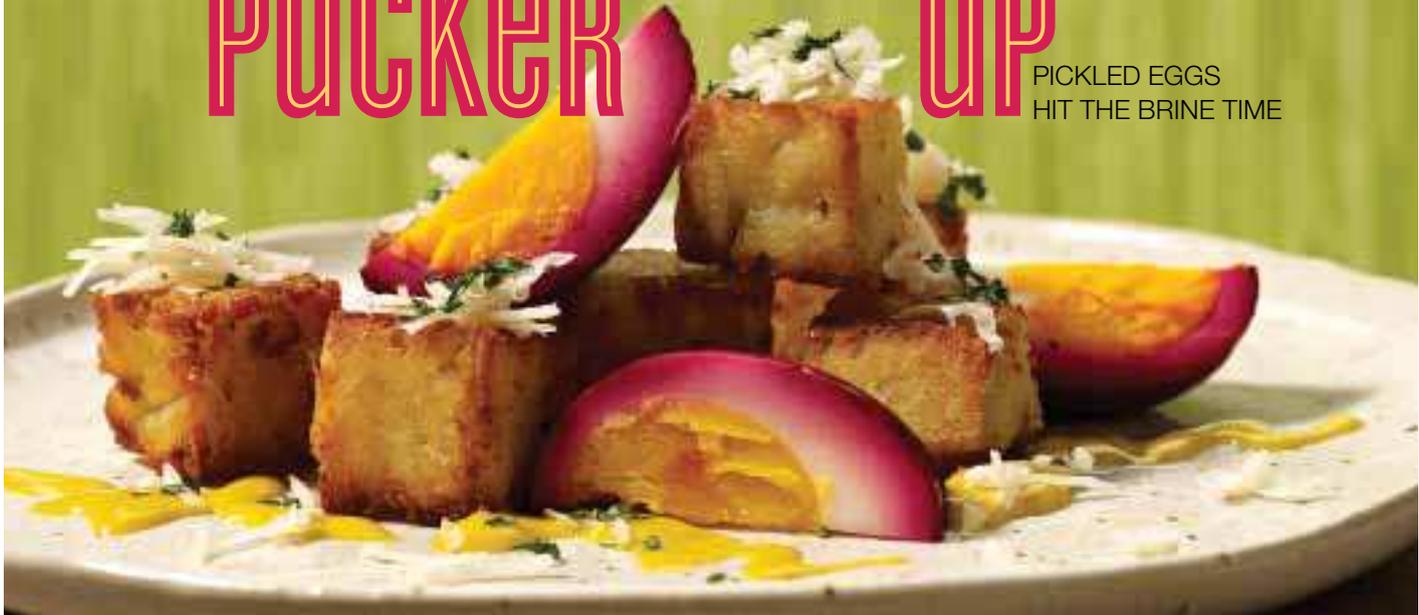


PUCKER UP

PICKLED EGGS
HIT THE BRINE TIME



Tater cubes with beet-pickled egg, \$12, Executive Chef/Co-Owner, Tom Berry, The Proprietors Bar & Table, Nantucket, Mass. **RECIPE**, p. 92.

by **Kate Parham**

It's a standard sight in a Southern mom-and-pop diner or corner store: a big jar of pickled eggs. But how did pickled eggs go from homey to hip?

"Southern food has always had lots of pickles, and now it's an American trend to pickle oddball things," notes Chef Matthew McClure of The Hive in Arkansas. "It makes sense—pickling is not just a preservative, it adds another dimension of flavor," notably brightness, making pickling the perfect treatment for rich ingredients like eggs.

For Chef/Co-owner Tom Berry of The Proprietors Bar & Table in Nantucket, Mass., pickled eggs were a means to an end. Inspired by a curry mayonnaise he had in Amsterdam, Berry set out to create an interesting fried potato dish. "But I needed another component and since it was a Dutch dish, Amish came to mind," says Berry. "Pickled eggs were a natural fit." Berry adds beets to his pickling brine, so the eggs pick up the magenta color that dis-

tinguishes his tater cubes stacked with beet-pickled eggs (\$12, recipe, p. 92). The key to retaining that deep color is cutting the tops off the beets right before adding them to the pickling liquid, as the pigment deteriorates immediately.

At Ruka's Table in North Carolina's Highlands, Executive Chef Justin Burdett opts for ultra-rich duck eggs to balance the acid from the pickle. Burdett also uses beets in his pickling brine, taking it a step further by swapping beet juice for water in the brine. "I like to impart the most beet flavor, so cooking the beets in their juice reinforces that earthiness," says Burdett, who serves his pickled eggs on a charcuterie board with pickled vegetables and bread (\$2.73, recipe, plateonline.com). The chefs agree: Eggs must sit in pickling liquid overnight to be fully penetrated by the brine.

When it comes to the perfect boiled egg, each chef has a preferred method, though all tout temperature as paramount. Burdett drops his eggs into bubbling water for

eight minutes (they are soft-boiled at this point) before draining off the hot water and adding scoops of ice to the same pot. Once the eggs are chilled, he shakes them in the pot to crack the shells before peeling them. He adds that the brine should be completely cooled before pouring it over the eggs, so as not to introduce more heat and overcook the eggs.

Alternatively, McClure, who uses pickled eggs in a salad spread served with toast, adds eggs to salted water and brings them to a boil. He turns off the heat, letting the eggs sit in the water for 12 to 13 minutes before running them under ice-cold water. "I peel the eggs in the water so it penetrates through and helps you pull off the shell," he says. Then he grates the eggs for the salad, ensuring a fine, even texture. "Chopping means something different to everybody, but grating makes a very consistent product."

There may be many methods for pickling eggs, but one thing's for certain: "Pickled eggs are a great conversation starter," says McClure. "It's like cornbread—everyone has their opinion."

Kate Parham could eat pickled eggs in a house, a box, a car and a train.

TIP: TOM BERRY BRINGS EGGS TO ROOM TEMPERATURE BEFORE COOKING THEM, ESPECIALLY WHEN USING FRESH ORGANIC EGGS, WHICH ARE NOTORIOUSLY HARD TO PEEL.