



Chef Lynn Mixes Classic Style With Tropical Flair

By Richard Leong
March 16, 2010

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Dagan Lynn is giving a tropical makeover to some of the classic Mediterranean dishes created by master French chef [Alain Ducasse](#).

Ducasse picked the 34-year-old to head the kitchen of mix on the beach, his first restaurant in the [Caribbean](#) at the W Retreat & Spa on the U.S. island of Vieques off [Puerto Rico](#).

Lynn's menu for the restaurant, which will open on March 25, combines Ducasse's high-style with everyday Caribbean ingredients such as mangoes and pineapples.

The executive chef, who grew up on a farm in upstate New York, spoke to Reuters on cooking with tropical foods and working on the small island off the east coast of Puerto Rico.

Q: How hard was it for you to blend the local Caribbean ingredients with Ducasse's Mediterranean-inspired style?

A: "The Caribbean is very similar to the Mediterranean. They have similar ingredients. They are light fares. There are some products which I'm not familiar with. They have a wild basil that's grown here, which is very aromatic."

Q: What are some of the dishes that have local flair?

A: "I'm just starting to put together a melon gazpacho. There is also a nice cocoa bean soup. The whole menu has a bit of a Caribbean feel to it. We are introducing a little bit more Latin flavors as we develop the menu."

Q: How are you procuring the products for your dishes?

A: "We are sourcing as much as we can from the island and Puerto Rico. We have a local residential pro here for gardening. He is growing all our lettuces and arugula. He's providing the wheat grass. It's definitely a challenge because Ducasse is all about the ingredients."

Q: What is the chef community like on Vieques?

A "It's very much like a small New York City environment. The food community is close-knit, and it blew me away. It's definitely a hospitality town."

Q: What could guests expect find when they explore the island outside the W property?

A: "The beaches are beautiful and the people are great. When you get out to these beaches, you really feel like you are on another planet. You drive around these distant dirty roads until you come to this beautiful oasis with a white-sand beach and perfect aqua water."

(Reporting by Richard Leong; Editing by Cynthia Osterman)

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