

## Balancing Textures: Creamy, Fresh and Crispy

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In this article, we are looking at balancing textures by examining two variations of texture forward desserts. Both desserts feature a panna cotta as the base for a variety of elements. Our desire is to create an enhanced dimension of textures: creamy, fresh and crispy.

Like many classic dessert recipes, a panna cotta with mouthfeel that is too firm or too soft in execution simply isn't enjoyable. Our Greek Yogurt Panna Cotta is thick yet creamy, offering pleasant sour and dairy notes to avoid competition with the subtle fresh ingredients of melon and green apple. The Strawberry Panna Cotta carries some strawberry and vanilla flavor to create a baseline profile that compliments the other dessert elements.

Layering fresh elements on top of the custard provides moisture and fresh flavor burst. Creating a sensation in our mouths that we experience as 'texture.' We prefer cuts that hold up on the line during service and allow the diner to taste the fruit as it lingers on the palate. For slices, a  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch is thin enough, as we've done here with the strawberries and green apples. Green apples have skin to retain texture and are dipped briefly in a mild bath of citric acid and water to retain crispness. Melons are  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch scoops reserved in a simple sugar syrup until plating. Strawberry slices are handled in a similar fashion.



Crispy garnishes are the single most important element to successful modern plated desserts. Pastry chefs seldom hesitate to add several soft items, or fruit items, but far too many desserts have fallen flat due to a lack of crispy textures. We celebrate adding as many crispy elements as possible! For our strawberry dessert, we've added a fruit tuile, a classic tuile cookie, and freeze-dried lychee filled with Delice de Bourgogne. The melon panna cotta plating includes honey tuiles and freeze-dried Manuka honey pieces. The whole lychees and Manuka honey shards are sourced from Purely Artisan Foods based in San Diego. We prefer working with whole freeze-dried ingredients, as they offer more character to the desserts. They also lack the de-caking agents sometimes found in freeze-dried powders. Visit <https://www.purelyartisan.com/> for more information on their impressive selection.

To keep things light and fresh for the diner, we've used the strawberry syrup reserved from our fruit preparation. We then add freshly hydrated basil seeds which are visually reminiscent of strawberry seeds. Micro lemon grass and dianthus flowers are additional fresh components, both grown at <https://www.chefs-garden.com/>. Sauce on the melon panna cotta is made from an intensely flavorful green apple puree made by the French Cooperative Sicoly located on the Monts du Lyonnais, hills of the Rhone Valley region in France (<https://www.sicoly.com/>). Due to a state of the art cold vacuum process, the apples retain their beautiful color, texture and taste.

When creating dessert menus, consider the balance of textures to create delicious, compelling work that endures bite after bite. Favor multiple crispy textures and bring moisture to your desserts through multiple crispy garnishes, fresh fruits, sauces and syrups.