



# INTRODUCTION to

# THE BLUE TOMATO

THE INSPIRATIONS BEHIND THE CUISINE OF ALAN WONG

On a school tour on the Big Island, a sixth-grader asked me a simple question about ketchup. That's where the concept of the Blue Tomato came from, and you'll read about it in the pages that follow. But the Blue Tomato is much more than just a new color for ketchup. *The Blue Tomato* was one of many possibilities for the title of this book, but once it stuck, it took on a life of its own. For me, the Blue Tomato—in cooking and in life—is all about:

**Possibilities**—unleashing the potential in each of us to be the best that we can be, whether striving for excellence or following a dream

**Creativity and innovation**—the process of trying a new idea and discovering something truly unique

**Courage**—overcoming fears and preconceptions

**Exploration**—searching for answers and thinking out of the box

**Discovery**—the thrill of the Aha! moment when that light bulb goes on overhead

**Faith**—in ourselves, and in the promise of the people around us

**Awareness**—seeing what can be done, what is being done, and what we can bring to the table to do it better

**Change**—embracing it, growing and evolving

**Perseverance and stamina**—staying focused until the 25th hour, when the defining moment finally comes (and only happens because you stayed in the game)

**Curiosity**—asking why, and realizing that the answer can be something totally unexpected that you find along the way

And all this from a kid's question about ketchup! The fact is, possibilities always increase when your awareness is heightened and you're exposed to the amazing things being accomplished all over the world. The Blue Tomato resides in all of us, and it really can make this world a better place for us to live. The Blue Tomato is the idea that anything is possible—whether you're cooking in our kitchen or traveling the world. Remember: Once imagination stretches your brain, it will never be the same size again!

I started in this business as a dishwasher and a cook and have been a chef and a restaurateur now for more than 30 years. I tried to be the fastest and most efficient dishwasher I could be, and then I kept my eyes and ears open, working a succession of 10 different positions in one hotel in five years. It was a good model for me—to be the best I could be at each position in order to climb to the next one, striving for improvement each time.

A chef must evolve, must look around and look ahead, focusing on doing the best possible job at each step. This holds true outside the kitchen too. Traveling and exploring, cooking in kitchens all over the world, has introduced me to incredible new ingredients and culinary techniques, all the while feeding and satiating my curiosity. I hope this book does for you what food and cooking have done for me.



Aloha,

Alan Wong



## HAND SIGNALS

# THE BLUE TOMATO

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At our staff meetings and tastings, we use our hands to explain how two flavors are working together. As an example, consider the balance of fats and acids. Clasp your hands together with fingers interlocked as if saying grace. This represents a perfect marriage.

Now, hold your hands parallel, palms facing each other, fingers stiff and pointing upward. Touch your fingertips together to form a sort of teepee. To me, this indicates that the two ingredients touch together at that point on my tongue and don't let go; it stays there.

Make a fist with your right hand, then cover it with your left. Now your left hand is smothering the flavor inside, as fats often do. So if they're hiding that flavor and you want more of it to come out, then you reduce the fat or increase the acid in that ingredient.

When my staff gathers for a tasting, I ask everyone to hold up their hands in one of these ways to describe what they thought of the dish. Most of the time, the responses vary, and I ask them to explain what they tasted. Ultimately, the only "right" answer is your own answer. The important thing is that now you're thinking about it—it's as simple as that.





# Wagyu-Wrapped 'Ahi with Port Wine Sauce

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*Reef and beef? Surf and turf? Not really. In Japan, the tuna on your plate can be amazing. Ōtoro, chu-toro and toro are different grades of fatty tuna belly that melt in your mouth—as decadent as butter, and very rich. Japanese beef, or Wagyu, is similarly decadent—a luxury that's beyond the budget of the average Japanese citizen. Wrapping very thin layers of Japanese Wagyu around Hawaiian yellowfin tuna, then searing and partially roasting it—while being careful not to overcook the 'ahi—may not be quite the same as eating ōtoro in Japan, but it sure can make you think of it.*

### 1 The Beef

6 very thin slices Wagyu beef sirloin (or good-quality marbled beef)

### 2 The Port Wine Sauce

1 cup (238 grams) port wine

### 3 The 'Ahi

1" x 1" x 3" block sashimi-grade 'ahi, about 3 oz. (85 grams)

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

2 tablespoons canola oil

### 4 The Fern Shoots

Kosher salt

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup (30 grams) fern shoots

#### The Shiso

6 shiso leaves (4 grams)

### 5 The Cooked Vegetables

1 tablespoon (10 grams) minced shallot

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup (30 grams)  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch julienned won bok

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup (30 grams)  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces maitake mushrooms

### 1 Preparing the Beef

Freeze the beef. When the beef is half-frozen, slice thinly using a meat slicer. If a meat slicer is not available, ask a butcher to slice the beef as thinly as prosciutto. In fact, prosciutto can also be substituted for the beef.

