

Life or Knife
by Alena Staple

Editor's Note: Due to the unusual formatting of this piece, and the difficulty in transcribing it to standard page formatting, we are including the selection here as submitted. The story starts on the 2nd page.

This is my knife. There are many like it, but this one is mine. My knife is my best friend. It is my life. I must master it as I master my life. My knife, without me, is useless. Without my knife, I am useless. I must wield my knife true. I must cut straighter than any opponent who is trying to outwit/ me. I must master the cut before it masters me. I will

I remember being accepted onto the Culinary Team. The emotions, while overwhelming, were an interesting mix of anticipation, joy, and fear. My dream to be recognized for my hidden culinary skills was about to come true. I was honored to have this opportunity but I knew I had a lot to live up to with the success of students past. The need to prove my skill and worthiness drove me to extra practice and extra stress. I felt overwhelmed with practice just two times a week. I had to master so many cuts I thought my head would explode.

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|---------------------------|---|
| <u>School Name</u> | Oak Harbor High School |
| <u>Teacher Name</u> | Louise Reuble . |
| <u>Menu item</u> | Ahi Tuna Tartar and Dungeness Crap Tower with Avocado, Yellow Beets, Wonton Crisp and Mango Yolk |
| Number of Portions | 2 |
| Portion Size | 1 5 oz |
| Cooking Method | <u>Fry, Simmer</u> Chef |
| Recipe Source | Scott Fraser |

The rest of my studies suffered and any time the meal went wrong or the timing was off I felt like I was going back in time. It was convenient I got along with my team

members. Tatyanna, the captain, is crazy and scattered but she managed to make me calm. Ian just makes me smile. She makes life seem so crazy but wonderful at the same time. Of course there is Jackie whose personality addicted me instantly. She is so lost most of the time that everything makes sense around her. She is one of the best and worst people I know and I owe much of who I have become to her.

| Ingredients | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Item | Amount |
| Tower | |
| Yellow Beets | 1 small beet |
| Yellow Icing Paste | |
| White wine vineQar | 40z |
| Sugar | 4oz+ 1/6oz |
| Dungeness Crab | 20z |
| Mayonnaise | 1 %oz |
| Shallots | 1/6oz |
| English Cucumber | 1/8oz |
| AhiTuna | 20z |
| Avocado | ~ fruit |
| Lemon Juice | 1/6oz |
| Sriracha Sauce | |
| Sriracha hot Sauce | 1/6oz |
| Sour Cream | 1 oz |
| Ketchup | 1 oz |
| Mango Yolks | |
| Mango Nectar | 3 fl oz |
| Sodium Alginate | 1/12oz |
| Calcium Chloride | 1/6oz |
| Cold Water | 120z |
| Wonton Crisps | |
| Wonton Sheets | 6 sheets |
| Vegetable oil | 4c |

Every time I thought of how close competition was my stomach rose into my throat. I wish I could say it was easy but I felt like I was slowly going insane. I wondered to myself if physically and mentally I was going to handJe this responsibiJity. Parts of me

wanted to break down and give up. The disappointment would be better than the outrageous expectations.

Tower

1. Peel and brunoise the yellow beet
2. Simmer beets for approximately five minutes in vinegar, water and sugar mixture until tender; chill
 - a. Add yellow icing paste as needed depending on the color of the uncooked beets
3. Mix Dungeness crab with one tablespoon of mayonnaise and finely minced shallots, chill
4. Brunoise a three inch segment of English cucumber, chill
5. Construct tower molds by shaping a strip of acetate paper inside a pvc base, then secure with tape, sides should be three inches tall
6. Assemble tower in layers: avocado, yellow beets, crab salad, English cucumber, Ahi Tuna (mixed lightly with ½ tsp of olive oil and a pinch of salt) , chill tower

My knife and I know that what counts in this industry is not the food we create. the sharpness of the blade. nor the blood that is spilled We know that it is the cuts that count. We will slice ...

