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21 Feb 2009 07:46 am

### [Sous Vide: Signed, Sealed, Then Slowly, Sumptuously Delivered](#)

Fine dining is full of highfalutin French words. You'll see them at just about every French restaurant in the country. *Prix fixe* for a price-fixed menu. *Une degustation* for a tasting menu. *Apertif* for a pre-dinner cocktail. *Amuse-bouche* for a bite-sized snack. If they don't trip off your tongue, the words will definitely trip it up.

We've been speaking a lot of French lately because there's a new French word that's traveling the tongues of American chefs these days. It's *sous vide*, and it's one of the most delicious words we've ever tasted.



That's because *sous vide*, French for "under vacuum," describes a unique "Cryovacked" cooking technique whereby chefs place ingredients inside a vacuum-sealed plastic bag that's cooked at a super low temperature—usually around 140 degrees Fahrenheit—for a super long time—sometimes for as long as 24 hours—while submerged in liquid. You can cook meat, chicken, fish, vegetables and even fruit *sous vide*. And when you do? The result is fantastic food. It's juicier (*sous vide* naturally tenderizes food by slowly breaking down its fibers), prettier (*sous vide* prevents food from breaking down, thereby preserving its texture and color), more flavorful (*sous vide* produces more concentrated flavors, highlighting natural tastes) and—supposedly—more nutritious (*sous vide*, because it is so gentle and requires very little oil, butter or stock, is said to preserve the nutritional qualities of many foods) than your typical rich French fare.

We know, because we've tasted *sous vide* preparations firsthand—twice! First, we sampled *sous vide* swordfish in Las Vegas at [Andre's](#), courtesy of Chef Andre Rochat, who told us in a [special interview](#) all about his Cryovac cooking technique. Then, we tasted [Chef Daniel Angerer's](#) Cryovacked Shrimp Carpaccio at [Klee Brasserie](#) in

New York. Both were amazing, and turned us into true *sous vide* converts.

We're not the only ones, though. Top chefs around the country, including Thomas Keller, Joel Robuchon, Charlie Trotter and Wylie Dufresne, are falling in love with *sous vide*.



Although their fascination is new, the technique itself isn't. According to [The New York Times](#), *sous vide* has been around since the late 1960s and was first popularized in 1974 by Chef George Pralus, who eventually opened his own Cryovac school.

Apparently, you can try Cryovac cooking at home with your own vacuum packer. Measuring and maintaining the low temperatures required by *sous vide* can be tough in your home kitchen, though, and makes food safety a big issue. In fact, professional chefs use special hypodermic needle thermometers to take the temperature of their Cryovac dishes. It's *that* precise. Our solution? Skip the homemade *sous vide* and leave the science and succulence of this up-and-coming cooking technique to the professionals. More and more chefs are doing it, so it can't be long before your favorite restaurant breaks out the Cryovac!

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## 2 Responses

1. [William](#) Says:  
[February 22nd, 2009 at 5:52 pm](#)

I have not tried sous vide yet, but it sounds awesome. I was wondering, what is that delicious looking dish in the first photo, and what restaurant does it come from?

2. [Travels in Taste Staff](#) Says:  
[February 25th, 2009 at 5:06 pm](#)

Hi William

It was the Shrimp Carpaccio at Klee in New York City — it was wonderful — here's the link to the full listing . Here's also our dining with chefs discussion with Chef Angier . Just so you know the second picture was taken at Andre's in Las Vegas — its the Pan Seared Magret of Duck. Thanks for asking!

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