



This is my soapbox and your guide to all things food; from the newest and most well hidden spots to trying out new recipes at home, this site will cover all dimensions of good eats from my point of view.

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Please Pack your Knives and Go Home - Top Chef: The Tour



I was fortunate enough to attend today's Top Chef Tour demo featuring my two favorite chefs from past seasons, Richard Blais (Flip) and Kevin Gillespie (Woodfire Grill). Blais wowed audiences and always kept the judges on their toes with his molecular gastronomic prowess. By incorporating modern techniques like liquid nitrogen and sous vide, he often made dishes that didn't taste or seem as they appeared. Sadly, in the finale, Richard completely choked and gave way to the new Top Chef.

[editorial]



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Kevin was a master of simple techniques. Focusing on quality of ingredients and flavor pairings, he consistently kept viewers on the edge of their seat, glands salivating. It was rare that we ever heard the judges say a negative thing about a single one of his dishes and he took home a staggering 5 challenge wins. Again, in the end, the much more female-enticing Michael Voltaggio took home the title of Top Chef.

I felt very honored to be in the presence of both celebrity chefs today as they ran a Top Chef demo in the parking lot of the Westside Provisions District. Unfortunately, I could only stay for one demo (lunch break) and Kevin led the forum with a poached shrimp dish. Blais and Gillespie alternated at each time slot and commented on each others food. I wish I could have stayed for another.



Gillespie's dish featured an olive oil poached shrimp with a prosciutto based sauce employing caramelized carrots. The shrimp was accompanied by sautéed celery and asparagus and frankly, I've never tasted celery that clean and refreshing. The dish was finished with pumpkin seed oil and balsamic vinegar.

Kevin stressed a few interesting notes that I will share with you here rather than recapping how to make his dish, which will be featured on the [Bravo website](#). He stressed quality of ingredients - while most of the items featured in the dish were bought from Whole Foods, Gillespie supports the farm-to-table movement and recommend shopping at the [Morningside Farmer's Market](#). He also supports sustainable practices when dealing with proteins. Kevin focussed on layering flavors and I must say that every ingredient (and there were a good number) played a complimentary role in creating a dish that was pleasing to the palate.

I found that Richard Blais really shared some great advice with the occasional humorous remark or chef wankery. Kevin's use of celery leaves inspired Blais to leave the audience with the most unique pointer of the day. He encourages cooks and chefs look for new uses of ingredients that we traditionally throw away. Things like tomato seeds, celery leaves and other "scraps" can be used for nontraditional and singular flavors. The other helpful tidbit he imparted on the group was to cook certain items that don't necessarily have to be fresh in advance. This leads to less confusion in the kitchen and less of a single time-suck when preparing a dish. Lastly, he stressed saving the flavorful oils used to cook other items for future use. He mentioned that his family kept a coffee tin under the counter with bacon fat when he was growing up. Kevin comically responded that his family did the same thing but it was a giant bucket and displayed proudly and prominently on their counter.



It was really impressive to watch the wheels in Blais's head turning. When Kevin placed the prosciutto in the pan to make his sauce, Richard thought to use the remaining butchers paper to wrap and flavor the uncooked shrimp with. Additionally, Blais always found time to hock some device he was promoting like his Sous Vide Machine or name brand pans that sponsor him. When signing my book, Blais even drew a full ensemble featuring pork belly complete with chocolate gastrique, dill and sherry!

After the demo, there was a 20 minute Q & A where fan boys and girls alike could find out all the dirt that went on behind the scenes. This was an extremely well run (and free!) event and I found both chefs to be very humble. Cheers to Bravo, Westside Provisions District and Richard and Kevin! Can't wait to try Woodfire Grill!

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