The pressure was building. Jackie wanted me to be everything I wasn't. A follower, a giver, and a user. She wanted me to understand her world of drugs, sex, and complete chaos. It was my world turned upside down. Nothing made sense anymore and I was about to lose my cool. I was sitting on the floor of a room that made no sense. I was rocking back and forth and I couldn't breathe. I felt like I was going insane. I was losing control and I wanted to end it all. The moment that I felt like ending my life was the breaking point. I was over it all in one moment. I knew right then that I had to change who I was living for and why. I finally realized someone that didn't even care about me had driven me to marijuana, heroin, and cocaine.

Sriracha Sauce

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together sour cream, mayonnaise, ketchup and Sriracha hot sauce
2. Set mixture aside to allow flavors to develop

Where I was I don't know but I knew I had to change where I was going.

Everything about what I was doing seemed so stupid and trivial once I came back to my old self I knew that my relationship with Jackie would never be the same but the reality was that I had to make sacrifices in order to save myself from a life I didn't want. The light that came on in my head was hard to deal with but I went back to making school a priority. I made time for myself and for the things that were good for me. I dove headfirst into culinary and in the process fell in love with cooking all over again. More than winning, I wanted to prove to myself that I could win competition and I knew I was back on the right track to do it.

Mango Yolks

1. In a medium metal bowl, mix mango nectar with sodium alginate, then strain through a fine sieve
2. In a second medium metal bowl, mix water with calcium chloride
3. Fill a third bowl with one cup of water
4. Scoop half a teaspoon of mango mixture and slide into the calcium mixture
5. Remove mango yolk from mixture and spoon gently into the plain water, set aside

My knife is human, even as I, because it is my lift. Thus, I will/earn it as a Ji,51er. I will/earn its weakness, its strength, its parts, its accessories, its tang and its blade. I will keep my knife sharp and ready, even as I am sharp and ready. We will become part of each other. We will...

We traveled to Spokane where the competition was held. When we arrived, the realization that people knew who we were was the oddest sensation. We walked in to the hotel and immediately the place got quiet and people started pointing and whispering in our direction. It was like standing on a hot stage with the bright fluorescents shining in your eyes. However, it came with the territory and I wasn't planning on giving them anything less to talk about. I felt right at home. I was in a world where I belonged; a world that made sense.

We competed along with hundreds of other hopeful students and still managed to catch the judges' eyes even after an exploding burner. The relief that came after ending our hour of cooking was short lived, as we were to find out who won the next day.

Wonton Crisps

1. Cut six wonton wrappers on the diagonal and prep a half sheet pan with paper towels to wick away oil from finished chips
2. Heat vegetable oil in a frying pan until surface of oil ripples
3. Cook wrappers in oil until crisp and light golden brown

The whole team was crowded around a table in a big hall. All I remember was the food was disgusting, the speaker put me to sleep, and I wanted this win more than anything else I could remember. Jackie held my hand and she told me she was proud of me. I told her I was proud of me too. I realized later that I should have returned the

jester but I suppose I was too busy celebrating. We won and somehow I always knew we had it in us. I was so shocked I couldn't even make room for excitement. I didn't even start crying till I was telling my mother. Her telling me how proud she was of me made me realize how proud I deserved to be. This year my team and Jackie are all off on their own adventures. I'm in Culinary where I belong. I knew then as I know now that I deserved every tear and moment of joy. I have worked through pain, frustration, laughter, and confusion and I won; even if we don't win as a team this year I will always have won for me.

Plating

1. Using an icing decorator tool, spread Sriracha sauce on plate in a wave pattern
2. place tower mold on plate and gently slip off mold
3. Place wonton crisps on opposite side of plate and finish tower by topping tuna with a mango yolk

Before Paul Bocuse I swear this creed My knife and myself are the defenders of my skill We are the masters of our trade. We are the next generation of world cuisine. Until victory is the chef's and there is no fast food, just quality.