

PASTRIES FOR THE PEOPLE



So Good Magazine, July 2010 issue features Jean-Yves Charon, master chef and co-founder of Galaxy Desserts.

So Good magazine, an international magazine of top desserts and pastry chefs.

JEAN-YVES CHARON

For most people having a sweet tooth isn't considered a favorable attribute. But for those in the pastry world it goes with the territory. And Galaxy's Desserts' Jean-Yves Charon is no exception. "AS A CHILD, DESSERT WAS ALWAYS MY FAVORITE PART OF THE MEAL," RECALLS CHARON. "I ALWAYS WOULD ASK WHAT WAS FOR DESSERT BEFORE I FINISHED MY FOOD SO I COULD DECIDE WHETHER TO SAVE ROOM."

www.galaxydesserts.com / Richmond, California

By Lisa Shames

Many years later his love for all things sweet has served him well as co-founder and pastry chef of Richmond, Calif.-based Galaxy Desserts, a privately held corporation with some 200 employees that creates French-inspired, all-natural and kosher individual-size desserts for clients ranging from top hotels—Hyatt, Marriott, Hilton, Westin—and retailers—Whole Foods, Bristol Farms, Kroger—to specialty catalogs—Neiman Marcus, Williams-Sonoma, Stonewall Kitchen.

After deciding that pastry was the career for him, the French-born Charon attended the Jean Le Maitre school in Brittany where he studied pastry, ice cream, bread and candy making. Upon graduation, he apprenticed for three years at a bakery in Reims where he furthered his artisanal pastry skills. Charon learned quickly and it wasn't long before he became a manager for Brioche Doree/Paris Croissant, opening up stores in London, Paris, Canada and New York.

After a brief stop in New York, Charon moved to San Francisco, first as manager of production for Saralan, a cookie manufacturer, then as executive pastry chef at the

Harris Restaurant. A few years later, Charon opened Paris Delights, a bakery in San Francisco. But it wasn't until he met Paul Levitan, an owner as well of a small bakery, The Cheesecake Lady, at a food industry trade show that the story really became interesting.

It was in 1998 that the two entrepreneurs decided to combine their mutual passion for pastry and varied backgrounds—Levitan, who has an MBA from the Stanford Graduate School of Business, handles the financial and administration duties, while Charon concentrates on the development of products—and Galaxy Desserts was born.

From the beginning the premise behind the company was simple: to create individual servings of high-quality desserts—think mini crème brûlées, multi-layered mousse cakes, exotic fruit tarts, breakfast pastries and even cannelés, the classic Bordeaux dessert with a vanilla-bourbon-um custard center—in large quantities. Says Charon, "Not many people were doing it so we could be creative because there weren't any rules."

But thinking outside the box often comes with challenges.

Take, for example, their macarons. Two years ago

Galaxy Desserts' Jean-Yves Charon channels his life-long love for the sweeter things in life into a multi-million dollar business

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Williams-Sonoma approached Charon about creating the traditional Parisian sandwich cookie for them. Charon was up for the challenge—"I always try to have one or two clients with whom I can experiment on products with," he says—and the complicated R&D work began. After much testing, Charon was still stumped as to why the cookies were coming out too thin. Some back and forth calls with his vendors led to a conversation with the egg farmer: "He told me that in summer the chickens drink more water and therefore there's more water in the eggs," says Charon. To compensate he added egg white powder and the problem was solved.

It's this understanding of the vital role science plays in the production of his pastries that Charon, a long-time member of the Research Chef's Association, an U.S.-based organization that combines food science and the culinary arts, taps into on a daily basis. "When we create something we never change more than one ingredient at a time, otherwise you can't find the problem if you have too many variables," he says.

Science also comes into play when it comes to the freezing of their products, a process that is done at very low temperatures as to avoid crystallization, says Charon. And then there are hygiene regulations—Galaxy sends their products to a lab every day to be tested—as well as transportation concerns and the need for traceability of each and every ingredient. Add it all up and that's why still to this day, says Charon, you won't find many companies doing high-volume quality pastries.

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work they do by hand on many of their products, which when you're producing some 100,000 individual desserts and pastries per day, is no easy task.

But all this hard work has paid off. Besides the financial growth of the business itself—sales were about \$20 million last year—Galaxy products have received numerous awards over the years, including gold and silver medals from the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade.

Then there's the buzz factor that comes with being chosen as one of Oprah Winfrey's "Favorite Things" not once but four times. Back in 2002 when their croissants, a 144-layer pastry made with 32 percent butter that is shipped frozen, left out overnight to thaw and rise, and then baked in the recipient's oven that Charon is especially proud of, were selected the first time by the talk show queen—"I've never had a better croissant, even in Paris," gushed Oprah on her show—he figured they would sell maybe 1,000 more of the 15-each boxes. They ended up selling about 15,000 and had to put a temporary hold on orders until the demand could be met. When they were selected again in 2005, and the same with their molten chocolate lava cake in 2003, Charon flew out to Chicago to create the pastries live for the show's audience.

