After studying business at the Sorbonne, in Paris, though, he worked French,” he says. “I’m a cook of ingredients. I was raised on a farm.”

Richard is understandably proud, and Bouley is not the only chef Beard Foundation Outstanding Chef, called “the most influential cooks excited and vigilant. “If they get complacent and into a rou

“One of his new restaurants was immediately a premiere dining experience, celebrity-unblinking, and sparking with four-star reviews. Yet Bouley has always been provocative, following his own path, rather than one prescribed for a celebrity chef. What chef would choose the lounge area ceiling. Through another master artisan, Bouley

Bouley opened in 1987, the resilient chef has developed and tested several concepts: Danube, an Austrian restaurant; then Secession, an Austrian-inspired restaurant. Sezone.

Bouley’s imagination is sparked in an extreme environ-ment. As the founder and owner of several restaurants, he explores the creative opportunities that come with each change. Bouley describes the possibilities, built, it rippled out, and started over, doing it again and again until they were satisfied. That was the same artistic and whimsical to revolve that is echoed in his approach to his menus.

The front doors, made of walnut, were salvaged from a nineteenth-century abbey in Provence, France. A master craftsman restored and laundered the fabric. Greg Nygard. The lounge area ceiling. Through another master artisan, Bouley

Bouley opened in 1987, the resilient chef has developed and tested several concepts: Danube, an Austrian restaurant; then Secession, an Austrian-inspired restaurant. Sezone. The original closed in 1996; the second, in 2003; the third, in 2007. Bouley opened in 1987, the resilient chef has developed and tested several concepts: Danube, an Austrian restaurant; then Secession, an Austrian-inspired restaurant. Sezone. The original closed in 1996; the second, in 2003; the third, in 2007. Bouley opened in 1987, the resilient chef has developed and tested several concepts: Danube, an Austrian restaurant; then Secession, an Austrian-inspired restaurant. Sezone.
from a long-closed quarry in France used to build Versailles. Bouley’s restaurant was the only project outside France to receive the stone. The meticulously cut stones were carefully arranged according to their color, shape, and texture to replicate intricate, historical patterns. The vestibule is lined with narrow shelves of fresh apples, producing an orchard of fragrance, a hint of surprises ahead.

Large Impressionist-style paintings, commissioned from artist Claude Chevally, grace the dining room. A massive limestone fireplace warms the interior, with tapered candles reflecting off vaulted gold-leafed ceilings and silvered walls. The room shimmers with lush fabrics, saturated colors, and lustrous glazed surfaces.

By contrast, his test kitchen research facility, with its state-of-the-art equipment, provides ongoing stimulation and education for Bouley and his staff. On occasion, food enthusiasts are invited to spend time learning the alchemy in his private sanctum. Bouley collects talent in many fields, bringing them together for collaboration. He invites other chefs, cheesemakers, vintners, and food experts from around the world for freewheeling brainstorming sessions of technique, new ingredients, and trends. A huge slate wall acts as a blackboard for doodling ideas. Oversized video screens project the work in progress, and an adjacent library contains fine culinary resources.

Bouley thrives on executing an idea. It could be a thoughtful process or a whimsical one. His immaculate kitchen is calibrated to his pace. Cooks work at a custom-made Molteni, the Ferrari of gas stoves. He communicates at times without words, directing the brigade with a searing glare, an arched eyebrow, or an impatient gesture.

One now-famous chef chuckles as he recalls his first day in the kitchen when Bouley instructed him to talk to a fish. It was the chef’s metaphor to explain that every fish, like every person, is different. A cook must be sensitive to nuance and communication is essential, extending to all foods. He insists that cooks look at, and consider, each product. He tries to learn from every situation.

Bouley says, “IT’S ABOUT REACHING A POINT OF TAKING YOUR CLASSICAL CULINARY INFLUENCES AND DEVELOPING A VOICE OF YOUR OWN. IT IS ABOUT UNDERSTANDING HOW TO ENHANCE THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF A FRUIT OR A PIECE OF FISH, RATHER THAN OBSCURING IT WITH INAPPROPRIATE HERBS AND SPICES.”

