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Online

The Morning After: Taste of the Nation



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Restaurant profits may be down across the board, but Taste of the Nation drew even bigger crowds this year than last, according to Share Our Strength founder Bill Shore: "Turnout has actually increased. A lot of nonprofits are struggling but people are reading about hunger more than they ever have before, and there are more people on food stamps and using food banks. We've actually seen an increase in our revenue in the past six months compared to last year so this will be a record year."

Fighting childhood hunger by binging on Boston's finest culinary concoctions might seem as ironic as showing up to an Earth Day celebration in a Hummer. But Share Our Strength, which has raised more than \$70 million since 1988, isn't all oysters and prosecco. In addition to fancy pants events, the organization also runs a nutrition education program called Operation Frontline, which teaches low-income families how to prepare affordable but healthy meals. Even Taste of the Nation is surprisingly accessible by foodie standards. With 70 restaurants and 40 wineries participating, you more than recoup the cost of general admission (\$85 pre-sale), especially if you have a poor grasp of portion control.

Some food highlights: the black truffle syrup in veal stock with potato froth, pictured above, at the [Gargoyles On The Square](#) booth (upon our third helping, the restaurant's PR rep took a look at us and said, "Oh, it's you again."); the sweet, dense, and spicy Kobe meatballs at [Vox Populi](#) (recently featured on [Citysearch's 3 Buck Bites](#)); the scallops from [Hamersley's Bistro](#), by far the most coveted item of the evening; [Tremont 647's](#) ballsy, spicy Mexican chocolate mini-cupcakes (pastry chef Katherine Craddock, formerly of Excelsior, has barely been with Tremont 647 a month and she's already got them hooked on [Taza](#), a source of fair trade chocolate in Somerville, which delivers by bike to the restaurant. "It costs about the same as UPS, and it's usually next-day service."). Also intriguing: the ice luge (sponsor unknown) at the front and center of the convention floor. Apparently, it was a booze receptacle for many a Bostonian.



Tremont 647's cupcakes

In the spirit of the recession, we asked chefs to come up with low-cost versions of the dishes they prepared for Taste of the Nation. Their answers, and some more food porn, are after the jump.

Joseph Margate, [Clink](#) (original dish: shrimp and sea urchin with citrus consomme)

"Get some baby shrimp, boil briefly or saute in butter, chill it, and put it in little glasses. Add a little olive oil and then put some orange juice in it."



Margate's shrimp dish

Jodi Arnold, [Rialto](#) (original dish: spring salad with a local mozzarella cheese)

"Seasonal vegetables tend to be affordable. Blanch them, toss with a little lemon sauce, and serve them with a seasoned mozzarella cheese.

Jason Santos, Gargoyles on the Square (original dish: black truffle syrup in veal stock with potato froth)

"Buy good quality beef stock and cook it down with butter. Take really light mashed potatoes and whip them with butter. It's essentially mashed potatoes with gravy, just served in an elegant way."

Gordon Hamersley, Hamersley's Bistro (original dish: seared sea scallops with a salad of spring vegetables)

"Monkfish has got that same basic texture as scallops. It's sweet, they cook more or less the same way, and if you can cut them the right way, you can even pretend they're scallops. There's a reason monkfish used to be called the poor man's lobster!"

Bridget M. Kelly, [Burtons Grill](#) (original dish: gluten-free Mediterranean salad tossed with Vermont feta cheese in oregano vinaigrette, with grilled chicken or shrimp)

"Take some farm fresh vegetables and mix with your preference for olives. [Burtons' version featured

kalamatas]. Using any sort of Mediterranean flavored vinaigrette that you can find at the store would be lovely. The key is to buy great cheese."

So if you don't feel like elbowing other Bostonians aside for slices of fish on crackers, try replicating these Taste of the Nation dishes in your own kitchen. All you'll be missing is an ice luge.