

# Daniel Boulud: If it's spring, lamb's on the menu

BY DANIEL BOULUD, VANCOUVER SUN    APRIL 17, 2009



On a visit to Vancouver last July, two of the suppliers Daniel Boulud made a point of meeting in person were Jens-Hugo and Virginia Jacobsen at Polderside Farms in Chilliwack.

**Photograph by:** Handout, Files

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*He's regarded as one of the world's best, and we're thrilled to have Michelin-starred chef Daniel Boulud on board as an occasional guest columnist. It's been a privilege to have had Jean-Georges Vongerichten write for us, and now, Boulud. The Vancouver Sun is the only newspaper he writes for.*

*In the coming weeks and months, he'll share his thoughts and experiences, and throw us a few cooking tips from his deep well of knowledge.*

*He's getting to know Vancouver better with every visit he makes for the care and nurturing of the two Vancouver restaurants he operates with David and Manjy Sidoo: Lumiere and DB Bistro Moderne. Through these columns, perhaps we'll come to know him, too.*

By DANIEL BOULUD

I can't have a spring menu without lamb on it. During this season, I also start to ramp up the spices, and even think about grilling.

On a visit to Vancouver last July, two of the suppliers I made a point of meeting in person were Jens-Hugo and Virginia Jacobsen at Polderside Farms in Chilliwack. Dale Mackay introduced us. He had already been purchasing poultry from them for Lumière. Now at DB Bistro Moderne, we also buy whole baby lamb from Polderside. The Jacobsens raise only about 25 each season, so their "elevation" is still

quite small and personal.

Stephane Istel, our chef at DB Bistro Moderne, uses each and every cut of the lamb in a couscous he's serving now. He roasts the saddle stuffed with herbs and spices and tomato; the belly is confit and crisped; the loin is cut into cutlets that are marinated and grilled. The legs are prepared two ways: one very slowly baked in a salt crust and the other cubed to make brochettes on rosemary branch skewers. The shoulder is braised with vegetables tagine-style, while the trimmings go into our home-made merguez sausages and spicy meatballs. Of course, the bones go in to a stock to season the couscous.

I wanted to take the spirit of this dish and translate it into something you could prepare at home. This recipe has strong Mediterranean flavours by way of the mint, sumac and eggplant. It also has wonderful Moroccan accents from the Ras el Hanout, a mild spice blend of cinnamon, cardamom, clove, chili pepper, coriander, cumin, mace, nutmeg, peppercorn and turmeric.

In this dish, I like the interplay of sweet and sour that comes from the apricots. Traditionally, it might be garnished with semolina couscous, but here I use bulgur. I like its larger grain, and it's delicious when you accent it with pistachios and fresh mint, lending it nutty, refreshing notes.

Of course, the original inspiration for the dish comes from the North African tradition of the "Mechoui," a whole lamb roasted on a spit outdoors over an open wood fire and served with dozens of garnishes, from a spicy harissa to a mild yogurt sauce, vegetables, dried fruits and couscous. The French have adopted this tradition and often bring it out at gatherings of family and friends. It's our version of a barbecue party.

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