

(SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S ISSUE)

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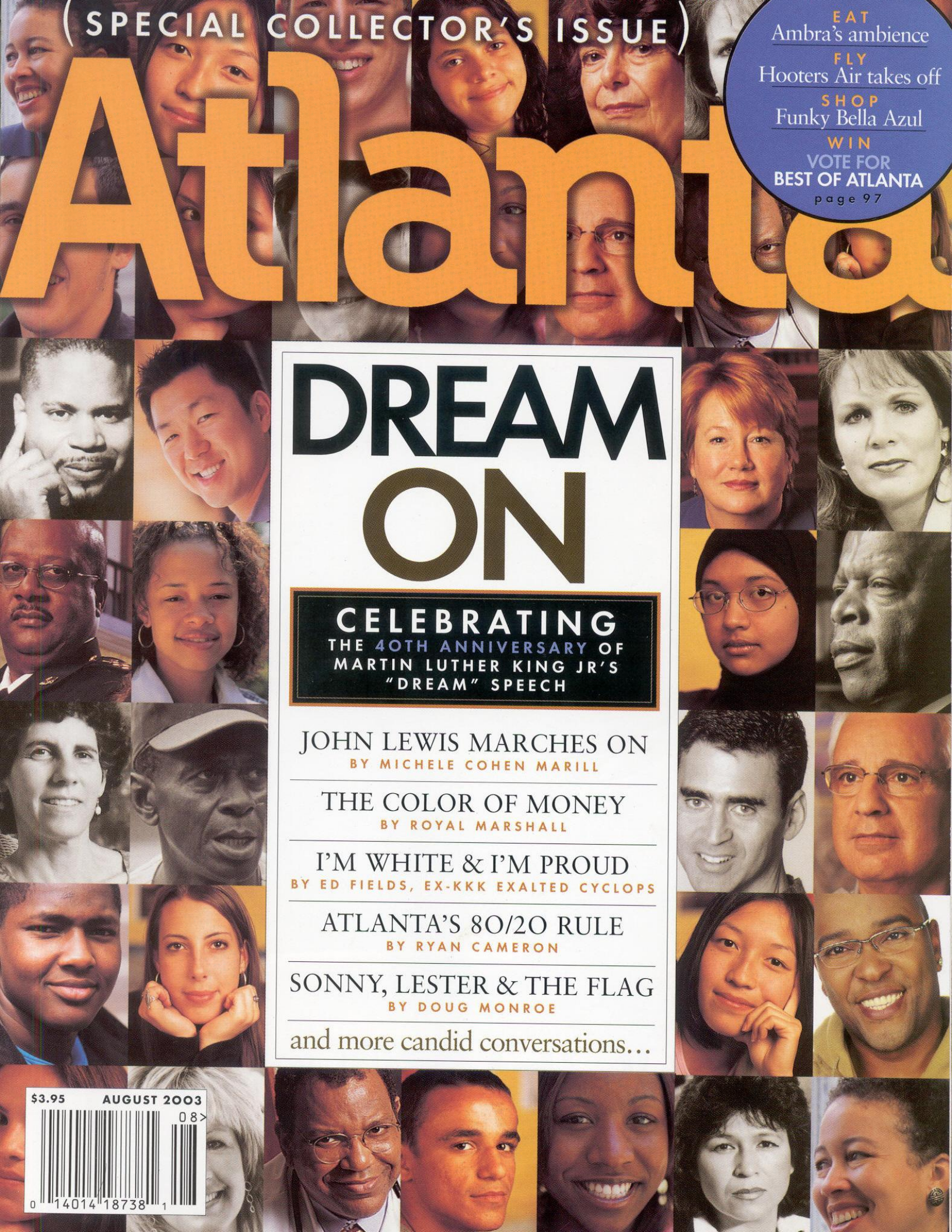
I'M WHITE & I'M PROUD
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and more candid conversations...

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JUST CHILL OUT

DURING AUGUST'S SULTRY TEMPERATURES, UNIQUELY FLAVORED SORBETS ARE A REFRESHING AND SOPHISTICATED TREAT.

BY JENNIFER MCLAINE

PERHAPS BECAUSE IT WAS always eclipsed by ice cream, sorbet has long been saddled with somewhat of a frou-frou image—more bridal showers and luncheons than I can remember featured it as the dessert that followed the requisite plate of chicken salad with grapes. After a century of ladies' luncheons or private dinner parties, sorbet gained a more democratic following in the 1990s, when it became fashionable as a palate cleanser, or “intermezzo,” as gourmet restaurants served it to preface main courses. In fact, this practice actually dates back to Victorian England, where dinner party hosts served guests “water ices” as refreshment between starters and main courses.

But this cousin of ice cream is now a sophisticated dessert in its own right. Contributing to this newfound status is the minimalist approach to desserts that has become a necessity for many restaurants: Appetizers and main courses have become so complex that a heavy dessert would be overwhelming. So pastry chefs cater to customers' desire for something simpler, lighter and less fattening. The most common sorbet flavors are based on fruit

MORSEL

According to legend, Emperor Nero of ancient Rome had snow brought from the mountains and had it combined with fresh fruits to create desserts much like modern sorbets.