The kitchen has always dictated his personal life, so it’s fitting that Bouley met his wife on the day that Danube closed. Nicole Bartelme, a Rhode Island School of Design graduate, runs the philanthropic organization TriBeCa Native, founded the TriBeCa Film Festival, and has a hand in Bouley’s restaurant projects. “David and I have very similar tastes, so we work very well together,” says the artist and photographer.

“Restaurants start when the guests sit down at the tables, and cooking can only be considered an art once the customer has finished the last bite,” Bouley believes, already thinking ahead to his next creation.
1. Soften the gelatin sheets in cold water to cover, about 15 minutes.

2. To a medium saucepan over low heat, add the dashi, soy sauce, mirin, and sake.

3. Remove the gelatin and squeeze out excess water. Add it to the dashi mixture and stir until the gelatin has melted. Pour the mixture into a 9-by-5-inch terrine mold. Let it stand at room temperature until almost set.

4. Arrange the sea urchin on the surface of the gelatin in the terrine. Refrigerate until firm.

5. In a bowl, whisk together the crème fraîche, yuzu, shallots, and lime juice. Season with salt and pepper.

6. Put the chives in a blender or food processor and purée. With the motor running, add the oil to the blender in a stream. Continue to purée until smooth. Season with salt and pepper.

To assemble

1. Spoon the yuzu crème fraîche onto each serving plate. Unmold and cut the terrine into 1-inch-thick slices and place 1 slice on each plate. Garnish with chive oil, kinome, and caviar and serve.

**NOTE:** Chive oil is another wonderful—and colorful—garnish for this dish. To make chive oil, purée 1 cup of coarsely chopped fresh chives in a blender or food processor. With the machine running, stream in 3/4 cup soybean or grapeseed oil and process until the mixture is smooth. Season the oil with salt and pepper to taste. Drizzle the oil over the plated terrine slices.

**SERVES 6**
MUSHROOM PURÉE

1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil
1 pound porcini or royal trumpet mushrooms, thinly sliced
Salt
Freshly ground black pepper

FLAN

3 small brown eggs
1 cup Dashi (page 127)
6 fresh kinome (prickly ash leaves)

DASHI SAUCE

2 tablespoons kudzu powder
1 cup Dashi (page 127)
1 teaspoon mirin
1 tablespoon fresh ginger juice (squeezed from grated fresh ginger)
2 tablespoons light soy sauce
2 to 4 ounces jumbo lump crabmeat, plus extra for garnish
4 to 6 ounces black truffle pâté

PORCINI FLAN WITH DUNGENESS CRAB AND BLACK TRUFFLE DASHI

To make the dashi sauce

1. In a small bowl, stir the kudzu into 1 ounce of cold water until smooth. In a small saucepan, heat the dashi until warm and add the mirin. Add the kudzu mixture and stir until the mixture thickens. Add the ginger juice and soy sauce.
2. Add the crabmeat to a bowl and add dashi mixture to cover. In a second bowl, combine the remaining dashi mixture with the pâté. Cover and keep warm.

To make the mushroom purée

1. In a large sauté pan, warm the olive oil and cook the mushrooms until tender. Purée the mushrooms in a food processor and season with salt and pepper.

To make the flan

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F. Whisk the eggs, then pour in the dashi and blend. Pass the mixture through a strainer, then divide it among six 4-ounce ramekins. Set the ramekins in a roasting pan or large baking dish and add hot water to the pan to come about halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Cover the pan and bake until the tip of a knife inserted into the center of the flans comes out clean, 8 to 10 minutes.

To serve

1. Spread 1 tablespoon of the mushroom purée on each cooked flan. Add a 1-inch-thick layer of the dashi-crabmeat mixture on top of each flan and finish with a 1/4-inch-thick layer of the dashi-pâté mixture. Garnish with additional crabmeat and the kinome. Serve warm.

NOTE: If you do not eat crab, the recipe works very well with asparagus or corn instead.

SERVES 6