



New-Nordic they call the current Copenhagen-based gastronomic trend that's driving high-end cuisine from a decade of mass-molecular proliferation to the joy of foraging in fields and sourcing from shallow seas and beaches consuming organic and now biodynamic produce.

Not only does Copenhagen have the world's best restaurant, Noma, courtesy of the San Pellegrino awards, this cradle of tomorrow's cuisine now has the world's best chef, 36-year-old Rasmus Kofoed of Geranium, who in January won the gold medal at the 2011 Bocuse d'Or in the French city of Lyon, a sort of Olympic Games for the chef-set sponsored by luxury brands like Perrier and Hublot. Kofoed had previously won bronze in 2005 and silver in 2007 at the same competition.

Kofoed trained at the Hotel D'Angleterre in Copenhagen [he was sacked for refusing to serve 'shooting star' - a form of Scandinavian fast food], and the two Michelin star Scholteshof in Belgium before returning to his native Copenhagen and setting up Geranium three years ago with Soren Ledet, formerly of Noma. The restaurant received its first Michelin star soon after opening but abruptly closed in 2009 following the bankruptcy of an investor. Kofoed and Ledet spent a year sourcing a new space for Geranium that has just reopened on the 8th floor in Fælledparken (Common Gardens) in the centre of Copenhagen, a convivial spot for eyeing the city's green copper roofs and the distant windmills of Oeresund.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Danish chef Rasmus Kofoed from Geranium restaurant in Copenhagen has just been named the world's best

What's the best dish you've ever eaten?

I don't remember as a customer, but when I was small I went to a private school and we ate porridge on Saturday mornings. I always remember the flavour and the taste of it.

Who is your mentor?

The one that gives me the passion is a Danish chef called Jens Peter Kolbeck, and another inspiration is a

Photography by Claes Bech Poulsen



“I don’t know what Ferran does with a carrot ...”

baker, pastry chef, who bakes biodynamic breads that are amazing. He’s very true to what he does and I like that. He’s called Jørn ussing Larsen.

Why the name Geranium?

It’s green, it’s alive, it’s living, it has this beautiful smell, that’s what the kitchen and the restaurant are about. It’s not that we’re using the flower that much in the food, it’s more like a symbol in the kitchen.

Symbols, concepts seem very important to you at Geranium?

I’m using very natural products, biodynamic/organic ingredients and then I turn them into a high level kitchen cuisine. I’m not just serving a carrot but the taste of the carrot. I keep the natural flavour and taste, and turn it a little bit my own way. So I start from nature and transform it.

How does that differ from what Ferran Adrià does with a carrot at El Bulli?

I don’t know what Ferran does with a carrot ... [laughter] ... it’s a long time since I’ve been there. But I just do what I feel. The dishes I create are very original, close to the seasons and to nature. It’s the modern Danish kitchen, so it’s very light, very fresh, and uses a lot of ingredients that can be found not far from the restaurant. We don’t use overseas products. It’s what we find in Copenhagen.

What are you preparing this morning as I speak to you?

What’s new from a seasonal perspective?

We’ve just had the first lumpfish roe today, which has gone on the menu for tonight, so we’ll make a dish with

horseradish and dill, frozen crab juice, and serve it with the roe. We also have a biodynamic cabbage that I’ll serve with some different herbs this evening. The herbs change a little every day in fact. Today there’s also brown fennel, chervil and some other things. We get the herbs from a place called Kiselgården in Copenhagen.

Did you go the edible flowers route? Is there much to do with edible flowers in fact?

It changed. They were more popular a few years ago. If you have them now, it is just for colour and helps express a dish in the way you want. In the season you have onion flowers, elderberry flowers, they have a lot of aroma and perfume and that’s important. I pickle a lot of flowers. I put them in vinegar and sugar during summertime, so I

can use them in the winter.

Three years ago you were smoking salmon in a glass jar in front of the customer. Are you still doing that now?

That was a former life. I’m not doing that at the moment. I smoke potatoes - I like to incorporate the smoke in the dishes, it’s common in the north, so we have very small potatoes, glaze them with butter and a little bit of chicken stock and it gives more to the potatoes I think.

In fact, what the media call New Nordic is old, isn’t it? It’s cooking methods that Vikings were using?

I can get some inspiration from the Old Danish kitchen, but not that much. They used to cook everything - especially vegetables - too much. My food’s certainly more healthy and fresh and lighter than the Vikings ever was.

Are you and René Redzepi and all the rising Danish chefs friends or foes?

Copenhagen is a very small city. A lot of the chefs are friends; we see each other sometimes and have a beer, a meal or a coffee. But we are also competitors, we want to be the best, all of us. We go to each other’s restaurants not to get inspiration for a particular dish, but just because it can make you start thinking, it’s stimulating. If I eat a good and creative meal and it touches me, it makes me think about food. It’s food for thought. That’s the best point about it.

What’s your opinion about food bloggers?

You need the media to help, but I think food bloggers often have too many ambitions; when they go to a restaurant they don’t always sit and relax. They focus too much on taking the right picture and I don’t think that makes them relaxed when they eat. After all, that’s what eating is about. You need to be calm to have a good experience. If you’re stressed it won’t be very nice.

What’s your favourite food?

Porridge; with a lot of structure from grains, cold milk, a little jam, good bread and a piece of cheese, no butter. - GEORGINA SCOTT



Geranium co-founders Søren Ledet (left) and world’s best chef Rasmus Kofoed