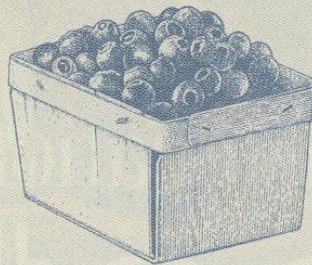
RECIPE

SPICED BLUEBERRY SORBET

SORBET IS ONE OF THE SIMPLEST DESSERTS TO MAKE AT HOME, with bounds of creativity being the only limit. If inspiration escapes you, try this fabulous late-summer recipe from Executive Pastry Chef David Jeffries of Park 75 at The Four Seasons Hotel.

INGREDIENTS:

- 14 ounces water
- 12 allspice berries
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 vanilla bean, split and scraped of its seeds
- 14 ounces sugar
- 3 1/2 ounces glucose or light corn syrup
- 42 ounces of blueberry purée (approximately 6 pints of blueberries)



DIRECTIONS:

- Bring water, allspice berries, cinnamon sticks and vanilla bean to a simmer.
- Add sugar and bring to a simmer.
- Add glucose (or corn syrup) and stir until particles have dissolved.
- Pour through strainer over blueberry purée.
- Stir together.
- Let mixture chill overnight in refrigerator at 40 degrees.
- Make sorbet according to your ice cream/sorbet machine.
- Garnish with fresh blueberries and mint leaves.

Yields: Two quarts, or 18 four-oz. servings

purees, but lately, herbs and flowers used as infusions have made sorbet one of the most creative and unique last-course options available.

A SORBET'S BASE CONSISTS OF WATER, sugar and fresh fruit or fruit purée; it is made with a fairly high proportion of sugar to liquid and never contains milk or dairy products. It can be prepared in a conventional ice cream maker with beaters, which gives it a very smooth consistency, much like ice cream. The best texture possible for a sorbet is when it's freshly made and still soft. It shouldn't be hard or contain ice crystals.

The very best pick of seasonal fruits and herbs available lend themselves to great sorbets. Executive Pastry Chef David Jeffries at the Four Seasons Hotel's Park 75 restaurant features spring and summer flavors such as watermelon, honeydew and peach. Sorbets may be simple, but Jeffries' cre-

ations are anything but simplistic. For Valentine's Day, the restaurant served a rose petal sorbet, and Jeffries enjoys using other edible plants and herbs throughout the year as well. "Geranium leaves, for instance, add a really refreshing quality to sorbet. You have to mix them gently—like brewing tea—and the sorbet takes on the essence of the plant," he explains.

Current late summer flavors that you might find on the restaurant's rotating menu are cinnamon peach and spiced blueberry. Jeffries simmers allspice berries and pours the mixture over a blueberry purée to create the mix. The pastry kitchen uses a special mixer called a Pacójet to make a creamy and smooth sorbet that is soft and not grainy—an added bonus because fresh fruits can be frozen and, due to the change in texture, the machine purees them perfectly. If a customer really enjoys one of the restaurant's palate cleanser sorbets,

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

such as the lemon thyme, the staff is happy to serve it as a full dessert. And for those ice cream flavor addicts who lean toward more traditional tastes, Park 75's vanilla bean sorbet supplies a longtime favorite flavor and satisfies the longing without the guilt of fattening dairy products. His dessert creations can also be enjoyed in the hotel's adjoining lounge in the form of a refreshing "Peach Sorbetini," a Belvedere-type drink with a dollop of fresh peach sorbet and bits of fresh peaches on top.

The inherent sweetness of fruits becomes more nuanced and interesting with the infusion of a complementing herb or spice. For instance, Bacchanalia's beautifully balanced dessert trio of herb-infused versions—pineapple sorbet with clove, tarragon sorbet with rose geranium, and strawberry sorbet with basil infusion—illustrate how this marriage of flavors works. As a palate cleanser, a hibiscus sorbet served with passion fruit juice is a fragrant creation the restaurant uses, and one popular option at Bacchanalia's sister restaurant, Floataway Café, is the cinnamon sorbet with macerated mandarin oranges.

Teas also provide a great flavor base. During one intermezzo course at Bacchanalia, a small white dish arrived at my table cradling a softly frozen robin's-egg-sized dollop. The green tea sorbet rested in the middle of a tiny puddle of actual green tea. It was the cleanest, most subtly sweet taste I could imagine, and it perfectly primed my palate for the rich celery root ravioli with black truffles that followed. While the meal as a whole was memorable, if I could have indulged in more of one thing, the sorbet would have been my pick.

So no matter what the course—intermezzo or dessert—slowly swallowing a cold spoonful of sorbet on a hot summer night at a favorite gourmet restaurant can be as exhilarating as the wide-eyed anticipation we felt in the ice cream shops of our childhood. ✪