



## World Chefs: Gaier, Frasier show variety of Maine cooking

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By [Richard Leong](#)  
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(Reuters Life!) - Chefs Mark Gaier and Clark Frasier explore the food history of Maine and offer their interpretation of the state's traditional dishes in their latest book, "Maine Classics."

Gaier, 53, and 50-year-old Frasier have been incorporating the area's

traditions and local ingredients in the dishes at their acclaimed Arrows restaurant in Ogunquit, which opened in 1988.

They spoke to Reuters about Maine's rich food traditions, foraging and the recipe to their long partnership:

Q: What makes Maine's cooking unique?

A: Frasier: "Maine cooking is very satisfying and old-fashion food. When we examined the roots of the cooking, it's very rich. It's very straightforward. It's meant for hardworking people who want robust food. It goes back to who we are as people. Maine cooking is all about the American experience and how we grow up as frontier people, growing up with the Indian people and our shared experiences there, building the clipper ships going to [China](#), going to Hawaii, going all over the world. (It is about) having to work really hard to get stuff from the rocky soil of Maine and surviving on the ocean with the lobster and the cod."

Q: What surprised you during your research for the book?

A: Gaier: "In the Damariscotta River area in midcoast Maine, there was evidence of huge, thriving oyster consumption many years ago. But due to pollution, there had been no oyster business. Now it has been coming back the last 20 years. Maine has become one of the bigger oyster producers in the country. It was eye-opening to explore that."

Q: So there's more to Maine than lobsters?

A: Frasier: "People think of blueberry and lobster and that's Maine, and really Maine has a really long food history. We have a long forest behind that long coast line, which is filled with venison, mushrooms and all sorts of things that could be foraged. There's this whole wealth of things. We also have a long history in Maine of gardening and farming because we have a very long harsh winter. A lot of the book is dedicated to preserving the spring and summer in old fashion ways - blueberry jam, blueberry preserves, peach preserves."

Q: What tips do you have for foraging?

A: Frasier: "You need to follow good guide books. You don't just wander out in the forest without someone who really knows what he is doing. Once you see the picture of a black trumpet mushroom in a book, it's pretty obvious they don't look like toad stool ... Things are pretty much the same for things like golden chanterelles. But I would advise anyone to be extremely careful to go into the forest to forage either with an expert or a guidebook or both."

Q: What makes your personal and business partnership successful?

A: Gaier: "It works because we have a similar vision as far as our careers and the operations of our restaurants. In our personal life, we have a lot of common interests. We both like adventure traveling, cycling, going to the gym, hiking and other outdoors things."

Frasier: "We have been together for 26 years and most of that time we have been working together. Personally I feel it's a great business combination. It's a nice balance of yin and yang. Mark always had the business background and I was more involved with marketing. As far as being chefs, we have always been complementary. Mark is from the Midwest. He always wants to pare things down to the simplest things. I'm always like let's try this new wild ingredient."

#### RECIPE

Fiddlehead Ferns with Brown Butter (6 side-dish servings)

2 quarts water

One half teaspoon kosher salt

4 cups fiddleheads

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

One fourth teaspoon lemon juice

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Bring the water and salt to a boil in a large pot. Add the fiddleheads and blanch for 1 minute. Drain and plunge them immediately into an ice bath. Remove the fiddleheads as soon as they are cool.

2. Melt the butter in a saucepan on medium-high heat and cook until just brown. Turn the heat to low and then add the lemon juice and the fiddleheads. Season with salt and pepper to taste and cook until the fiddleheads are fork tender. Serve at once.

(Reporting by Richard Leong; editing by [Patricia Reaney](#))