'Refined & Approachable'
Appalachian Cuisine

Jeff Carter, executive chef at Dancing Bear Appalachian Bistro, located on the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Townsend, Tennessee, combines old world techniques with locally sourced ingredients to deliver modern Appalachian cuisine that is refined and approachable.

"I grew up along the coast of Alabama, so the Creole cuisine of New Orleans greatly influenced me as a young cook," Carter said. "I used to watch my dad cook family meals from Creole cookbooks, which inspired me to dive deeper into the culinary world. I still pull from those experiences and that cuisine to this day as we develop new dishes at Dancing Bear Appalachian Bistro, all the while staying within the boundaries of regional Appalachian cooking."

He said his approach to Appalachian cuisine is a product of understanding the history and evolution of the region's unique culinary culture, an emphasis on cultivating relationships with local farmers and purveyors, and the ongoing collaboration with Dancing Bear's resident farmer in charge of the on-site gardens and hydroponic farm.

"I focus on sourcing local, supporting the community and being passionate about the cuisine and the products that we serve," he said.

Every fall, Carter and Sharon Oldham, co-owner of Oldham Hospitality Group, "talk about what we want to plant in the garden for the following year. Our garden, property and hydroponic facility all combine to be one of the biggest supporters of our ability to use as many local ingredients as we possibly can," he said.

"I focus on cooking food and dishes that make our guests feel comfortable and welcome."

Carter shared these favorite recipes that reflect his approach to modern regional tastes.

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BENNE SEED BACON

Benne bacon takes candied bacon to the next level. It has a sweet flavor from the brown sugar, spice from the sriracha, crunch from the glaze. The benne seeds add umami and there's a smokiness from the bacon. It's great as a passed appetizer or part of a charcuterie display. It is also perfect when chopped and added to a salad for extra crunch, and even on a bowl of vanilla ice cream!

INGREDIENTS
- 1 cup Sriracha
- 3 cups brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- ½ cup hot water
- 3-4 tablespoons benne seeds (or sesame seeds)
- 15 slices thick cut bacon

INSTRUCTIONS
- In a medium, heavy bottom pot, add sriracha, brown sugar, cinnamon, and hot water. Heat to a simmer to melt the sugar completely. Remove from heat and allow the mixture to cool to room temperature.
- Preheat oven to 325 F.
- Line a sheet pan with foil and add baking rack on top. Place raw bacon on rack, and coat the top completely with the sauce, then sprinkle with benne seeds.
- Add bacon to oven and cook for 10 minutes, then rotate the pan. Continue to bake for an additional 15-20 minutes, rotating the pan every 8-10 minutes until the bacon looks glazed and crispy.
- Remove from oven and let cool to just warmer than room temperature. Remove bacon from the rack and store in air tight container.

COMEBACK SAUCE

YIELD: ABOUT 6 CUPS
INGREDIENTS:
- 2 each celery ribs, diced
- ½ each yellow onion, diced
- 2 tablespoon garlic, minced
- ¼ cup capers, drained
- 1 quart mayo, preferably Dukes
- ½ cup whole grain mustard
- ¼ cup Sriracha
- ½ cup prepared horseradish
- ½ cup Italian parsley, chopped
- 1 tbls Worcestershire
- 1 ½ each lemons, juice and zest
- 1 tsp cayenne
- ¾ tsp salt
- ¾ tsp pepper

INSTRUCTIONS:
- In a food processor or blender, add celery, onion, garlic and capers. Puree until smooth.
- Add all remaining ingredients to a mixing bowl with the pureed vegetables.
- Stir until all ingredients are evenly mixed. Check seasoning and adjust to preference.
- Add to airtight container and store in refrigerator for up to 7 days.

