

## SEARED BEEF SALAD

One of the many exciting challenges of a project like ours at the Firehouse is to create a menu concept that evolves throughout the day, from breakfast, brunch, and lunch through to dinner. We are also a neighborhood restaurant, with regulars who dine several times a week, so our breakfast and lunch menus need to have healthy and tasty dishes that can tempt them. This salad is one of the favorites on our lunch menu. The inspiration for the dish came from the lovely modern Thai restaurants I discovered during my time in San Francisco.

Serves 4

### INGREDIENTS

for the fried fennel:

Grapeseed oil, for deep-frying

1 fennel bulb, outer layers removed and base trimmed

1¼ cups/200 g rice flour

Maldon sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

for the steak marinade:

2 teaspoons hon dashi

½ cup/125 ml water

½ cup/125 ml mirin

2½ tablespoons low-salt soy sauce

2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil

1 teaspoon rice vinegar

2 teaspoons fish sauce

Juice of ¼ lemon

½ red chile, seeded and thinly sliced

½ ounce/12 g fresh ginger, peeled and thinly sliced

About 1½ pounds/650 g Galician Solomillo sirloin (in one piece), or other high-quality sirloin

for the carrot dressing:

½ cup/125 ml grapeseed oil

½ ounce/15 g garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 ounce/30 g red chiles, finely chopped

5½ ounces/160 g grated carrot

1 tablespoon fish sauce

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Juice of 1 lime

for the salad:

2 fennel bulbs, outer layers removed, base trimmed, and bulb thinly shaved  
14 ounces/400 g sugar snap peas, topped and tailed  
11 ounces/320 g arugula, washed  
5½ ounces/160 g watercress  
7 ounces/200 g green onions, half thinly sliced, half charred on a grill or grill pan, then chopped  
1 cucumber, shaved into thin slices  
¾ ounce/20 g mint, leaves picked  
¾ ounce/20 g basil, leaves picked  
¾ ounce/20 g cilantro, leaves picked

### **FRY THE FENNEL**

Place the oil in a deep saucepan and heat until it reaches 355°F/180°C. Shave the fennel into very thin slices with a mandoline. Dust generously with rice flour, then remove the excess flour and deep-fry for 3 minutes, until crispy and golden brown. Remove from the oil with a slotted spoon, drain on paper towels, and season well with salt and pepper. Set aside until ready to serve.

### **MAKE THE STEAK MARINADE**

Pour the hon dashi, water, mirin, and soy sauce into a saucepan and place over low heat. Bring to a boil and simmer for about 10 minutes, until it has reduced by a third. Remove from the heat and whisk in the sesame oil, vinegar, fish sauce, and lemon juice. Add the sliced chiles and ginger and blend until smooth with a stick blender.

### **MARINATE THE BEEF**

Keep half the marinade aside for dressing the salad. Place the beef in the remaining marinade for 45 minutes to 2 hours.

### **MAKE THE CARROT DRESSING**

Heat the grapeseed oil in a frying pan over low heat, add the garlic, and fry until fragrant but not browned. Pour the garlic oil through a fine-mesh sieve into a heat-proof bowl, then return the oil to the frying pan, add the chiles and fry for about 2 minutes, until fragrant. Remove from the heat, add the grated carrot, and toss it in the fragrant oil until softened. Transfer the fragrant grated carrot to a bowl and add the fish sauce, olive oil, and lime juice. Set aside at room temperature, uncovered.

### **COOK THE BEEF**

Drain the beef from its marinade (discarding the marinade). Place a frying pan over high heat and sear the beef briefly on all sides until it is covered with a nice crust but is still rare on the inside. Put the beef into the remaining marinade while it rests, then cut it into thin slices just before serving, reserving the remaining marinade to dress the salad. The beef should be raw in the middle and juicy.

### **SERVE**

Mix all the salad ingredients (except the herbs) together with the beef. Toss generous

amounts of carrot dressing and steak marinade through the salad and garnish with the crispy fennel and fresh herbs on top. Serve in a big bowl and everyone can dig in.

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