

From the Village Voice
Bites
Shad Madness
Peculiar Spring Roe Hits NYC

by Nina Lalli

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Outside the Oyster Bar, at Grand Central, a giddy sign announces the news that sends many food lovers into a tizzy every spring: SHAD IS HERE!

The roe is the delicacy gourmets go nuts for. Its tiny eggs, unlike salmon roe or caviar from sturgeon, are held together inside a tough membrane, and come in pairs, which are sometimes sold in fish markets by size—small, medium, and large—just like T-shirts. At this point, early in the season, there's not much variation. The roe are "tight," and on the small side.

The traditional treatment of shad roe is nothing if not respectful. The fish is beloved most for its intense rich flavor, largely due to a high fat content—it's a point of pride that it doesn't need sauce or fancy cooking methods. This intensity is only deeper in the roe. It is usually sautéed in olive oil or butter (or both) very quickly and brightened at the last minute with capers and lemon juice or vinegar (or both), and garnished with parsley. At the Italian restaurant, Sette Mezzo, shad roe is prepared exactly this way—no gimmicks, and cooked to tender perfection.

Bacon is another common counterpart to shad roe. At the Oyster Bar, two strips simply lay atop each piece. At Minnow in Park Slope, pancetta-wrapped shad roe skewers will show up on the menu Monday (March 27th), accompanied by a lemon dipping sauce. Though a manager admitted Chef Tom Colicchio is not a fan of shad ("his mother made him eat a lot of it") Craft won't deprive the masses, either. A classic preparation, with a twist or two, will appear on the menu soon. It will include bacon, a red wine sauce, and pickled onions serving the same purpose as the capers would—to cut the richness of the fish.

Some chefs take the twists a little further. At Savoy, on Prince Street, a special menu featuring shad and shad roe will be available through April 9.

The four courses (\$55) include house-smoked shad, pan-roasted shad roe with meyer lemon cream, red rose radish, and fresh-dug carrots, and an oak plank-roasted shad filet. (The fourth course is dessert, and thankfully the shad has been left out of a buttermilk panna cotta.) At Esca, it's served crispy with house-pickled vegetables and whole grain mustard vinaigrette (an entrée for lunch or an appetizer for dinner.)

Dorian Mecir, the owner of Dorian's Seafood Market on the Upper East Side, says "A lot of people aren't familiar with shad, so they shy away from it."

If you're not up to cooking it yourself, Dorian's has a chef on staff and sells shad roe cooked (\$15 a pair) as well as raw (\$12 a pair). Dorian has shared their simple recipe with us. Get it while you can-the fish will swim away in just three or four weeks.

Dorian's Seafood Market
1580 York Avenue

Shad Roe Sautéed in Butter

1 pair shad roe
salt and freshly ground pepper
4 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 tablespoon freshly chopped parsley
1 lemon

Puncture the roe in several places with a pin. Season roe with salt and pepper. Melt butter in a skillet with a lid. Add roe and GENTLY sauté for 3-4 minutes. Turn over with care, using a spatula. Cover and let simmer for about 6 or 7 minutes. Divide roe in half carefully. Transfer to plates. Spoon melted butter over roe, sprinkle with parsley, and serve with lemon wedges. Enjoy