

# FOOD ARTS

AT THE RESTAURANT AND HOTEL FOREFRONT

## Front Burner

EDITED BY BEVERLY STEPHEN



**Edible Pearls** New York City – Christine Le Tennier was busy debuting her Flavor Pearls at the Summer Fancy Food Show here in June. With a selection of these “jewels” in his pantry, a chef or mixologist can lay instant claim to the molecular gastronomy panache popularized by **Ferran Adriá**’s spherification technique.

Le Tennier, a Brittany native who’s been in the seaweed business for 20 years, started manufacturing the Flavor Pearls in France a little over a year ago. They are packaged in small jars like caviar. Indeed, the truffle pearls look deceptively like caviar, which she describes as a “surprise for the customer”, who will be expecting a fishy rather than an earthy taste. So far the pearls – some with liquid centers, some with gel centers—come in 30 different flavors: violet, caramel, passion fruit, pink grapefruit, hot spicy, vinegar and shallots, etc.

The pearls are made by dropping fruit and flower syrups or concentrated juices, essential oils, sauces, vinegars, liqueurs, etc. into a sodium alginate solution, which results in spherification. “The main ingredient is seaweed”, she explains. “The inside can be a sauce, vinegar, a fruit puree. Champagne didn’t work, but Grand Marnier works very well”.

She recommends using the Tabasco pearls for a deconstructed Bloody Mary, topping oysters with the

vinegar and shallot pearls, and dropping Blue Curacao pearls into Champagne, which results in a “Blue coupe of Champagne—very popular in France right now”. The other thing the French are loving, she reports, is vodka and caramel shooters, which are made with caramel syrup but can be augmented with caramel pearls.

Le Tennier has a knack for seeing a niche that will appeal to chefs and filling it, as she did first with seaweed and now with the Flavor Pearls. The modernist French chef **Thierry Marx** (**Mandarin Oriental**, Paris) will write the introduction to her new book on seaweed and modern scientific gastronomy.

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