

## A Work in Progress

A restaurant dish doesn't just happen—it evolves. The chefs behind **Longoven** in Richmond, Virginia, explain

► **OUT OF ALL** the dishes a chef envisions, tests, and eventually serves, how does one become a restaurant's signature? For Longoven's Andrew Manning, Megan Fitzroy Phelan, and Patrick Phelan, the defining menu item is the thing they've never been able to stop fiddling with: a savory egg custard that they've topped with everything from uni to summer flowers. As the team journeyed from DIY pop-up stalwarts to the owners of a new brick-and-mortar location, a version of this dish has always anchored their constantly changing restaurant. —ELYSE INAMINE



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AUGUST 2017

### Corn Custard

It's summer, and Manning sees blue crabs and corn everywhere, so he makes a corn custard covered with fat hunks of Chesapeake blue crab, a double dose of shiitake (jelly and mushrooms), seaweed-cured egg, and shiso. More late-night calls ensue as they finalize this month's pop-up menu. **It's been a hectic ride:** They're six months into the renovation of Longoven's future home.



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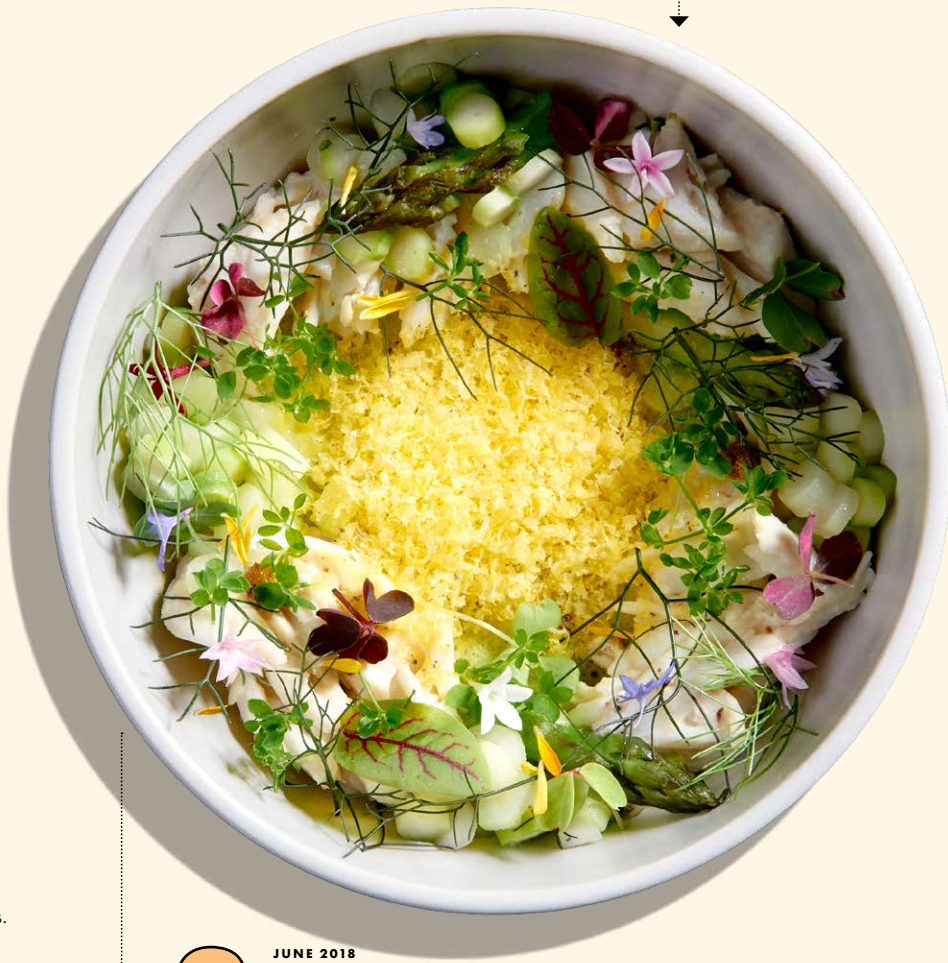
NOVEMBER 2016

### Jasmine Rice Custard

Manning wants to put a savory custard on the menu. This month he finally does, mixing jasmine-rice-steeped milk with egg yolks, steaming it, then topping with crunchy cauliflower mushrooms and Maine uni. After the chefs wrap their day jobs (butchering, catering, and teaching pastry), the three refine the dish through late-night phone calls. In the end, the uni custard scores with diners.

**That's validation for the team**, who are balancing their ambitious roving restaurant with regular work.

\* *Blast from the past: A new version of this custard will appear at Longoven this month.*



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JUNE 2018

### Asparagus Custard

More blue crab! Manning plays off the classic pairing of crab and asparagus with this summer-flower-crowned custard. This iteration earns a spot on Longoven's debut menu in the new space, a familiar note among the chaos of opening. **"Surreal" is the way the chefs describe the first night.** It's not until they get back to their homes, late after service, that they realize they're finally doing what they've been dreaming of the past four years.