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LEGENDS

Boston's **Barbara Lynch** on Maine ingredients dazzling Beantown diners.

Savoring Maine

No. 9 Park ★ B&G Oysters ★ Stir ★ The Butcher Shop ★ Drink ★ Sportello ★ Menton ★ 9 at Home



If **Maine lobster** were a movie **star**, who would it be?

"Meryl Streep."

—Superchef Barbara Lynch

INTERVIEW BY COLIN W. SARGENT

BARBARA LYNCH, 47, the multiple James Beard Award-winner *Boston Magazine* has called the "erudite bad girl," loves to dazzle her diners with ingredients from Maine at her constellation of eight trendy eateries, including No. 9 Park, B&G Oysters, Stir, Menton, and Sportello. One of *Food & Wine's* Ten Best New Chefs, she's acutely focused, charmingly high energy, and always has something edgy cooking—that is, she'd make the perfect good Maine girl if she weren't from South Boston and a world celebrity.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY BARBARA LYNCH GRUPPO





Lemon Aioli Lobster Rolls

SERVES 4

4 lobsters, each about 1 1/4 pounds

1 cup Lemon Aioli or 1 cup Hellmann's mayonnaise mixed with 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice

1/2 cup peeled, very finely chopped celery

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

4 top-split hot dog rolls (I like Pepperidge Farm)

4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh chives

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and fill a clean sink or very large bowl with ice water.

Cook the lobsters, covered, for about 10 minutes. Plunge them into the ice water to halt the cooking. Twist the tails off the bodies. Cut each tail lengthwise into 2 pieces, removing the intestinal tracts. Remove the claw meat by snapping off the little pincers first. Using the back of a heavy chef's knife or good kitchen scissors, crack open the claws and remove the meat. Remove the knuckle meat too. Cut the meat into generous bite-sized pieces. Gently toss the lobster meat with the aioli and celery. Season to taste with salt and pepper and refrigerate until ready to serve.

To round out the plate, try the fries, slaw and the easy homemade pickles.

If you were going to design one of your miniature dessert dishes—*mignardises* (French for “cutenesses”)—around ingredients associated with Maine, what would they be?

Low-bush blueberries with cream, saltwater taffy, caramel. I'd do a take on an apple pie with cheddar. Blueberry chili with whipped-cream cheese. *Mignardises* are treats meant to be eaten with the fingers, like chocolates you can pop into your mouth.

Have you ever considered opening a restaurant in Maine?

No. But if I were driving around Maine, I'd say, “Oh, wouldn't that be a perfect lobster shack,” or “Oh, wouldn't that be a perfect oyster house.” But I dream like that wherever I am.

What's the worst thing you've ever seen done to lobster?

Overcooked, rubbery, dry, stringy.

What's the commonly ordered lobster entrée by the Beacon Hill, Boston Brahmin set at No. 9 Park?

Butter-poached lobster or baked stuffed lobster.

How do Boston diners differ from Portland diners?

There's a greater variety of diners in Boston, a broader audience.

Would a diner be dismissed at one of your sophisticated Boston restaurants if he came in looking like a stereotypical clamdigger from Maine?

He wouldn't be dismissed at all. That's the beauty of our restaurants. Whether it's a person wearing a ten-gallon hat from Texas or someone wearing plaid flannel shirts from L.L. Bean, we try to meet people where they are.

Jay McInerney has recently compared a certain brand of Zinfandel to The Rock in a satin smoking jacket. If you were describing the taste of lobster as a movie star, who would it be?

Meryl Streep.

Is butter the making, or the ruination, of lobster? What are



some alternatives?

There's nothing that isn't beautiful about lobster and butter. I love it. Another way I love lobster is with extra virgin olive oil, a squeeze of lemon, and salt.

Is this an Italian influence?

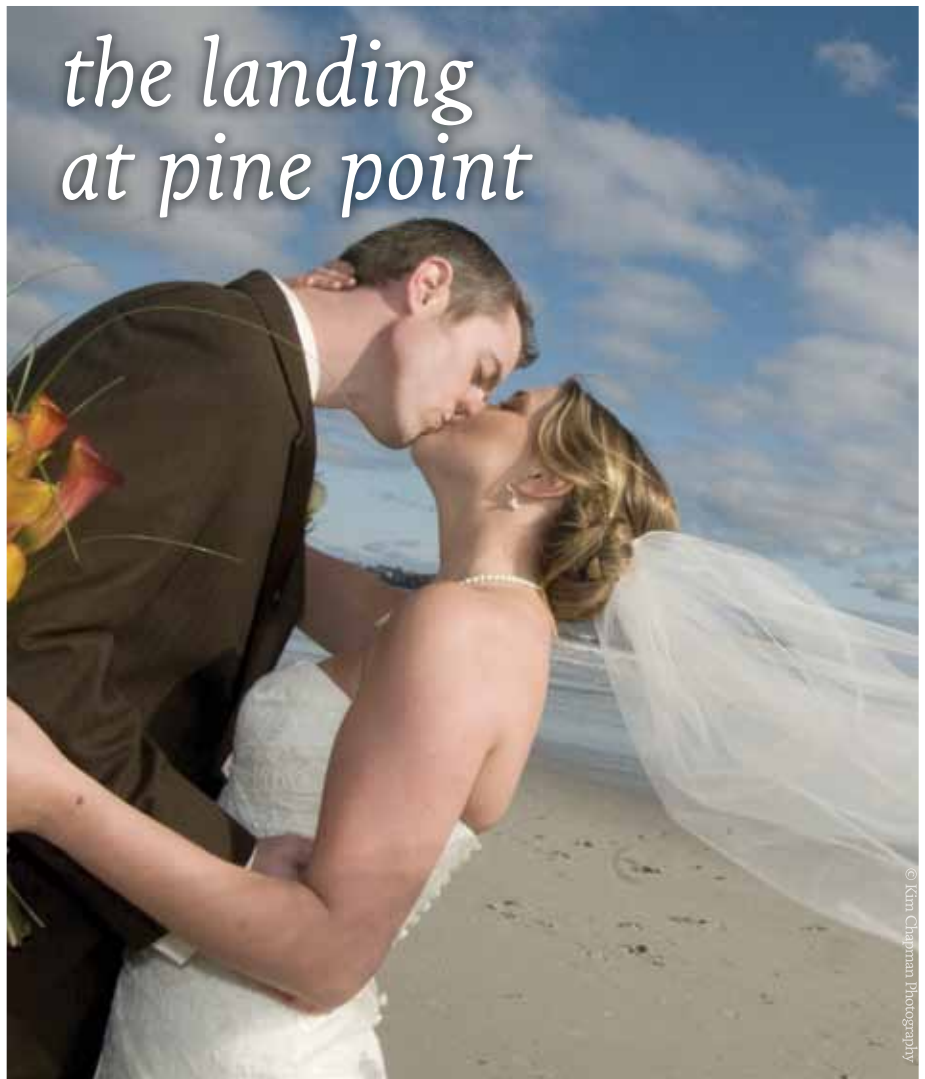
Provence.

