



# BEADS OF GOODNESS

A superfood revered by ancient civilisations way before the term became trendy, amaranth makes for a versatile addition to your meal.

words **CHARLENE CHOW** art direction **PRISCILLA TAN** photos **JAMES LIANG**

**T**hey say good things come in small packages. In the case of the amaranth seed, which is tinier than millet or quinoa, the adage rings true. This minuscule seed is a nutritional powerhouse loaded with fibre, protein (complete with amino acid lysine), calcium, iron, magnesium, and uncommonly, Vitamin C. It also has medicinal properties as it contains cancer-fighting agents such as organic acid squalene. Better still, it is gluten-free.

True to its name derived from the Greek word "amarantos", which means "unfading", the hardy crop was a common food for the Aztecs between the 13th and 16th centuries. The nomadic tribes even deemed it sacred enough to make idol tributes to the gods out of it, and amaranth dough was sometimes mixed with human blood and consumed during rituals and ceremonies. Unsurprisingly, amaranth was outlawed after the Spanish conquest, when the colonials deemed such usage an unholy practice. Despite the ban, the pseudo-grain was still grown and used in Mexican cooking over the years, and is seeing a revival

worldwide as a popular superfood.

Typically, amaranth seeds can be cooked, puffed or ground into amaranth flour. But amaranth is not only prized for its seeds. The amaranth plant is closely linked to Swiss chard and spinach, and yields broad leaves commonly used in dishes found in the South American continent, as well as in Indian or Chinese cooking—the former usually in lentils and curries, and the latter in stir-fries. The variety of amaranth leaves can range from purplish red to green.

Mathieu Escoffier, the newly minted executive chef of Saint Pierre, rarely works with amaranth leaves, but finds that a good pairing with the slightly bitter and acidic ingredient is the combination of seasonal Manjimup winter black truffles from Australia and a buttery bechamel sauce.

Executive Head Chef Ricky Leung of Empress, on the other hand, incorporates amaranth leaves often in his dishes. Here, he marries it with pumpkin and coral trout, venturing that the soft, silky texture of the amaranth leaves will go well with the earthy pumpkin and flavourful fish broth.



**MATHIEU ESCOFFIER**  
Executive Chef, Saint Pierre

Escoffier worked for luminaries in the French culinary world such as Alain Ducasse and Joël Robuchon, before landing on our local shores at One Fullerton's Saint Pierre two months ago. He shares how amaranth can fit seamlessly into Modern French cooking.

## PAN-FRIED AMARANTH AND TRUFFLED BECHAMEL CROQUETTE

Serves 8

### Ingredients

#### For the truffled bechamel:

- 50gm butter
- 50gm flour
- 600ml milk
- 30gm black winter truffle from Australia, diced
- Salt and pepper, to taste

#### For the amaranth purée:

- 500gm amaranth leaves
- 1 clove garlic, diced
- 3 tbsp brown butter

#### For the croquette coating:

- 200gm flour
- 200gm egg white
- 300gm bread crumbs
- 100gm parsley

#### For garnish:

- 100gm amaranth seeds

### Method:

1. For the bechamel, melt butter over low heat and add flour. Add milk and cook until the bechamel mixture is thickened. Add diced truffle, salt and pepper. Pour the mixture into half-bowl flexipan moulds. Set aside to cool.
2. For the amaranth purée, boil amaranth leaves for 6 minutes in salted water. Strain and cool. Pan-fry the garlic and add amaranth leaves and brown butter. Transfer to a blender and whizz until the mixture is smooth. Pour the mixture into half-bowl flexipan moulds. Set aside to cool.
3. Assemble the croquettes by removing the bechamel and amaranth mixtures from the moulds. Place one of each together to form a sphere.
4. For the coating, dip the spheres in flour, followed by egg white, then bread crumbs mixed with parsley. Repeat, this time without the flour. Deep-fry the croquettes in hot oil at 170°C for about 4 minutes. Garnish with amaranth seeds and serve immediately.



## BARBECUED LOBSTER IN A BREAD SHELL, AMARANTH AND SHELLFISH SABAYON

Serves 8

### Ingredients

#### For the shellfish sabayon:

- 1 egg yolk
- 2 whole eggs
- 3gm rice vinegar
- Pinch of salt
- Small pinch of curry powder
- 150gm lobster butter (made from lobster shell infused in butter)

#### For the lobster:

- 4 lobsters
- Salt, to taste
- Pinch of cayenne pepper

#### For the bread shell and amaranth:

- 1 loaf white bread, sliced
- Olive oil (enough to brush the bread)
- 500gm amaranth leaves
- 1 tbsp butter
- Salt and pepper, to taste

### Method:

1. For the sabayon, whisk eggs with rice vinegar. Add salt and curry powder, and cook over low heat until mixture is thickened. Remove from heat and slowly whisk melted lobster butter into the mixture until smooth. (The texture should be like mayonnaise.)
2. Cut each lobster into half lengthwise, and season with salt and cayenne pepper. Grill the lobsters at 250°C for about 5 minutes with the shell facing down, and for 1 minute with the shell facing up. Remove the barbecued lobster meat and dice.
3. For the bread shell, mould a slice of white bread into the shape of a bowl with your hands (about 8cm in diameter) and trim the edges. Brush with olive oil so that it holds its shape. Repeat until the loaf is used up. Bake the bread shells at 170°C for about 15 minutes, until golden brown.
4. Pan-fry the amaranth leaves with butter and season it with salt and pepper.
5. Place pan-fried leaves and diced lobster meat into the bread shell. Spoon over the shellfish sabayon and serve. **WD**

