

# FOOD & *Spirits*

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Issue 10

The Omaha Metro's Best Guide for Food, Dining, Spirits and Wine.

MAGAZINE | OMAHA EDITION

**BBQ Review pg. 8**

The Pathos of Cooking pg. 11

**MENU of MENUS** pg. 14



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### ON THE COVER

Boxer BBQ's pulled pulled pork sandwich and baked beans won the Council Bluffs restaurant a "People's Choice" Award at Food & Spirits' BBQ Review last October. Photo by David Ahlquist.

## LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHERS

### From Food & Spirits

Big and exciting changes are afoot at Food & Spirits Magazine. I'm happy to announce that FSM has formed a partnership with The Reader family of publications. John Heaston, publisher of The Reader, and I formed this partnership as a sort of expanded commitment to the food and spirits industry here in Omaha and this move should have a dramatic impact on the coverage the industry receives going forward.

Since I've moved to Omaha, I've always enjoyed The Reader and respected John and the work they do a great deal. Their commitment to Omaha and their passion for what they do plays a critical role in our city's development and it's with these things in mind that the partnership seemed like an ideal fit. I, too, care a great deal about what FSM does and stands for and I couldn't even imagine developing this partnership with any other publisher in town. The combination of both our teams is something that we're very excited about.

There won't be a ton of changes taking place at FSM but the ones that are going to happen will present you with improved dining and bar coverage and touch a broader audience. The Reader's review of top dishes in town, Menu of Menus, will become a featured section in FSM. Our circulation and distribution will also double in the Omaha Metro area and we will be direct mailing to select carrier routes. Also, FSM will also have a more defined and stable publishing schedule going forward and, maybe most importantly, our access to the wonderful creative staff we already have in place will expand with the addition of the fine and talented folks at The Reader. Additionally, the bars, restaurants, lounges and other businesses we serve will have a number of other marketing services available to them. Most notably is The Reader's revamped dining website, DishOmaha.com and its accompanying mobile app that is now available in iTunes and which is coming to Droid this spring.

However, one thing that won't change is our commitment to producing the best magazine in town that provides our readers and advertisers with locally driven editorial content that you can't find anywhere else. Let us know what you

like, what you don't, and what we might be missing. As always, we're listening.

Erik Totten, Publisher  
Food & Spirits Magazine

### From Pioneer Publishing

We're tremendously excited about this new partnership. As we prepared to relaunch our dining site DishOmaha.com and release our first mobile app along with it, I approached Omaha's pre-eminent food publisher — Erik — as a courtesy and to find ways we could collaborate in 2011.

The conversation took off and working together became a natural and logical fit.

The one thing that's always driven The Reader and Pioneer Publishing's family of publications and websites is our commitment to local content. Erik with his creative team and Food & Spirits Magazine has embodied that. I have to admit it's with a touch of editor and newsprint envy that I've watched some of Omaha's most knowledgeable and creative writers contributing to a beautiful publication I always enjoyed reading, including Michael Campbell, Dan Crowell, Dr. John Fischer, John Finocchiaro, Brian O'Malley and Ann Summers, to name a few. With this kind of content and Jake Scott's clean art direction and design, not to mention David Ahlquist's sharp photography, Food & Spirits Magazine was taking local dining and cultural coverage to a new level and that was exciting and fun to watch.

We look forward to continuing that trajectory, blowing up coverage of the food and spirits space in both print and online, and learning some things ourselves about magazine writing and glossy publications. We aim to not only educate the emerging foodie but to also serve long-time food and spirits enthusiasts, and to pair that with our cultural coverage and growing digital and event skills. Dining and libations are the two most popular forms of entertainment. We'd be doing everyone a disservice if we hadn't partnered.

Thank you for reading!  
John Heaston, Publisher  
Pioneer Publishing

No. 10

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Sean Brennan

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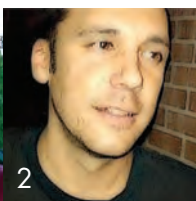
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## EXPERTS PANEL

MEET THE FULLY QUALIFIED PANEL OF INDUSTRY EXPERTS WHO HAVE DEVOTED THEIR KNOWLEDGE TO THIS ISSUE...



1 Michael Campbell



2 Corey Caughlin



3 Dan Crowell



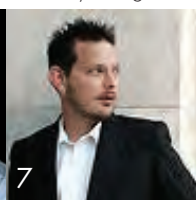
4 John Finocchiaro



5 John Fischer



6 John Larkin



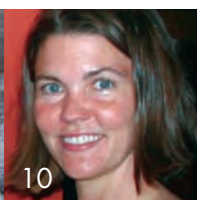
7 Marq Manner



8 Jason McLaughlin



9 Brian Smith



10 Ann Summers

### 1 Michael Campbell

Michael Campbell, former owner of Mick's Music & Bar in Omaha, is a singer/songwriter and humorist. His CD *Used Without Permission* is available in stores, and his weekly essays can be found at [PickyMick.blogspot.com](http://PickyMick.blogspot.com). He is the author of *Are You Going To Eat That?*, a collection of fifty humor essays.

### 2 Corey Caughlin

An Omaha native, Corey later traveled to Denver where he became a chef's apprentice. While in Denver, Corey helped prepare lunch for Julia Childs at her last book opening. Corey later settled in San Francisco and held various jobs, including a sales position for the Chronicle newspaper, as well as writing and illustrating the comic PloP. Recently, he returned to Omaha and is currently working in the service industry and writing comics for Food and Spirits Magazine.

