



Minami Restaurant pastry chef Nikki Tam was an art student who later discovered her first love was creating her favourite foods in the kitchen.

Tam unleashes her passion for pastry

Minami chef channels her artistic side to create visually enticing desserts that taste great

RANDY SHORE

Originally from Hong Kong, Nikki Tam has always loved baking and admired the pastry arts.

After studying art in Toronto, she moved back to Hong Kong and initially pursued a career as an interior designer. However, she soon realized her desire was to be in the kitchen, creating and indulging in her favourite foods.

It was then that she decided to move to Vancouver to attend pastry school to pursue her dreams.

Combining her love for design and passion for food, plates naturally became the best blank canvas for her to express herself with. Today, Tam is the lead pastry chef at Minami Restaurant.

Q What motivates and inspires you as a chef?

A The satisfaction of presenting a dessert with different components that excites both

the sight and taste buds of others motivates my creativity and inspires me to improve every day.

Q How would you describe the type of food you like to cook?

A Textures and flavour combinations are very important to me; so is the art of plating. I tend to create desserts that are not too sweet and I love playing with and incorporating molecular gastronomy for an extra fun factor.

Q What might diners not know about you?

A I love hiking and being outdoors as much as I love being in the kitchen, which is lucky for me because all those sugar calories will just add up if I don't get any exercise.

Q Describe a couple of your most recent creations.

A The pear tart that is currently on our fall winter menu is a throwback to my child-

hood as it was a dessert my aunt would always make. I have since taken over the duty of making this dessert every Christmas, and it is a family favourite.

Q What's your favourite local product and how do you use it?

A I love picking blueberries when they're in season during summer time and I turn them into blueberry cheesecake and blueberry compote.

Q If there's one important piece of advice you might have for home cooks, what might that be?

A Invest in a scale to measure out pastry recipes. It will make sure your recipes always turn out the same.

PUMPKIN PANNA COTTA

3/4 tbsp. (12 mL) powdered gelatin

1/3 cup (80 mL) homo milk



Make your own pumpkin panna cotta with pastry chef Nikki Tam's recipe.

2/3 cup (160 mL) 36 per cent cream

1/4 cup (60 mL) condensed milk

3/4 cup (180 mL) pumpkin puree

2 tbsp. (30 mL) cold water

1/2 tsp (2.5 mL)

ground cinnamon

1/8 tsp (0.5 mL) ground nutmeg

1/8 tsp (0.5 mL) ground ginger

1/8 tsp (0.5 mL) salt

Sprinkle gelatin in the cold water and let it dissolve. Combine milk, cream, condensed milk and pumpkin puree in a pot and heat until simmering. Once the mixture is simmering, take pot off heat and add spices as well as the dissolved powdered gelatin into pot, mix thoroughly. Let the mixture cool down a bit and pour into serving glasses. Keep the glasses in the fridge overnight to set.

GINGERBREAD CRUMBLE

4 1/2 tbsp. (70 mL) softened butter

2 1/2 tbsp. (37 mL) brown sugar

7 tbsp. (105 mL) flour

First spice mix

3/4 tsp (4 mL) ground cinnamon

1/2 tbsp. (7.5 mL) ground ginger

1/8 tsp (0.5 mL)

ground cardamom

1/8 tsp (0.5 mL) ground nutmeg

1/8 tsp (0.5 mL) salt

Second spice mix

3/4 tsp (4 mL)

ground cinnamon

3/4 tsp (4 mL) ground ginger

1/2 tsp (2.5 mL) ground nutmeg

Preheat the oven to 350 F (175 C). Combine the brown sugar, flour and the first spice mix in a mixer with a paddle until incorporated. Add softened butter and continue mixing until a nice crumbly mixture forms. Spread the crumble mixture evenly on a baking tray lined with Silpat (or parchment) and bake for 12 minutes. Once the crumble mixture is cool, toss with the second group of spices.

To Assemble: Spoon some of the gingerbread crumble into the set panna cotta before serving and it's ready to be enjoyed.

Serves 4-6