

SANG HOON DEGEIMBRE

CULTIVATION IN CONSONANCE

Near Brussels, in the village of Éghezée, a restaurant opened its doors more than twenty years ago and has always managed to keep up with the times. Neither ahead, nor behind the times. Just there, anchored in the present, aware as time slowly and steadily passes, always making the best of it.



This idyllic place was created by Chef Sang Hoon Degeimbre, a passionate, self-taught cook.

Imagining such a unique restaurant without any culinary training sounds a bit crazy. Succeeding at it sounds downright impossible. Nonetheless, when he opened the doors of l'Air du Temps on the 1st of July back in 1997, it was also his first day in a professional kitchen. A madness that Sang Hoon Degeimbre has a quite straight-forward answer to: "I wanted to be my own chef". And so his journey of discovering his own way of cooking began, guided by his desire and curiosity.

After three years and a Michelin star, the chef deploras a lack of local seasonal vegetables. So he decided to grow them in his own garden. To achieve this - once again - unfathomable challenge, he joined forces with Benoît Blairvacq, also a self-taught gardener. The two enthusiasts, guided by their palate and their dreams, have succeeded in creating a 5-hectare paradise, which produces the best vegetables in the world. How is this possible? By only harvesting them when perfectly ripe and only an hour or two before serving. From the garden to the plate with the a snap of a finger... well, almost. "The most beautiful technique is one you don't see," explains the chef, who likes to experiment with a juicy bite of nature on the plate, enhanced by explorational seasoning to bring even more sensations.

Over the years, Chef Degeimbre has remained a studious pupil who

listens to his teacher, the garden. This has enabled him to gain a new perspective on many things, particularly the passage of time, which does not always deliver what one had hoped for. "We must make do with what the earth gives us at a given moment and not waste it." In order to have vegetables all year round, the chef relies on the process of lactic fermentation.

Throughout his career, the chef has always asked himself one simple question, "Why?" This constant reflection certainly paid off, as today he holds 2 Michelin stars and is ranked 10th in the We're Smart Guide. But above all, with an approach like that of Chef Degeimbre, accepting that we can still learn every day, his cuisine will forever keep up with the "Zeitgeist." Namely his own.



TURNIP ROSE, LEAF GRANITA, RADISHES WITH WILD GARLIC BUTTER & MOLE SAUCE

Serves 4 90 minutes 3 hours 30 minutes

THE TURNIP ROSE

For the turnip rose

- › 2 large turnips

- › 50 g onion
- › 55 g olive oil
- › 30 g fresh lemon juice

For the Tarama

- › 100 g homemade breadcrumb mixture
- › 30 g wild herbs
- › 200 g water
- › 30 g pine nut miso

For the lacto juice

- › 100 g pickled onion juice
- › 100 g mead (fermented drink of water and honey)
- › 100 g butter

For the angelica oil

- › 50 g angelica leaves
- › 100 g oil

For the garnish

- › Courgette jangajji (fermented courgette)
- › Gherkins

- 1 Peel and thinly slice the turnip and cut it in half. Line up 15 half-slices overlapping and roll into a rose.
- 2 For the Tarama, soak the wild herbs for 3 minutes in boiling water, then chill them in 200 ml of ice water and blend with the water to make a herb juice. Strain and add the breadcrumbs to the herb juice. Peel and chop the onion, put in a blender with the lemon juice. Blend until smooth and add the miso with the herb juice a little at a time to obtain a smooth texture. Add the olive oil slowly, as for a mayo. Season with lemon juice. Set aside in the fridge for two hours.
- 3 For the lacto juice, combine all ingredients, bring to the boil and blend finely. Season with salt.
- 4 For the angelica oil, cut the angelica into pieces and blanch in boiling water for 3 minutes, then cool in ice water. Drain and blend in a blender with the oil heated to 50°C for 20 minutes on medium to high speed. Allow to settle until the oil separates from the residue. Save the oil.
- 5 Place a teaspoon of tarama on a plate. Arrange three slices of courgette and three slices of gherkin on top in the shape of a rosette. Place the turnip rose in the middle and drizzle with the lacto juice and a little angelica oil.



THE RADISHES

For the radishes

- › 4 radishes
- › 30 g butter
- › 5 g wild garlic leaves
- › 6 g salt

For the granita

- › 100 g radish and turnip tops
- › 50 g wild garlic
- › 150 ml water

- › 3 g salt
- › 6 g gelatine

- 1 For the radish butter mix the butter with the finely chopped wild garlic and salt. Using a leaf-shaped cookie cutter, cut out radish imprints and save them. Fill the holes in the radishes with the garlic butter.
- 2 For the granita, blanch the tops and bear garlic for 3 minutes and cool in 400 ml ice water. Dilute the gelatine in some warm water. Finely blend the leaves

- and wild garlic with 150 ml of water and filter. Add the gelatine to the juice, season with salt, stir to mix well, pour onto a tray and freeze. Scrape with a fork after freezing to make a granita.
- 3 Place a spoonful of the granita in a small cooled jar and place the buttered radishes on top with a little fleur de sel.



RADISH CUTOUTS WITH MOLE SAUCE

For the radish cutouts

- › Radish cutouts (see above)
- › 100 g rice vinegar
- › 50 g wild garlic jangajji (soy sauce fermented wild garlic)
- › Wild garlic capers (buds)

For the mole sauce

- › 100 g red peppers
- › 100 g soybeans
- › 5 g grape seed oil
- › 35 g onion
- › 15 g garlic
- › 2.5 g ground black pepper
- › 10 g tomato paste

- › 200 g canned tomatoes
- › 2.5 g smoked paprika
- › 50 g coriander
- › 10 g cocoa paste
- › 2.5 g cinnamon
- › Salt

- 1 Mix rice vinegar, wild garlic jangajji and wild garlic capers. Soak the previously prepared radish bites in the mixture for 1 hour before serving. Drain on paper towels before serving.
- 2 For the mole sauce, chop and seed the peppers and the preserved tomatoes. Fry the onions and garlic in the oil. Add the tomato paste and then the peppers and tomatoes. Cover and simmer over low heat for 2 hours. Season with pepper, paprika, cocoa paste and cinnamon and simmer for another hour. Finish in a blender to obtain a smooth texture, adding the fresh coriander. Adjust salt if necessary.
- 3 Place a spoonful of mole sauce and a few preserved radish bits in a bowl and decorate with fresh herbs and flowers.