You've sent us a photo of your lobster roll. Could you please describe it?

I serve it toasted on a Pepperidge Farm top-side, with lemon aioli and rondelles (little slices) of celery. Meaty, creamy, with a touch of acid or brightness. We make our own French fries and butter pickles. The crunch brings it all home.

In the boxing match of shrimp vs. lobster, whose corner would you be in and why?

I'd be in lobster's corner. Bigger and sweeter.



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From Bombay to Brunswick

Brunswick, Maine is a far cry from Bombay, Rangoon or Kabul—three postings the Amstutz family has called home in a career of foreign service. “This town offers world class opportunities,” says Bruce. “Hardly a day goes by when there isn’t a group going to a concert, play, museum or restaurant.”

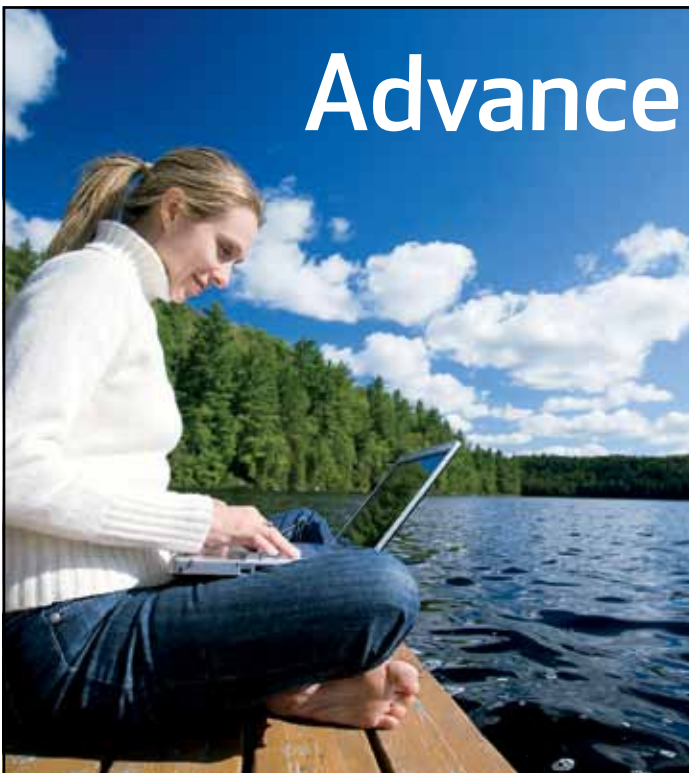
To learn more about Thornton Oaks, contact Henry Recknagel at **800-729-8033** or **thoaks@gwi.net**. We also invite you to visit our website to meet more of our residents.



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LEGENDS

You worked at Figs in the early 1990s, owned by Todd English, who visits Camden every summer to see his mom, who lives here year-round. Have you ever talked with him about that?

Yes, I have, a number of times. My first visit to Maine was Kennebunkport, which is great. Very New Englandy, beautiful beaches, elegant white houses. I've also flown over the islands off the coast and looked down, fascinated by how many there are. I love Maine. I just don't get to go there enough.

Now that casual-dress Friday seems like it's every day, has that outlook affected the idea of ultra-chic dining with white linen tablecloths? Are dressy occasions and the sense of five-star dining at risk?

That's saying luxury hotels are at risk, and people will no longer drive a Mercedes.

What's the edgiest way to serve a Maine dish that's high-concept?

Let's see. Okay, I'd do a deconstructed, reinterpreted Maine clambake.

Please weigh in on the Maine lobster branding controversy, where people feel they're allowed to call any lobster a Maine lobster.

I've actually done the taste test: Maine versus Cape Cod. Maine won. You should hold onto it [the Maine-caught brand]. ■

➤ For Barbara Lynch's signature Lobster BLT on toasted ciabatta rolls, visit portlandmonthly.com/portmag/2012/05/lynch-extras.






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