



Amuse-Bouche: Little Bites Of Delight Before the Meal Begins

By Rick Tramonto, Mary Goodbody

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Amuse-bouche (pronounced ah-myuz boosh) are today what hors d'oeuvres were to America in the 1950s: a relatively unknown feature of French culinary tradition that, once introduced, immediately became standard fare. Chefs at many fine restaurants offer guests an amuse-bouche, a bite-sized treat that excites the tongue and delights the eye, before the meal is served. Nobody does it better than the celebrated executive chef/partner of Chicago's Tru, Rick Tramonto. Amuse-bouche are a favorite of diners at Tru, many of whom come expressly to enjoy the "grand amuse"--an assortment of four different taste sensations.

Amuse-Bouche offers an array of recipes, from elegant and sophisticated to casual and surprising—but always exquisite—that will inspire home cooks to share these culinary jewels with their guests. From Black Mission Figs with Mascarpone Foam and Prosciutto di Parma to Curried Three-Bean Salad, from Soft Polenta with Forest Mushrooms to Blue Cheese Foam with Port Wine Reduction, Tramonto's creations will embolden the novice and the experienced cook alike to experiment with unfamiliar ingredients and techniques.

Organized by type of amuse and season of the year, the book also includes a directory of sources for specialty products. With more than a hundred recipes and with fifty-two full-page color photographs by James Beard Award--winning photographer Tim Turner, **Amuse-Bouche** enchants the eyes as much as an amuse pleases the palate.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Many of the best restaurants tantalize diners' palates with charming, intensely flavored tastes that tickle the tongue and delight the eye. A tiny serving to whet the palate, an *amuse-bouche* (literally, "mouth amusement") sets diners up for what is to come. Rick Tramonto, executive chef of Chicago's widely acclaimed Tru restaurant, is well known for his passion for and commitment to these bite-size treats. In *Amuse-Bouche: Little Bites That Delight Before the Meal Begins*, he shares the art of creating these miniature delights. While most people won't find many occasions to serve *amuse-bouche* at home, the recipes are easily adapted to become passed hors d'oeuvres, first courses, or even main courses. From Chilled Fava Bean Soup with Seared Scallops, to Blue Cheese Foam with Port Wine Reduction, to Charred Lamb with Truffled Vinaigrette and Oven-Dried Tomatoes, this book offers something for every taste. Surprisingly, most of the dishes are exceedingly simple to prepare, often consisting of just four or five ingredients. As might be expected, the success of the recipes is dependent not so much on involved cooking techniques or complicated combinations of flavors but rather on the selection of a few high-quality ingredients. Creamy Corn Grits with Butternut Squash and Sweet Corn, for instance, starts with ever-so-humble beginnings to ultimately showcase the bright flavor of corn and the hearty sweetness of butternut squash. With more than a hundred clever and inspiring recipes, *Amuse-Bouche* will surely not fail to amuse.

--Robin Donovan

From Publishers Weekly

Breaking new ground in a previously untackled area of cuisine, the executive chef of TRU restaurant in Chicago and coauthor with Gale Gand of *Just a Bite*, Tramonto (who also coauthored *Butter, Flour, Sugar, Eggs*), has paired up with Goodbody to explore the world of Amuse-Bouche, "Little bites of food to amuse the mouth, invigorate the palate, whet the appetite." To this end, the author has produced recipes designed to create a mouthful of delight, whether a spoonful of salad, an espresso cup of soup or a scoop of savory sorbet. Giving the book greater scope, Tramonto suggests that the dishes, such as the simple, flavorful Warm Onion Tart with Thyme, can be used as hors d'oeuvre, "so elusive is the line between." Many of the portions can be expanded or multiplied to form starters or a light main course. Other recipes given a new look are bean salad, which with the addition of curry oil becomes Curried Three Bean Salad, and Potato Salad, which is spiced with cayenne pepper. The recipes require a variety of skill levels and time, although there are always several suitable for all occasions and aptitudes.

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From Library Journal

An amuse-bouche is a special little tidbit served as a treat at the beginning of the meal in many upscale restaurants, and Tramonto, chef of Chicago's acclaimed Tru, is a master of the form. Instead of just one, he presents four amuses, or sometimes even more, to each guest. He finds these little bites a perfect way to experiment with flavors and ingredients-and to have fun doing so (he describes the food at Tru as "fine dining with a sense of humor"). But sophisticated as his amuses are, they translate surprisingly well to the home kitchen. Because they are prepared on such a small scale and often include only a few ingredients, the better to highlight individual flavors, preparation of many of them, such as Watermelon Cube with Aged Balsamic, is not the lengthy process typical of most chefs' recipes. Not that there aren't more complicated recipes, too, such as Seared Cumin-Crusted Squab with Horseradish Gastrique, but the recipe instructions are clearly written and accessible. Tramonto also points out that these little bites are a great way for home cooks to serve an ingredient that would otherwise be prohibitively expensive (as in Warm Mini Foie Gras Club

Sandwiches) or to taste an unfamiliar, "exotic" ingredient. For most collections.
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