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GLASS MENAGERIE



MASON JARS MAKE FOR BEAUTIFUL CENTREPIECES, RUSTIC CHANDELIERS AND NIFTY CANDY JARS. Camilla Wynne, however, uses them for something that only a few years ago seemed ostensibly arcane: food preservation. Raspberries, apples, beets, pickles ... she cans them all, like her grandmothers and the homemakers before her, before refrigerators and microwave dinners redefined the zeitgeist. The Master Preserver and owner of Preservation Society, the Montreal-based small-batch preservation company she founded in 2011, is among a growing number of chefs, food writers and canning instructors ushering a return to the once requisite culinary practice. But unlike her forebears, Wynne's not in it to perfect strawberry jam but rather to delight and amuse, one glass jar at a time. Case in point: her Bloody Caesar pickled celery.

"You always garnish a [Bloody] Caesar with a celery stick, so I thought, 'What if we infuse the drink into the celery itself?'" says Wynne. "It's basically my Caesar mix with a little bit more acid. It even has vodka in it."

The pastry-chef-turned-canning-connoisseur's other cocktail-inspired offerings include margarita-flavoured marmalade made with lime, tequila, triple sec and salt, and Blood and Sand — a whisky, orange and Cherry Heering-laced jam named after the robust drink. The latter is included in Wynne's latest book, *Preservation Society Home Preserves* (2015, Robert Rose Inc), a collection of recipes for jams, marmalades, chutneys and other water bath-based concoctions.

Originally from Edmonton, Wynne came to Montreal 16 years ago to study religion at McGill University when day-dreams about desserts she wanted to bake would often usurp her attention. She dropped out and instead completed a pastry course at the Institut de tourisme et d'hôtellerie du Québec (ITHQ), before training under chefs Patrice Demers and Rachel

Bassoul respectively, while simultaneously touring the world as a member of the erstwhile indie band Sunset Rubdown. In 2009, following what would ultimately be their last show, Wynne returned from Tokyo and worked for friends and fellow pastry chefs, Stéphanie Labelle at Pâtisserie Rhubarbe and Foodlab's Michelle Marek then stationed at French restaurant Laloux.

A year and a half later, realizing the band was not getting back together, Wynne, who had taken to canning in her early 20s, branched out on her own. "At the time, there was nothing else like it," she recalls. Wynne, who also studied artisanal preserving at the Institut de technologie agroalimentaire du Québec in Sainte-Hyacinthe and is one of only two Master Preservers nationwide, the program of which is offered at Cornell University in New York, taught home canning workshops before launching her own product line. Her playful artisanal canned goods, often made with local ingredients, are now sold online and at various retailers throughout Canada, and recently the US. Inspired by everything from Atlanta's staple sweet tea to renowned French pastry chef Pierre Hermé's couture confections, Wynne's preserves buck tradition.

"I worked in molecular gastronomy restaurants and what I always thought was cool about that was, for instance, when a deconstructed black forest cake first showed up in a restaurant, you're like, 'Oh, that's so cool.' We can take these familiar flavours and break them apart and put them back together in another way," says Wynne. "When I started making preserves, I wanted to do that."

Whether to eat healthier or to enjoy summer produce all year round, Wynne, herself seduced by the similarities between pastry cooking and preserving, attributes the resurgence of the old-timey practice to a sense of longing. "I think a lot of people are nostalgic for the taste of those things," says Wynne. "It feels good to reconnect to making your own food." ✦