### 2 Reducing the Port Wine

In a small saucepan, bring the port wine to a boil over medium-high heat. When it boils, reduce the heat to medium and simmer until the port wine is syrupy and reduced by  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Remove from the heat and set aside.

### 3 Searing the 'Ahi

Season the 'ahi with salt and pepper. In a small sauté pan, heat a teaspoon of canola oil over high heat. Sear the 'ahi on all sides. Transfer to a plate and cool.

### 4 Preparing the Fern Shoots

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook the fern shoots for 1 minute. Shock the fern shoots in an ice bath to prevent further cooking and to retain the green color.

#### Preparing the Wrapped 'Ahi

Cover a sushi rolling mat with plastic wrap. Lay the beef slices on the plastic, leaving a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch border all the way around. Lay the shiso leaves on the beef, forming a rectangle of 3 leaves across and 2 down, overlapping the leaves by  $\frac{1}{3}$ . Place the 'ahi in the center of the shiso leaves. Season with salt and pepper. Tightly wrap the beef around the 'ahi; the beef should form at least 3 layers around the 'ahi when rolled. Gently remove the plastic wrap.

**Note:** Visit [www.thebluetomato.net](http://www.thebluetomato.net) for the how-to photo illustration which accompanies this recipe in the book.

### 5 Preparing the Cooked Vegetables

Heat 1 tablespoon canola oil in a sauté pan over high heat until hot. Place the beef-wrapped 'ahi seam side down in the pan; sear on all sides. Cook the beef through, but keep the 'ahi rare. This should take about 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from the pan.

In the same pan, sauté the shallots, fern shoots, won bok and mushrooms until cooked. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer the mixture to a rectangular serving plate, spooning the mixture down the center of the plate.

#### To Plate

Slice the beef-wrapped 'ahi into 12 pieces and place over the greens, overlapping slices like shingles. Drizzle the port wine reduction along both sides of the plate. Serve at once.





# Alaskan King Crab & Manila Clams with Sunomono Salad

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*In Japanese cooking, sunomono are vinegared dishes. Basically, that means pickled, and you can pickle just about anything. You can vary the sweet-to-sour ratio and the length of time you let it pickle. This type of sunomono salad has good acid and a very refreshing, palate-cleansing flavor. Dinner in a typical Japanese home commonly includes many small side dishes such as salted vegetables (tsukemono) or other sunomono dishes to accompany a meal.*

### 1 The Pickling Liquid

- 1 cup (200 grams) sugar
- 2 cups (454 grams) rice wine vinegar
- 1½ tablespoons (10 grams) finely julienned ginger

### 2 The Pickled Vegetables

- 6 small MA'O Farms breakfast radishes (50 grams), halved
- 1 12-inch English cucumber, cut into ½-inch dice
- 1 1-inch piece (28 grams) bittermelon, cut into ¼-inch slices
- Kosher salt
- 5 small (142 grams) Tokyo turnips with partial stems, quartered
- ½ cup (83 grams) small florets Romanesco (green) cauliflower
- 1" x 1" x 2½" piece (72 grams) carrot, cut into 2½-inch matchsticks, ⅜ inch thick
- ¾ cup ¼-inch slices hearts of palm (102 grams)

### The Crab and Clams

- 3 large (283 grams with shell on) Alaskan King Crab legs, shell removed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- Steamed Clams (recipe follows)

**Note:** Other seafood like shrimp, scallops, octopus, squid and abalone also work well in this salad.

### Garnish

Micro greens

### 1 Making the Pickling Liquid

In a large bowl, dissolve the sugar in the vinegar. Add the ginger.

