Descriptions of all the amuse-bouches shown at left at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE119

Dolce de calabaza (Mexican pumpkin candy) with buttermilk blue cheese and an aged-balsamic reduction, from L'Etoile in Madison, Wisconsin.

Photo by: Liliana Calfee Miller

And to Begin...

WE LOVE amuse-bouches, those one- or two-bite treats that many chefs present to diners before the first course as a way to entice the appetite. Often as much fun to look at as they are to eat, such morsels (whose name translates loosely from the French as please the mouth) grew out of the nouvelle cuisine movement of the 1970s, in which French-trained chefs built meals out of multiple small, colorful courses. When we asked chefs around the country to send us examples of their signature amuse-bouches (shown at left), we found a range of culinary philosophies represented; some see them as a means of recrafting surplus materials, while others approach them with equal reverence as an entrée. "Amuse-bouches are an opportunity to push boundaries," says Daniel Humm, executive chef at Eleven Madison Park in New York City, whose amuse-bouches include an assemblage of lobster,

Descriptions of all the amuse-bouches shown at left at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE119

lemongrass, and curry (shown left; fourth row, second from right). At Restaurant Tallent in Bloomington, Indiana, chef David Tallent encourages line cooks to pack their creations (such as vegetarian muffulettas; shown third row, second from right) with as many taste sensations as possible. But Rick Tramonto, chef at the acclaimed Chicago restaurant Tru (where starters include caramelized onion tarts; shown third row, far left) and author of the cookbook *Amuse-Bouche* (Random House, 2002), perhaps sums up the trifle's significance the best. "It's my way of saying, 'Welcome, I hope you enjoy your meal.'" —*Jayanthi Daniel*

NICK PEYTON; MIKE MCCARTHY; KATIE SELVA; CHRISTINE BARBOUR; LARA KASTNER; KUNIKO YAGI; DANIEL ORR; TARA WING-LOFARO; TIM TURNER; NINA HUEY; CHRISTINE BARBOUR; TIM TURNER; MIKE MCCARTHY; PONCHAREE KOUNPUNGCHART; UNION SQUARE HOSPITALITY GROUP; JOSHUA BEHAN; KATIE SELVA; LILIANE CALFEE MILLER; LARA KASTNER; TODD COLEMAN