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### Chicago fans of foie gras protest city's force-fed ban

By Kari Lydersen, *Washington Post* | August 24, 2006

CHICAGO -- Don't come between foodies and their foie gras.

That was the message sent by Chicago diners who dug into foie gras dishes Monday, on the eve of the city's ban on foie gras. High-end restaurants had special foie gras tastings to protest the ban, and even a few down-home sandwich and pizza joints added it to their menus for the occasion.

At the 676 Restaurant & Bar on Chicago's Magnificent Mile, chef Robert Gadsby topped foie gras with Pop Rocks candies, wrapped it in prosciutto, and blended it into hot chocolate as part of an "Outlaw Dinner" that also featured such controversial ingredients as wild morels, absinthe, unpasteurized imported cheese, and hemp seeds. While the seven-course, \$140 dinner was completely legal, all the ingredients have been banned at some point.

Gadsby called the foie gras ban ridiculous.

"What's next?" asked Gadsby, who also hosted an Outlaw Dinner last month at his Noe Restaurant & Bar in Los Angeles, where foie gras will be subject to a statewide ban by 2012. "They'll outlaw truffles, then lobster, beluga caviar, oysters. There are diners who eat to fill a hunger urge, and there are diners who eat to be dazzled. If you take away the luxury ingredients, how can you dazzle them?"

The Chicago City Council passed the foie gras ban in April, joining California and several European countries that outlawed foie gras, alleging animal cruelty. Foie gras, French for "fatty liver," is produced by force-feeding grain to ducks and geese until their liver enlarges as much as 10 times the organ's normal size.

"This isn't telling people what to eat; this is basically a statement against cruelty to animals," said Alderman Joe Moore, sponsor of the ordinance. "This is a product of animal torture, pure and simple. It doesn't need to be on menus in Chicago."

Chicago restaurant luminaries Charlie Trotter and Rick Tramonto agree and have both vowed not to serve the liver dish.

But others want to fight. On Tuesday, two restaurant groups sued, alleging the ban violates the state constitution and will cost the city \$18 million in lost revenue and taxes.

The city Department of Public Health will respond to initial reports of foie gras sales with a letter; if there is a second report, health inspectors will pay a visit. "We're not exactly chomping at the bit to enforce this," said the department's Tim Hadac. "It's an animal rights issue; it doesn't appear to relate to human health in any way."■

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