### 2 Making the Pickled Vegetables

In another bowl, combine the radishes, cucumber and bittermelon and sprinkle generously with salt. Let the vegetables sit for 25 minutes or until they become slightly soft. Transfer the vegetables to a colander and rinse. Drain well and add the vegetables to the pickling liquid.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and add a tablespoon of salt. Have ready a large bowl of ice water. Add the turnips,

cauliflower, carrots and hearts of palm to the boiling water and blanch for 1 to 2 minutes or until tender. Using a slotted spoon, remove the vegetables from the pot and transfer to the bowl of ice water. When the vegetables are cool, drain and add to the pickling liquid.

Pickle the vegetables for about 5 hours; they will become more pickled the longer you let them sit.

### To Plate

On a large square plate, line a variety of the pickled vegetables artistically down the center, making sure to use a little of each vegetable. Place the crab and clams intermittently through the line of vegetables. Garnish with micro greens. Serve well chilled.

**Preparation Note:** To lend a more intense flavor to this dish, pickle the crab and clams. Add the seafood to the pickling liquid with the vegetables or pickle separately using a portion of the same pickling liquid.

### Steamed Clams

- ½ cup (116 grams) water
- 1 tablespoon (14 grams) sake
- 1 tablespoon (15 grams) minced garlic
- 16 ounces (454 grams) live clams

Place all ingredients in a covered saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil and cook for 5 to 7 minutes or until clams open their shells. Remove the clams from the liquid; discard any unopened clams. Remove the clam meat from their shells and chill. Cooking liquid may be reserved for use in a fish or shellfish soup or sauce.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Celebrating the Art of the Possible...

### Chef Alan Wong Releases New Cookbook: *The Blue Tomato*

Eleven years after publishing his much-acclaimed first cookbook, *Alan Wong's New Wave Luau*, Hawai'i's master chef has new stories to tell and fresh recipes to share. *The Blue Tomato: The Inspirations Behind the Cuisine of Alan Wong* features 70 memorable dishes representing the best of Chef Alan, his innovative menus and the creative chefs and staff members who make up the next generation of the Alan Wong's Restaurants family.

With stunning food photography and more than 200 individual recipes, *The Blue Tomato* reveals a glimpse into the inner workings of his restaurants and philosophies. Here are updates of time-proven favorites, inventive new ideas and contemporary twists on the multi-ethnic dishes of Hawai'i.

More than just a cookbook, *The Blue Tomato* is a testament to Alan Wong's conviction that anything is possible in today's world – with the right mix of creativity, persistence and innovative thinking. This 284-page book is a personal journey with Chef Alan, featuring some of his own photography, travel anecdotes and the sources of his inspiration. It is an indispensable guide for the home cook and, at the same time, a remarkable resource for the serious cook or professional seeking the *how* and *why* of Chef Alan's culinary techniques and creative process.

Connect with *The Blue Tomato* via Facebook ([www.facebook.com/TheBlueTomato](http://www.facebook.com/TheBlueTomato)) or via Twitter (@bluetomato808). The book's website, [www.thebluetomato.net](http://www.thebluetomato.net), includes photo galleries, recipe excerpts and behind-the-scenes videos with Chef Alan.

- more -

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## Celebrating the Art of the Possible...

### Chef Alan Wong Releases New Cookbook: *The Blue Tomato*

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A founding chef and renowned master of Hawai'i Regional Cuisine, Alan Wong is known the world over for his creative, cutting-edge cuisine. A 1996 winner of the James Beard Award, he is a tireless ambassador for Hawai'i Regional Cuisine and a leader in America's farm-to-table movement. Chef Alan has served as a judge on the *Top Chef* television show and made guest appearances on the Food Network, the Travel Channel and the Public Broadcasting System. He worked previously at The Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, Lutèce in New York City and The CanoeHouse on the Big Island of Hawai'i. In 1995 he opened Alan Wong's Restaurant – now Alan Wong's Honolulu – and, in 1999, The Pineapple Room by Alan Wong, also in Honolulu. *The Blue Tomato* is his second cookbook.

*The Blue Tomato: The Inspirations Behind the Cuisine of Alan Wong* is priced at \$40.00 (ISBN 978-1-9356900-7-8) and is available at bookstores, other retail outlets and online booksellers, or direct from the publisher immediately at [www.thebluetomato.net](http://www.thebluetomato.net).

Watermark Publishing is a Honolulu, Hawaii, book publishing company. Established in 1999, Watermark Publishing has produced a number of award-winning books – including children's books, memoirs, biographies and cookbooks – specializing in titles that celebrate Hawai'i's unique, "mixed plate" culture.

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