

RISE OF THE CAVIAR BAR



BY AVA ROOSEVELT

Attempting to enlighten the South Florida Opulence audience about the culinary merits of caviar would be like asking Christian Dior to shorten your skirt.

Yet, for newcomers to the exclusive world of caviar, you might be interested to know that sturgeon is one of the most ancient freshwater fish living today – dating back some 200 million years. It can take a female “sea dinosaur” sturgeon, depending on the species, from five to 20 years to produce the roe for caviar. It’s a daunting statistic and a cause célèbre of its exuberant price.

THE CAVIAR TRIO

There are three traditional types of caviar. The scarcest is Beluga, followed by Osetra and then by Sevruga. Beluga, from the *Huso huso* sturgeon, is mostly found in the Caspian Sea – the world’s largest saltwater lake, adjacent to Iran and Russia. It can bring \$35,000 a pound, but because Beluga caviar is critically

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endangered, the United States has banned its importation.

Osetra and Sevruga are available in the states. The eggs range in color from almost black to light gray, with the lighter colors being the most valuable because they come from the oldest sturgeon.

Caviar’s timeless culinary elegance has graced the tables of royalties and well-to-do-connoisseurs for centuries, but a hot trend in South Florida — caviar bars — promises to allow the experience without the need for sporting a tux or ball gown.

WHERE TO GO IN PALM BEACH

On the coconut isle of Palm Beach, one of the most in-demand caviars is Black River Caviar from Uruguay. No surprise, it can be purchased at Mary Mahoney’s store of luxuries on Worth Avenue, known for its quest to offer only the best in crystal, china, silver – and, now, Black River Caviar.





Caviar Russe- Miami

"We originally imported fertilized roe into Uruguay from Russia," said Graham C. Gaspard of Black River Caviar. "Ours is the only sturgeon facility pioneering a completely unique and sustainable process awarded a top 'green' rating by the Marine Conservation Institute because it emulates the surgeons' natural habitat. The Black River is a freshwater lake that corresponds very closely to the Caspian Sea, with its slow and natural current and a 'raceways system,' which is a perfect simulation of the river delta and its rapids. It guarantees naturally oxygenated water, simulating the female fishes' natural journey up the river. The continuous exercise allows them to mature in a fashion which ensures a quality akin to their wild counterparts."

NEW MICHELIN-STAR CAVIAR BAR IN MIAMI

Celebrated Caviar Russe, the long revered Michelin-Star caviar bar in New York and one of the largest importers of caviar in the United States, has recently opened in Miami at the Four Seasons Hotel.

"We decided upon Miami because our clientele is so international (Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, Russia, China), with 2nd and 3rd homes right here in Miami. To us, Miami felt right at home," said Ilya Panchernikov, Managing Director of Caviar Russe in Miami. "Fine caviar has been historically coveted for its rarity. Flavor, texture, grain size and color are all factors that contribute to value of the most expensive gourmet food. Having complete integration of our caviar helps us control exactly what we believe to be the 'Caviar Russe Standard.' We are in control at every point of production. Our goal has always been quality! This has helped us achieve the recognition as the leading caviar supplier to the

gourmet industry and private clientele. Following the same principles and hiring the best people has led to our Michelin-Star restaurant."

The experts at Caviar Russe are traditionalists, but at the same time, they push the boundaries of culinary imagination with caviar. Traditional caviar service will include toast points, crepe blini, and Yukon gold potato, creme fraiche and chive. Mother-of-pearl utensils are used in order to avoid any sort of oxidizing reaction between the flavor and metal.

"We offer over 15 different varieties of caviar, and this can be intimidating," said Panchernikov. "Don't be afraid to ask questions! Our staff will educate you on all facets of the caviar world from taste, texture and portion size for any event you want to host. The single most important tip is to always purchase caviar from a reputable dealer."

South Florida Opulence asked Panchernikov to recommend her favorite "must-try" dishes that one should taste on their inaugural visit to Caviar Russe.

"There are so many to choose from but here are my top favorites: Bluefin Toro tartare with Osetra Caviar; Uni with Dashi Gelee and Osetra Caviar (also a NY classic); Hamachi with hearts of palm and smoked spices; Agave Soy Black Cod with Watermelon Radish; and lastly a signature of Caviar Russe Miami: Caviar Caesar Salad, hands-down amazing!" ●

