

# San Francisco

December 2008



ENVELOPE-PUSHING ★★★★★

## Orson



Freewheeling as they are, there is nothing frivolous about **Luis Villavelazquez's** desserts at Orson. Dehydrated shards of carrot jut from a pumpkin custard that has been strewn with brown-

butter streusel and encircled by squiggles of root-beer maple syrup. Startling, yes—but it whispers of late autumn. The sweet, chewy carrot reinforces the earthy, creamy custard, and the streusel and syrup provide clever richness. Villavelazquez is unafraid to dabble at the cutting edge, whether by dehydrating Niçoise olives to add them to a **chocolate-chip ice cream sandwich** (above) or by combining walnuts, flour, and sugar in a cream charger to form the base of a 30-second microwave cake. As his creations tastily demonstrate, this is all in the interest—not at the expense—of flavor, texture, and surprise.

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## LUIS VILVELAZQUEZ

### *Why he matters:*

Because he uses innovation as a means, not an end. "I like hills and valleys of flavor. So, to prevent a chocolate dessert from being too sweet, it needs salt and acid."





At Orson, pastry chef Luis Villavelazquez's Clock Past Midnight features pumpkin custard, brown-butter streusel, shards of dehydrated carrot, and drizzles of root-beer maple syrup and carrot reduction.