

EMERIL LAGASSE

Emeril's

In 1982, Emeril Lagasse replaced Paul Prudhomme as executive chef of the famed New Orleans restaurant, Commander's Palace. After seven and a half years at Commander's Palace, Lagasse opened his first restaurant, Emeril's, in 1990.

What was the most important thing or lesson you learned at Commander's or from Ella Brennan?

It took about three months for my interview process with Ella. She finally asked me to come for a visit to meet her family and see the restaurant and once I got there, I never left. Working with Ella and the entire Commander's team influenced who I became as a chef, and later, who I became as a restaurateur.

What years did you work at Commander's and in what positions? I started at Commander's Palace in 1982 as Executive Chef and was there for 7 years. During the last 2 ½ years, I was both Executive Chef and Manager.

What do you think will be Ella Brennan's legacy on the New Orleans culinary scene? Ella was a defining force, not only in New Orleans, but nationally. Her dedication, hard work, and real foresight paved the way for so many chefs, including myself. There's not a chef or restaurateur in New Orleans, present or future, who cannot pay tribute to what Ella did for our city's dining scene.

What is or was your favorite dish at Commander's Palace that you either helped create or you just love to eat? I always have and always will have a soft spot for the turtle soup. The sherry finish gives it the perfect punch and it's quintessential Commander's.

*CHEF EMERIL LAGASSE, Emeril's
Commander's Palace 1982-1989*



Chef Emeril Lagasse of Emeril's

BANANA CREAM PIE WITH CAMEL DRIZZLES AND CHOCOLATE SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

4 cups heavy cream
1 ½ cups whole milk
1 ½ cups plus 2 teaspoons
granulated sugar
1 vanilla bean, split in half
lengthwise and seeds scraped
3 large egg yolks
2 large eggs

½ cup cornstarch
3 lbs (about 9) firm but ripe
bananas, peeled and cut
crosswise into ½-inch-thick
slices
½ tsp pure vanilla extract
Shaved chocolate, for garnish
Confectioners' sugar, for garnish
Fresh mint, for garnish

Graham Cracker Crust

1 ¼ cups graham cracker crumbs
4 tbsp unsalted butter, melted

Preheat oven to 350. Combine graham cracker crumbs and sugar in a medium bowl and mix well. Add butter and mix well. Press mixture into a 9-inch pie pan. Top with aluminum pie tin and with a circular motion, press crust tightly into pan. Bake until browned, about 25 minutes. Cool for 10 to 15 minutes.

Caramel Sauce

¾ cup sugar
½ tsp fresh lemon juice
2 tbsp to ¼ cup whole milk

Combine sugar, water, and lemon juice in a medium heavy saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring, until sugar dissolves. Let boil without stirring until mixture becomes a deep amber color, 2 to 3 minutes, watching closely so it doesn't burn. Add cream, whisk to combine, and remove from heat. Add milk, 2 tablespoons at a time, until desired consistency is reached. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature before serving with pie. (The sauce will thicken as it cools.)

Chocolate Sauce

½ cup half-and-half
½ pound semisweet chocolate chips
Scald half-and-half and butter in a small heavy saucepan over medium heat. Remove from heat. Place chocolate and vanilla in a medium heat-proof bowl. Add hot half-and-half and let sit for 2 minutes, then whisk until smooth. Serve slightly warm. (The sauce can be kept refrigerated in an airtight container for several days, but it must be returned to room temperature before serving.)

1 tbsp unsalted butter
½ tsp pure vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS

Combine 2 cups cream, the milk, ½ cup sugar, and vanilla bean and seeds in a large heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat. Bring to a gentle boil, whisking to dissolve sugar. Remove from heat.

Combine egg yolks, eggs, cornstarch, and 1 cup sugar in a medium bowl; whisk until pale yellow in color. Set aside.

Whisk 1 cup hot cream mixture into egg yolk mixture. Gradually add egg mixture to hot cream mixture, whisking constantly. Bring to a simmer, stirring constantly with a large wooden spoon to cook out cornstarch and thicken mixture, about 5 minutes. (The mixture may separate slightly; if so, remove from heat and beat with an electric mixer until thick and smooth.) Strain through a fine-mesh strainer into a clean bowl. Cover with plastic wrap, pressing down against the surface to prevent a skin from forming. Chill in refrigerator for about 4 hours.

To assemble, spread ½ cup custard over the bottom of the prepared crust, smoothing with the back of a large spoon or rubber spatula. Arrange enough banana slices (not quite one-third) in a tight, tiled pattern over custard, pressing down with your hands to pack them firmly. Repeat to build a second layer, using ¾ cup custard and enough bananas to cover, smoothing down the layer evenly. For the third layer, spread ¾ cup of custard over bananas and top with remaining bananas, starting 1 inch from outer edge and working toward center. Spread 1 cup custard evenly over bananas to prevent discoloration. Cover with plastic wrap and chill for at least 4 hours or overnight.

In a medium bowl, whip remaining 2 cups heavy cream until soft peaks form. Add remaining 2 teaspoons sugar and vanilla extract and continue to whip until stiff peaks form. Remove pie from refrigerator. With a sharp knife dipped in hot water, cut pie into 10 equal slices. Transfer slices to dessert plates. Fill a pastry bag with whipped cream and pipe onto each slice. (Alternately, spread the whipped cream evenly over the pie before cutting.)

Drizzle each slice with caramel and chocolate sauces, sprinkle with chocolate shavings and confectioners' sugar, garnish with fresh mint, and serve.