



Fennel Pollen Seared Scallops



Chef Ethan Paige

 Vinwood Caterers

 @vinwoodcaterers

*chef
ingredients*

Executive Chef Ethan Paige grew up in the towns of Amherst and Hadley, Massachusetts surrounded by an inspiring and creative community, rich with diverse culture and local agriculture. Currently, Ethan is working as the Executive Chef at @vinwoodcaterers located in the North Shore of Massachusetts.



Fennel Pollen Seared Scallops

Ingredients for Fennel Pollen Rub:

1 Tablespoon fennel pollen
2 teaspoons kosher salt
¼ teaspoon fennel seeds
¼ teaspoon granulated garlic
¼ teaspoon onion powder
½ teaspoon ground black pepper

Ingredients for Scallop Jus:

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
¼ cup white onion, peeled and small diced
2 Tablespoons finely sliced fennel stalks or finely diced bulb (no greens)
2 Tablespoons celery stalk, small diced
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 Tablespoons dry white wine
1 cup chicken stock (vegetable stock, fresh fumet or even decent clam juice will more than suffice as substitutes)
1 teaspoon fresh tarragon
2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves (no coarse stems)
1 fresh bay leaf

Ingredients for Brown Butter Carrot Puree:

2 cups carrots (peeled and

chopped (reserve the peels for your stock or perhaps your next juice concoction, reserve the hot cooking water from cooking the carrots to use to adjust the thickness of the carrot purée as needed)
¼ cup or 1/2 stick unsalted butter
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Ingredients for Fennel Frond + Carrot Green Gremolata:

½ cup fennel fronds, loosely packed (from half of one fennel or so; minimal to no stems. It should resemble picked dill)
½ cup carrot greens (well picked; minimal to no stems. It should resemble picked flat leaf parsley)
¼ cup lemon zest (Microplane about 2 medium sized lemons or break out that trusty channel knife/zester tool and mince that zest after for maximum extraction)
1 Tablespoon minced garlic (add more or less to suit your taste level, I recommend adding it last so you can just detect the heat and that sharpness is just present enough to cut through the greenery and

stand up to your sunny lemon)

Extra virgin olive oil (just enough to moisten and slightly bind the gremolata components together; less than what we think of as dressing a salad)
¼ - ½ teaspoon kosher salt, add to taste, again, Add at the end to just make the gremolata pop. If this were for a big old grilled ribeye, use very coarse sea salt flakes, sparingly

Ingredients for Caramelized Fennel Bulb:

1 large or 2 medium fennel bulbs (allow ¼-½ inch of visible stalks above the bulb for presentation)
1 tbs olive oil
Kosher salt and black pepper
2 Tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
3 Tablespoons local Grade A amber maple syrup
2 teaspoon unsalted butter

Scallop Selection:

20 large scallops (remove + reserve the tough muscles from the side of each scallop, these will be used for the jus. Try to acquire “U-10” or larger, scallop. Frozen or previously frozen scallops are not recommended.



Fennel Pollen Seared Scallops

how-to

Preparing the Fennel Pollen Rub:

1. Combine all but the fennel pollen in a spice grinder or coffee grinder and pulse until you have a fine, uniform rub.
2. Add the fennel pollen and combine well. Try not to shake it before applying but instead spoon it up and scatter it to prevent it from being unevenly mixed.

Preparing the Scallop Jus:

1. This is a scaled down and slightly tweaked version of a Tom Colicchio recipe. I will add a few subtle recommendations and tweaks to adapt it here.
2. Heat the olive oil in a small sauce pot preheated over medium heat, to about a 5.5 out of 10 flame. Add the onion, fennel, and celery. Season with salt and pepper and cook. Stir occasionally, until the vegetables are nicely sweated and translucent but not caramelized at all, about 8 minutes.
3. Reduce the heat to medium low. Add the separated scallop abductor muscles, stir them into the 'mirepoix' well and cook until they are just firm, 2 minutes should do it.
4. Add the wine and lightly simmer until the pan is almost dry, about 4 minutes.
5. Add the stock and the herbs. Simmer until the stock has reduced by half. Strain the sauce through a fine mesh strainer, use a rubber spatula to leave nary a trace of the preparation in the pan, then return the strained liquid to the pan.
6. Bring the sauce to a simmer over medium heat. Whisk in 1 soft pat of butter. Taste the pan sauce, add butter if it lacks richness or structure, adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper and keep warm over very low heat. I recommend placing the sauce in a simple double boiler over very low steam to give you even more control and to keep the sauce in that barely emulsified, bordering on unctuous butter sauce state. You can add a teeny tiny amount of cornstarch slurry or other thickener if you are comfortable and/or want to manipulate the texture of the sauce, but I like to live dangerously and leave it teetering on the brink of destruction, so I warm the final reduction and wait to mount the sauce with butter until right before sending it out.





Fennel Pollen Seared Scallops

how-to

Preparing the Brown Butter Carrot Puree:

1. Prepare the brown butter over medium to medium high heat. Allow the foam to subside for best 'noisette' flavor. I recommend using room temp butter to cut down on spattering. You may also choose to slice it into ½ tablespoon sized pats to coax the process along. Hold it warm-to-hot for best results in the recipe that follows.