To keep the excitement going, Charon is always on the hunt for new ideas, whether it's through reading books and magazines or by traveling (he's more than a little amused by the recent trend of American-style desserts in Europe. "It's funny that macarons are coming here and cupcakes are going over there," says Charon). And between 2 and 4 in the morning is when he comes up with some of his best ideas. "During that time I think about new products or problems that I had during the day and I'll end up finding ways to solve them," says Charon.

But no matter what new desserts he dreams up—fruit sushi, anyone?—it's the continuous taste-testing of them that makes the difference in the end. "We always need to know what the customer is experiencing," says Charon. "Tasting is a big part of what I do." Which, we think, is the perfect fit for Charon and his sweet tooth.

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tart

110	g	sugar
110	g	butter
2	g	baking powder
1		egg
15	g	water
1	pinch	salt
25	g	cocoa powder
200	g	harvest king

Yields 12 tarts (10 cm diameter)

Cream the butter and granulated sugar together.

Beat the egg and water together, then add to the butter/sugar mixture.

Add the sifted dry ingredients.

Preheat the oven to 175° C. Bake the tart shells for approximately 8 minutes.

caramel ganache

225	g	extreme dark chocolate, 72% cocoa
200	g	cream, 40% fat content
25	g	caramel

Make a caramel with 110 g granulated sugar and 75 g water.

Reserve 25 g of the caramel for the recipe.

In a saucepan, bring the cream to a boil. Pour over the chocolate and mix well.

chocolate mousse

50	g	water
100	g	granulated sugar
295	g	bittersweet chocolate, 62% cocoa
30	ml	whiskey
410	g	cream, 40% fat content
4	g	egg whites
35	g	granulated sugar

In a saucepan, bring the water and sugar to a boil.

Beat the egg yolks. Add slowly the syrup and then the whiskey.

Whisk the egg whites until stiff. Add the sugar.

Fold the egg yolk mixture into the meringue.

Whip the cream until moderately stiff.

Melt the chocolate using a double boiler.

Mix 1/3 of the whipped cream with the melted chocolate using a whisk. Fold the rest of the cream.

Fold the chocolate mixture into the egg yolk mixture.

Deposit the mousse in 10 cm plastic rings (2 – 2.5 cm high). Place in the freezer for 2 hours.

chocolate glaze

125	g	syrup
65	g	cocoa powder
310	g	neutral glaze powder

Make a syrup with 75 g sugar and 55 g water.

Sift the cocoa powder and the neutral glaze into the syrup. Whisk. Bring to a boil.



MONTAGE

POUR THE CARAMEL GANACHE INTO THE TART SHELL (APP. 10G)

REMOVE THE RINGS OF MOUSSE FROM THE FREEZER.

SPREAD THE CHOCOLATE GLAZE ON THE TOP OF EACH RING.

TAKE THE RING OUT OF THE MOLD.

PLACE ONE RING OF MOUSSE ON THE TOP OF EACH TART SHELL.

DECORATE WITH CHOCOLATE AND GOLD LEAVES.



CHOCOLATE TART SHELL

JEAN-YVES CHARON



TROPICAL DRAGON ROLLS

sushi rice

600	g	short grain rice
770	g	water
105	g	rice vinegar
110	g	water
9	g	salt
90	g	sugar

Cook the rice using a rice cooker:

- Put the rice in the cooker pot, fill the pot with water. Swirl rice and water with your hand briefly to wash the rice. Pour off water. Repeat washing one more time. Pour off as much water as possible.
- Put the water in the pot. Cook the rice.
- Do not remove the rice when the rice cooker is finished. Let the rice sit an additional 20 minutes in the rice cooker.
- Once the rice is finished, transfer it to a bowl for dressing.

Make the rice dressing:

- In a saucepan, mix and warm all the ingredients until the sugar dissolves. Let cook.
- Other flavors can be added at this point (coconut, cinnamon, vanilla...)

Dress the sushi rice:

- Pour 120 ml of the dressing over the rice.
- Using a sushi rice paddle, slice through the rice occasionally turning rice with the rice paddle.
- Allow the rice to cool down before using it (place a damp cloth over the rice)

rolls

qs.	sushi rice
1	sheet Origami wraps – mango flavor
10	raspberry
1	banana
1	kiwi

- Spread the rice on the mango wrap (leave a space of 2 cm on the top part of the sheet)
Place the fruits as desired.
Roll the sushi. Use a little bit of water to close the roll.
Cut into 1-cm-thick sushi.
Decorate with the orange and fresh fruits.