

STAR

SOCIETY

Guests sample luscious Small Bites

By Molly Glentzer

“Nothing fancy,” said chef **Olivier Ciesielski**, the owner of L’Olivier Restaurant, standing at the stove in **Gracie** and **Bob Cavnar’s** Museum District home as guests arrived for Recipe for Success’ first Gala in Small Bites of the season.

I was peeking at what he had going on the stove, including a small pot sizzling with the onion and broth base for an amuse-bouche of Porcini Cappuccino — essentially a mushroom soup he planned to pour into the row of sculptural demitasse cups nearby and cap with a creamy froth.

He buys dried porcini and grinds them like coffee. It’s good to have in the pantry, he suggested, so you can enrich sauces or whip up a soup fast. He opened a plastic container and invited me to stick in a finger and taste: Hmm, it wasn’t a stretch. You might have mistaken it for a smoky coffee.

When you’re cooking for friends, it’s best not to try to overdo it, Ciesielski advised, as guests nibbled his toasts of house-smoked salmon.

Then he produced a rich, absolutely perfect seven-course feast. After the amuse-bouche came a bright-clean Tropical Ceviche topped with an orchid and placed in a smoking bowl of dry ice (such drama!); melt-in-your-mouth Butternut Squash Ravioli with Sage Truffle Sauce; Pan



Chef Olivier Ciesielski works in the kitchen



Gracie Cavnar, at left, and guests

Seared Diver Scallop with Pea Risotto; millionaire-worthy Angus Beef Medallion with Green Peppercorn Sauce, a mile-high potato galette and green beans; and a dessert of yum-yum Marquise Chocolate with a theatrically made Mandarin Sorbet.

So much for nothing fancy. The chef enlisted help throughout, drawing guests from the table into

the kitchen to learn a few of his “sechcrets.” (There is *nothing* more charming than Ciesielski’s French accent.)

I had the task of adding the ravioli to a boiling broth; lifting it out with a little of the liquid to finish it in the truffle sauce; and spooning it into tiny canning jars with locking lids — another flourish of presentation.

All along, sommelier



Dave Rossman photos

Ciesielski serves Tropical Ceviche to guests at Recipe for Success’ Gala in Small Bites at the home of Gracie and Bob Cavnar.



Tropical Ceviche

Todd Leveritt of Richard’s Fine Wines & Liquors poured amazing wine pairings, with a dissertation on the merits and source of each: Gerard Bertrand Cremant de Limoux, Ragotiere Muscadet, Chanson Viré-Clessé, Montinore Pinot Noir, Jean-Louis Trocard Garagista and Château Lavignac Sauternes.

Before dinner began at a long table resplendent with Versace dinnerware, spring flowers and enough silverware to puzzle Miss Manners, Gracie Cavnar warned, “As you can see, we’re going to be here awhile.”

Recipe for Success is the nation’s leading school program fighting childhood obesity. After

a year in the program, which so far has taught more than 25,000 children how to garden and cook, she said, the students eat 30 percent more fresh fruits and vegetables.

Eating up every second: **Ginni** and **Richard Mithoff**, **Wayne** and **Janie Patterson**, **Ro-land** and **Karen Garcia** and **Gayle** and **Lloyd Bentsen III**.

Arvia and **Jason Few** host the next Small Bites benefit Friday. Featuring Cyclone Anaya chef **Jason Gould**, it promises a “Tropical Frolic.” Tickets cost \$1,000. See the full list of intimate dinners with leading chefs and reserve space at www.recipe4success.org.

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