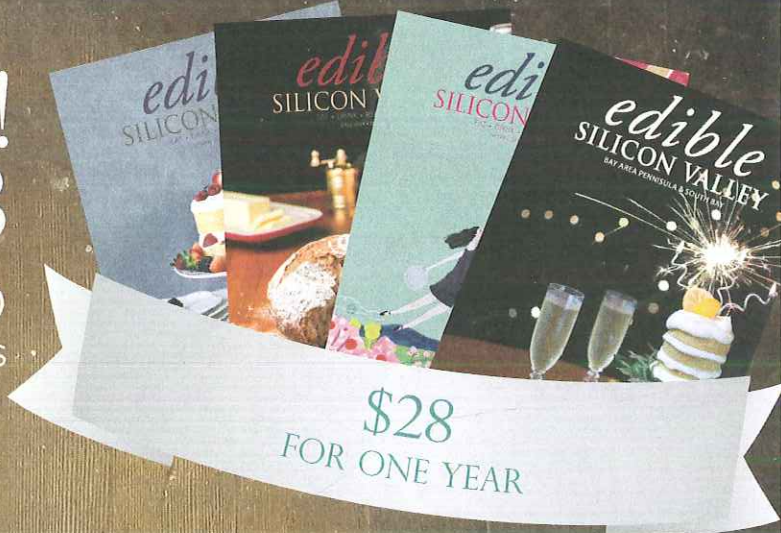


Cabbage, potato, chanterelles, walnut, lovage from Chef Daniel Patterson served on a slab-drop plate by Luke Shalan

tasteful
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