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Just Beet It

A red and gold beet salad satisfies eco-conscious guests

Oscar Wilde's famous quote "Life imitates art far more than art imitates life" was reaffirmed in the form of the lively food served during the opening gala event for the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) in Denver. As a service provider for MCA's inaugural gala, Three Tomatoes Catering was asked to add an artistic flair to food presentations for the big event.

When the MCA opened in October 2007, it became the city's first museum exclusively dedicated to contemporary art. In keeping with all things modern, David Adjaye was commissioned to design the museum. The internationally acclaimed British architect created an environmentally sustainable structure according to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) guidelines.

As an eco-friendly caterer, Three Tomatoes Catering was an easy choice for the MCA. The Denver-based caterer has had a locally grown, green policy in place for several years. The cuisine for the entire dinner included organic, seasonal foods purchased from local growers. The goat cheese was produced by Colorado-based Haystack Mountain and the bread was baked by a local company Three Tomatoes Catering has relied on for many years.

Ideas for plated presentations came from the green theme of the opening gala event. Creative inspirations were rooted in the Three Tomatoes Catering chefs' desire to artfully present dishes in a crisp, clean fashion that complemented the style of the MCA building itself. And, given the sophistication of the guests attending the gala, they wanted to exceed the expectations of Denver's ultimate foodies with exquisite flavors and exceptional presentation.

The cover-worthy part of the gala celebration dinner was the first course's deconstructed roasted beet salad. Framed in a high-rimmed rectangular plate, a sherry vinegar reduction in graduated drops of dressing gave the rustic cut red and golden beets flavor and flair. Next to the beets were medallions of goat cheese hand-rolled in finely chopped fresh Italian parsley, oregano and thyme. The cheese was sliced and served with pan-fried crostini lightly brushed with olive oil.

The first course was followed by sweet potato gnocchi with sage brown butter and fried sage. The plated entrée included a salt and pepper seasoned six-ounce buffalo tenderloin paired with jalapeno stuffed,



*Photographer: Priscilla Montoya
 Food Stylist: Joseph Beggs, Executive Chef,
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curried poached pears with honey, lime and soy jus. The 800 guests finished the gala meal with a plated dessert of coconut paletas served with candied ginger and orange peel with tempered dark chocolate shards.

During the weeks-long celebration commemorating the MCA's opening, Three Tomatoes Catering also catered four other events including an additional gala event and two VIP cocktails parties. After a long night of partying and dancing at the main gala event, roughly 1,000 guests that also attended a public forum the following morning, were energized after eating stacks of Three Tomatoes Catering's fluffy white pancakes. **CS**