



tall. “We use a mixer with a paddle,” he says, “and we move slowly, almost kneading the cheese into the flour for the batter.” Once the consistency is perfect, they add mascarpone, a light Italian triple-cream cheese, which adds moisture. Next, a thick pure vanilla extract from Madagascar is swirled into the mixture, adding a gentle sweetness. York chooses to keep mum on the filling’s remaining ingredients. For the base, he chooses a “short dough crust,” which is sweetened pie dough.

The Boheme’s fanciful cheesecake presentation keeps pace with its top-notch flavor. The dessert is enhanced with warm blueberry preserves sweetened with a touch of brown sugar (local blueberries are used when possible), crème anglais and a sprig of mint.

When it comes to visual beauty, dessert is where chefs can shine. “The sky is the limit,” York says. “The colors aren’t that vibrant on a steak or a piece of fish, but with dessert you can use the purples, the reds, the greens. You can add a rich ruby red raspberry coulis; candied, garden-fresh mint tops—even calligraphy out of white and black chocolate ganache. The possibilities are endless.”

At Victoria & Albert’s, located in Disney’s Grand Floridian Resort & Spa, vibrant colors infuse many of the restaurant’s desserts. Executive pastry chef Erich Herbitschek has created a bold, colorful dessert with his Meyer Lemon and Blood Orange “Purse” with Blackberry-Violet Sorbet. The centerpiece is a cylinder of white chocolate filled with a sweet blood orange concoction, lemon chiffon cake and Meyer lemon mousse. The contrasting sweet and tart flavors are delightful, and the plate is a splash of color with blackberry sorbet, crystallized violets and segments of blood orange. “When you get dessert, the first impression is really important,” says Herbitschek. “Of course, then it has to taste good for the guest to be really happy.”

The dessert selections at Todd English’s bluezoo in the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel take on a dramatic flair. “If you have an eye-appealing dessert, your brain is ready to eat something great,” says Laurent Branlard, executive pastry chef for the hotel. “After that, it’s extremely important to present a very nice strong flavor and different textures to make a statement beyond the first visual statement.”

While bluezoo keeps three of its desserts in rotation by season, the chocolate melange is one of two items that is a mainstay on the menu, incorporating theatrics with flavor. The popular dessert is comprised of five individual masterpieces on a long thin plate, which arrives at the table aflame. “We spray pure alcohol on top of the caramel that’s on the lime and milk chocolate crème brûlée, one of the five desserts,” Branlard says. “Then we light it on fire right before it goes into the dining room.” The presentation is exciting and impressive; and it serves to form a caramel crust atop the dessert.

Other chocolate treats on the plate include the Coffee Cremeu Napoleon with a rich, coffee-flavored cream; S’mores, a modern take on a campfire favorite, with a homemade graham cracker crust and a vanilla-flavored marshmallow filled with chocolate cream and enhanced with milk chocolate foam; and finally, the Concha Bavaroise, which is comprised of a smooth chocolate mousse, a flourless chocolate sponge cake and hazelnut crunch pop rocks. “It’s a tasting plate,” says Branlard. “This way chocolate lovers can experience many flavors.”

The pastry chefs at Orlando’s better restaurants are always stretching the boundaries of their art to create the most visually appealing and tastantalizing desserts. And they love what they do. Says Cory York of The Boheme: “We may incorporate fresh seasonal produce into our desserts, but the one thing we never take out of our recipes is love and passion, and that sets us apart.”