



The Judicial Palate

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East Egg or West Egg?

Gatsby is all the rage this summer. I have not yet seen Baz Luhrmann's new film adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*, but I recently re-read the novel that I first enjoyed in a high school English class. I even re-watched the 1974 film starring Mia Farrow and Robert Redford in anticipation of this season's renewed interest in *Gatsby*.

Jay Gatsby, Daisy Buchanan, and Nick Carraway are topics of discussion among my high school students. Commercials for the new 3D movie appear when I press the TV power button. I have also seen exercise classes full of flappers burning calories doing the Charleston.

Since *Gatsby* is in movie theaters, on TV and at the gym, why not welcome *Gatsby* into your kitchen?

For those of you who are rusty on your *Gatsby* facts, East Egg and West Egg are the two Long Island towns that are home to the characters in *The Great Gatsby*. My dear friend Carol Rendé, an English teacher and *Gatsby* aficionado, gave me a primer on the Eggs. Fitzgerald juxtaposed East Egg, representing old wealth, with West Egg, representing new money. On another level, East Egg symbolizes the superficiality and corruption of the East while West Egg symbolizes the innocence and solid values of the Midwest. I will leave you to explore Fitzgerald's Eggs in the novel and/or movie so that I can use my space to offer two recipes in honor of the Eggs—a simple, but delicious steak and eggs poached in salsa and a more sophisticated poached egg with surf and turf.

West Egg

Steak and Eggs Poached in Salsa

The ideal steak for this recipe is a skirt or flank steak. The skirt steak is cut from the middle underbelly of the cow, while the flank steak is cut from the rear underbelly.

These steaks are not the tenderest of cuts; however, both are reasonable in price and very flavorful. Skirt steak has become one of my favorite types of beef as it is so tasty and simple to prepare.

Marinate the beef for several hours to increase its tenderness. A basic marinade is to drizzle extra virgin olive oil over the steak and top both sides with fresh ground pepper and a few pinches of sea salt. Let the steak marinate in the refrigerator for three to four hours. When ready to cook, heat your salsa of choice (hopefully freshly made and with a kick) in a nonstick pan until it starts to boil. Turn down the heat until you are ready to put the steak on the grill as the steak and eggs will take about the same amount of time to cook.

Grill the steak on high heat—two to three minutes per side for the skirt and four minutes per side for the flank for medium rare. After you put the steak on the grill, crack up to four eggs over the simmering salsa and cook until the whites are firm but the yolks are still runny. The eggs will cook more quickly if you cover the pan, but do not move too far away from the stove as you do not want the yolks to solidify.

Slice the steak against the grain and place three slices on each plate. Gently spoon two eggs along with some salsa on the side and top with fresh cilantro.

East Egg

Poached Egg with Surf and Turf

The ideal steak for this preparation is a dry aged ribeye or strip steak. If you are not familiar with the dry aging process, it involves placing primal or individual cuts of beef in climate controlled (very cool) conditions for several weeks or up to several months. The goal of the process is to tenderize the meat and intensify its flavor. Natural enzymes break down connective tissue in the meat while the evaporation of moisture from

the meat concentrates its flavor.

Dry aged beef is not typically found in supermarkets; rather, it is sold at specialty butchers or gourmet markets such as Whole Foods. This beef is much more expensive than other beef as the drying process involves more labor. Also, the size of individual steaks is reduced due to the loss of moisture and the need to trim the surfaces that were exposed to air.

As with the West Egg dish, cook the beef on a hot grill. This steak will take longer than the flat cuts, about eight minutes per side. To avoid overcooking the meat, consult a grilling chart for cooking times according to thickness. While waiting for the grill to heat, bring a small pot of water to a boil and reduce the heat so that the water is no longer boiling. Add a splash of champagne or prosecco to the water for more richness.

With a few minutes left in the grilling, poach the eggs. Crack an egg into a small bowl and gently let the egg slide from the bowl into the water. Repeat with the desired number of eggs. Using a spoon, move the egg whites around the yolks to keep the individual eggs together. Turn off the heat and let the eggs cook for three to four minutes, depending on the size of the eggs, so that the yolks are still runny. Use a slotted spoon to remove the eggs and place two eggs on the side of the steak. Season the beef with fresh ground pepper and finishing salt. Drizzle extra virgin olive oil over the eggs and top each egg with a dollop of salmon roe. The roe are the glistening orange eggs of salmon, and, but for their color, the roe should remind you of the pearls worn by the female residents of East Egg.

Depending on your mood, go West Egg for pure and simple or East Egg for luxurious and refined. In either case, take the time to study *Gatsby's* Eggs this June. ☺