

## Brooks Headley Italian Pastry - New York Culinary Experience, The International Culinary

I rolled up my sleeves to mix and bake Italian pastry with **Chef Brooks Headley** of restaurant [Del Posto](#) as part of the fourth annual [New York Culinary Experience](#) hosted by [New York magazine](#) and [The International Culinary Center](#).

Being Italian, I jumped at the opportunity to learn how to bake different Italian pastries. On April 28, 2012, I had the opportunity to learn from Pastry Chef Brooks Headley as part of the two-day New York Culinary Experience hosted by New York magazine and The International Culinary Center in New York. The 2-hour 15 minute class took the students through the making of a savory, sweet dessert, Grilled Eggplant with Chocolate Chip Ricotta, Fregolata, and Chocolate, as each student had the opportunity to get their hands sticky in some dough; the session was conducted by Pastry Chef Brooks Headley and Pastry Sous Chef Roger Rodriguez.

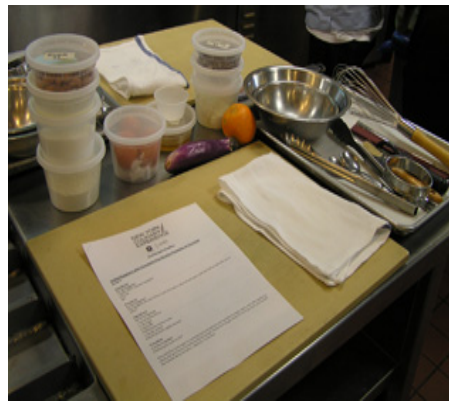
Chef Headley likes to make desserts that obviously taste great, but are visually different from anything you may expect. In concurrence with his owners who like desserts that draw "oohs and ahs" when presented, Chef Headley's creations deliver. To read the recipes for the exact measurement of ingredients used, please read [Chef Brooks Headley's recipes](#) in the [Chefs' Recipes](#) section.



**Edward Nesta and Chef Brooks Headley**

Each student had their own workspace, utensils, and their own Japanese eggplant, which are small in length and width, and tender. Any opportunity to pull out the big knife and do some slicing is a fun time. So, when we were instructed to cut the eggplant into thin slices and roll them in olive oil and salt, I brandished my knife and worked on my eggplant; you do not peel the eggplant for this recipe.

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### Workspace

The eggplant slices were collected and the next step was to grill them lightly until soft and until a nice grill line formed across the eggplant. Next, we got our hands ready to mix up the cookie dough portion of the recipe, the Fregolata. Separating the egg yolks drew some conversation as chef suggested using your hand as a sift to separate the yolk from the white. I like to crack the egg and pour it back-and-forth between the half shells, but we used the "hand sift" to separate our eggs.



### Sifting egg through hand

We mixed the dry ingredients with the wet ingredients until it reached a crumbly-textured dough. The interesting twist was how chef proposed we lay the dough on the baking sheet. He did not want perfectly round cookies, instead, he had us use a 5.5" ring where we randomly laid the dough in the ring, and moved the ring around the baking sheet until we had used up all of our dough. We placed the cookies into the oven and moved to the next step.



### Cookies placed on cookie sheet

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With our eggplant grilled and left to cool, we were ready to tackle the honey-vinegar glaze, mixing the chocolate olive oil sauce, and making the chocolate chunk ricotta. Each step in the process drew some comments as we ventured further and further from some of the student's dessert comfort zone by integrating savory ingredients into the process. The chocolate chunks were from blocks of 60% chocolate, which is the preferred chocolate of Chef Headley; being a good chef, I "sampled" a few of the chocolate chunks before they ended up in the ricotta mix, I love dark chocolate!

The cookies were done and we pulled them from the oven to let them cool. We were now ready to start the plating of this interesting dessert. We brushed the eggplant with the honey-vinegar glaze and laid them overlapping across the middle of the dish. The next step was adding a dollop of the chocolate chunk-ricotta on the top of the glazed eggplant. We followed that up by crumbling a cookie over the top of the dessert, and the pièce de résistance was drizzling the chocolate-olive oil sauce over the dessert and around the plate.



### Preparing Dessert

To say that this was a different dessert via the ingredients, would be an understatement, to say that this

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dessert was delicious was a bigger understatement, and to top it off, there were left over whole cookies that we could snack on later.

Chef Headley showed that melding savory and sweet ingredients to make incredible desserts is just the tip of the iceberg as to what he does as a pastry chef. With this said, I will be looking for future opportunities to bake with Chef Brooks Headley.

As there was time left in the class, we improvised and Pastry Sous Chef Roger Rodriguez, who loves to work with chocolate, mixed up a chocolate sauce to be used in the creation of a unique chocolate centerpiece. To expedite the cooling of the sauce before he poured it into his hand made mold, he poured it on a cold marble surface, and using a metal spatula, he continually mixed and moved the sauce to cool it down, but just until it thickened a bit so he could pour it into his hand-made mold.



**Chef pouring chocolate into mold**

The mold he used was a bowl of ice cubes with an orange in the middle. The orange was removed, and the result was an inverted bowl where he then poured the chocolate. He let the mixture cool for a few minutes and then removed the chocolate centerpiece and tapped off any ice that was stuck to the chocolate, and the result was a free-formed decoration that would make a unique and tasty centerpiece. When the chocolate centerpieces are used for events at Del Posto, the owners enjoy seeing pieces of the chocolate decoration scattered over the table, which means that the customers had a fun time and enjoyed the dessert.

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Pastry Sous Chef Rodriguez pulling ice off chocolate mold



Chocolate centerpiece - DIG IN!!

To read the recipes and draw on the exact measurement of ingredients we used, please see [Chef Brooks Headley's recipes](#) in the [Chefs' Recipes](#) section.

Read about other classes in the [Gastronomy](#) section and interviews and recipes from the other classes in the [Chefs' Recipes](#) section.

Visit [Luxury Experience's Facebook](#) page to listen to interviews with the chefs and see more photos from the event. [www.Facebook.com/LuxuryExperience](http://www.Facebook.com/LuxuryExperience)

To attend the [New YorkCulinary Experience 2013](#), please visit the [New Yorkmagazine](#) website: [www.NYmag.com/nyce](http://www.NYmag.com/nyce).

Regarding taking classes throughout the year with the excellent chef instructors at [The International Culinary Center](#) at their New York, California, or Italian Campuses, please visit the website: [www.InternationalCulinaryCenter.com](http://www.InternationalCulinaryCenter.com).

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