2. Place the prepped, peeled carrots in a sauce pot at least twice the volume of the carrots. Add water to fully submerge and season with kosher salt until it is just barely briny.

3. Bring the carrots to a boil then reduce heat to medium simmer. Cook the carrots until they are fork tender.

4. Scoop them out with a spider, a slotted spoon or a mesh strainer with a handle.

5. Add the carrots to the bowl of a small food processor or the quart container for your stick blender (handheld immersion blender).

6. Add the brown butter, specks of toasted milk solids and all, to the carrots and purée until smooth like baby food. If it is on the thick side, spoon in some of the carrot blanching water. If some of the butter looks a little separated, a little cold water (just a tiny splash) will alter its state and make it more suitable for emulsification. Adjust the seasoning with kosher salt and fresh finely ground black pepper. Do not use white pepper here.

Preparing the Fennel Frond + Carrot Green Gremolata:

1. Tightly bundle the greens together in your non-dominant hand and neatly slice very finely. This is your chiffonade of herbs. Keep it tight.

2. Mix in your remaining ingredients as described above and personalize as recommended. Set aside at room temperature. Can be prepared in advance

Preparing the Caramelized Fennel Bulbs:

1. Trim the fennel bulbs and discard blemished outer layers. Slice them vertically, about ⅓ to ½ inch thick. Do not remove the core, they are useful to hold the cross section slabs of fennel bulb together.

2. Heat the oil in a frying pan large enough to fit all the fennel slices in a single layer, or work in batches if necessary. A 14" well-seasoned cast iron pan is a very solid choice here. A non-stick frying pan will also do just fine, but you may have to work in batches for this step.





Fennel Pollen Seared Scallops

how-to



Preparing the Caramelized Fennel Bulbs (cont...)

3. Place the fennel in the pan and fry on high heat (about 8 out of 10 flame). Sear until you have nicely caramelized edges and surfaces, about 3-4 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Turn the slices over and sear the other side, seasoning again, then turn down the heat to a medium to medium-low heat. The residual heat of the pan should be just enough to do the trick.

4. Add the white balsamic vinegar, cover the pan with a lid and cook for a couple of minutes until the fennel begins to soften over a 4 out of 10 heat or so.

5. Remove the lid, add the maple syrup and butter and turn the heat up again to bubble away excess liquid. I turned mine over after a minute or so with a fork until all pieces were evenly seared and deeply caramelized. Also re-seasoned with salt and pepper at this point.

6. The fennel will be nicely caramelized and take on a lovely, lacquered appearance. Please do not scorch it! Hot hold in your toaster or oven over low heat until plate up. You can also pop it in the oven for a couple minutes to warm it just before plating up. Recommend completing this step before starting the scallops.

Preparing the Scallops:

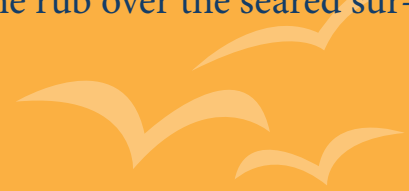
1. Pat the scallops dry with a paper towel.

2. Season with fennel pollen rub.

3. Preheat a well-seasoned cast iron skillet set over a medium-high flame, think 7 out of 10. Just remember, too hot and you will scorch the scallops instead of developing a wonderful crown and an acrid bitterness will invade your dish instead of cultivating a nicely caramelized crust. Add just enough olive oil to evenly coat the pan.

4. When the oil is nicely heated and quite viscous, place the scallops in the pan evenly distributed. Leave in place without moving about 3 minutes until golden brown and the sear on the bottom is just visible in the pan from the side of the scallop.

5. Gently turn the scallops and add half a stick of butter ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) to the pan. Dust an even sprinkle of the rub over the seared surface of the scallops.





Fennel Pollen Seared Scallops

how-to

Preparing the Scallops (cont...)

6. Continue spooning the butter over the scallops until they are just undercooked, about 2-3 minutes more. The heat will carry over to a perfect medium. An accurate quick read thermometer inserted in the thickest part should register 120F-125F immediately out of the pan (lower end of the range for smaller due to more carry over effect) and will rest up from there.

7. Warm your plates. Visualize your serving plate like an analog clock, dropping and dragging your carrot purée from about 7:30 or 8 o'clock, about 1 inch in, to about 2:30.

8. Arrange some of your most successful caramelized fennel pieces, shingled slightly offset, tucked inside of that. Alternate your seared scallops with the fennel you just placed, again, slightly offset the shingling, it will be more aesthetically pleasing this way.

9. Spoon the jus over and about the scallops and fennel, but don't overdo it, be sure plenty of the nice, seared surfaces are protruding... you worked hard to develop those textures and moments!

10. Scatter your gremolata here and there in sufficient abundance to balance the plate.

11. If you like, dust the plating area on the plate with a twinkle of your rub or straight up fennel pollen. Make a little dust pile in the negative space.

“This is not necessarily a quick dish to make if you prepare every component. I recommend prepping this with a partner to split up the work or make any one of the components on its own and substitute easier items for those you don't prepare. The lacquered fennel is exquisite on its own sprinkled with salt and fresh ground pepper! The brown butter + carrot purée will become a fixture in your arsenal of side dishes once you've made it once. The rub for the scallops is amazing with poultry, pork and a variety of other seafood items. No matter how you slice it, hope you are inspired to try!” - Chef Ethan