PIMENTO CHEESE

YIELD: ABOUT 2 QUARTS
INGREDIENTS:
- 2 ½ lbs. Sweet Water Valley sharp yellow cheddar cheese
- 1 ½ cups Dukes mayonnaise
- ½ lbs cream cheese, room temp
- ¼ cup Dijon mustard
- 2 each large red bell peppers
- ½ cup pickle juice (from house made or store bought pickles)
- ½ tbls cayenne pepper
- ½ tbls granulated garlic
- ½ tbls tabasco

INSTRUCTIONS:
- Char peppers over an open flame, turning every couple of minutes to get each side. Once the whole pepper is charred, place in a bowl and cover with plastic wrap to steam.
- Once cool enough to handle, peel charred skin off, remove seeds and chop fine. Set aside.
- Resist the urge to wash the skin off the pepper as this washes away a lot of the roasted flavor.
- Cut cheese into manageable pieces and grate on the large holes on a box grater or use the grater on a food processor. Set aside the grated cheese in a large bowl.
- Combine the rest of ingredients in stand mixer and mix on medium speed until creamy and cream cheese is incorporated.
- Add the mayonnaise mixture to the grated cheese and fold together.
- Let the pimento cheese sit for at least 2 hours but preferably 12 hours before serving.

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>
> —*Jeff Carter*

PICKLED SHRIMP

YIELD: 2 ½ POUNDS PICKLED SHRIMP (ABOUT 40-50 SHRIMP)

INGREDIENTS:

POACHING:

- 2 ½ lbs. 16-20 count shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 gallon water
- 2 tbls salt
- 2 tbls franks hot sauce
- ½ tbls red pepper flakes
- 1 tbls old bay
- ½ head garlic, peeled and smashed
- ½ each onion, cut in half
- ½ each lemon, cut in half

MARINADE:

- 1 ½ cups champagne vinegar (or white wine vinegar)
- 1 cup water
- 1 tbls. coriander seed
- 1 tbls. fennel seed
- ½ tbls whole allspice
- ½ tbls kosher salt
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp red pepper flakes
- 1 cup olive oil

VEGETABLE MIXTURE

- ½ cup red onion, thinly sliced
- ½ cup green onions, thinly sliced
- ½ cup fennel, shaved
- 2 lemons, zest only (zested in long strips if possible)
- ¼ cup capers, chopped drained

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Bring the poaching ingredients to a boil without shrimp and simmer for 5 minutes to infuse flavors
- Return to a boil and add shrimp and immediately cut off heat and let sit for 1-1 ½ minutes.
- Strain and immediately put on parchment lined sheet pan in refrigerator to cool.
- To make the marinade, combine marinade ingredients in a medium pot except the olive oil and simmer for 10 minutes to infuse flavors.
- While the marinade is simmering, prep the vegetable mix and place in a large bowl.
- Remove the shrimp from the fridge once cooled and remove the garlic, onion and lemon from the pan and add the shrimp the vegetable bowl.
- Once the marinade has simmered for 10 minutes, strain into a medium bowl and add olive oil, whisk and chill.
- Once the marinade is cool, pour over the shrimp and vegetable mixture and mix well. Cover and place in refrigerator and let marinate for at least 1 day.
- Occasionally remove from fridge and stir around in the bowl making sure all the shrimp get in contact with the pickling liquid.
- Shrimp will keep up to 2 weeks in refrigerator.

THE MAN IN BLACK

COCKTAIL BY DANCING BEAR APPALACHIAN BISTRO
YIELD: 1 COCKTAIL

INGREDIENTS

❖ 2oz of Buffalo Trace
❖ .5oz of sorghum black walnut syrup
❖ 4 dashes of Angostura Bitters
❖ 1 Luxardo Cherries on a toothpick
❖ 1 orange peel

INSTRUCTIONS

❖ In a rocks glass filled with ice, combine the whiskey, syrup, and bitters. Stir gently.
❖ Garnish with luxardo cherries skewered on a toothpick and an orange peel.
❖ To finish, flash smoke the cocktail. To do so, light Hickory wood chips and cover both the drink and the wood chips with the glass cloche, allowing smoke to fill up the inside of the cloche. Remove and serve.

FOR THE SORGHUM
BLACK WALNUT SYRUP

INGREDIENTS

❖ 1 cup black walnuts
❖ 1 cup sorghum
❖ 1 cup boiling water

INSTRUCTIONS

❖ Place all ingredients into a French press.
❖ Allow to steep for 30 minutes and press out the syrup.

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