### 3 Dan Crowell

Dan Crowell, cocktail enthusiast and self-avowed "spirits nerd," is the Luxury Brands Specialist for Sterling Distributing Company in Omaha. He talks incessantly (even occasionally to other people) about the virtues of what he calls "investigative imbibement." An eternally fascinated student of the distillers' art, he encourages any like-minded individuals to engage him in spirited discussion at <http://libationassociation.blogspot.com>.

### 4 John Finocchiaro

John Finocchiaro is a past owner of Finocchiaro Wine Company, Inc., a Nebraska wholesale wine, spirits, and beer distributorship dating back to 1935. He also formerly co-owned Johnson Brothers Finocchiaro, LLC. John is a former Certified Public Accountant and a Certified Specialist of Wine.

### 5 Dr. John Fischer

Dr. Fischer is a member and two-time president of the Omaha Branch of the International Wine & Food Society, past director of the Nebraska chapter of LADV, and the founding member of the Council Bluffs Branch of the International Wine & Food Society. He teaches a course on matching wine with food at the Institute for the Culinary Arts in Omaha and is the author of the books, *The Evaluation of Wine—A Comprehensive Guide to the Art of Wine Tasting* and *Wine and Food—101*.

### 6 John Larkin

John Larkin, co-owner of Jake's Cigars & Spirits in both Omaha and Lincoln, has been smoking and selling cigars for ten years, having begun his career as a tobacconist right out of high school in Salt Lake City. John moved to Lincoln in 2002 to run Jake's for longtime friend Alex Roskelley. After returning home from serving a tour in Iraq with the Army Reserve, he bought into the original Jake's

in downtown Lincoln. In 2006, John and Alex opened a new shop in downtown Benson where he now resides with his wife. John spends much of his time in business meetings (golfing), smoking cigars, and questing after the best beers, bourbons, and wines he can get his hands on.

### 7 Marq Manner

Marq Manner is a fan of Americana. He is interested in small town cafe's, roadside BBQ, getting a hotdog from a stand made in the likeness of George Washington, and the grittier eating atmospheres found in out of the way places. MarQ has been writing about the local music scene for The Omaha City Weekly for the past five years and has also written music features for many other rags and blogs.

### 8 Jason McLaughlin

Jason McLaughlin is a Beer Judge Certification Program judge, craft beer aficionado, and award-winning homebrewer living in Lincoln. Jason's love for outstanding beer started early when his lifelong friend, Adam Curfew of Salt Lake City, got his start at Squatter's brewery. The rest is history, as Jason travels around the country judging beer competitions and attending related events. Beer tasting and evaluation is his passion, and he can appreciate a great example of any style regardless of hype. His idea of a nice summer day is a lawn chair and a pint of Russian Imperial Stout.

### 9 Brian Smith

Brian Smith and his wife operate Black Sheep Farms, a chemical-free family farm near Bennington. He is a speaker and writer on the topic of local food, and he has a minor food addiction. Wanna go to lunch?

### 10 Ann Summers

Ann Summers is a writer, amateur naturalist, mother, and cook. She is the author of two children's nature books and a new book on healthy lunch tips and nutrition called *Healthy Lunch, Healthy Mind*. She believes that fresh local food is the best present we can give ourselves and our children.

### 11 Matt Biggins

Matt Biggins may have discovered his love for cheeses working the rice paddies in western China. He could have learned to write during his stay on MIR. If so, he's certainly happy to be living comfortably in the US and working with FSM Omaha.

### 12 Brian O'Malley

Brian O'Malley is a chef-instructor at the Institute for the Culinary Arts at Metropolitan Community College. As President of the Heartland Chapter of the American Culinary Federation, Coach of the Junior Culinary Competition Team, Board Member of the Nebraska Food Cooperative and the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society, and Muse Extraordinaire for Sage student bistro O'Malley spreads his passion for local and sustainable cuisine throughout the community.

# BBQ Review

by Erik Totten. Photography by David Ahlquist

*Nine Barbecue Restaurants Duke it out to be the Metro's Best*



For this issue's food review we held another one of our food competitions — this one to answer the oft-asked question, "Who has the best barbecue in the area?" Barbecue was brought in from nine of the best slow-cooking, meat-extravaganza, coma-inducing restaurants in the Metro area. There was a ton of food on hand and for just \$15 attendees walked away with as much food as they wanted and the opportunity to vote for their favorites.

*Food & Spirits Magazine* held its first annual barbecue competition, which we called "Booze, Bands & BBQ," at The Waiting Room last October. As always, Lucky Bucket was on hand with their fine brew and beer specials and Hockenbergs Food Service Equipment and Supply Company made a much-needed appearance with food warmers to keep all that barbecue piping hot.

**"Barbecue was brought in from nine of the best slow-cooking, meat extravaganza, coma-inducing restaurants in the Metro area... there was an enormous amount of food on hand."**

Also, the fine folks from the Heartland Chapter of the American Culinary Federation provided service. Boot-stomping barbecue music was provided by Matt Cox, 24-Hour Cardlock and The Willards, with a special guest appearance by Benson's own Trent Knox.

As with all of FSM's food competitions, there was an enormous amount of food on hand with attendees stuffing their face as much as they wanted and getting a take-out container to take their favorite BBQ home — scoring some of the best leftovers you could possibly ask for.

## **PARTICIPATING RESTAURANTS**

Swine Dining (204 E. Mission Ave., Bellevue)  
Boxer BBQ (722 Creek Top, Council Bluffs)  
Chef Mike's (2401 Lake St., Omaha)  
Harker's Bar-B-Q (4865 Center St. No. 6, Omaha)  
Heartland BBQ (5402 Northwest Radial Hwy., Omaha)  
Ozark Smoked Meat Co. (11302 Wright Cir., Omaha)  
Uncle Earnie's BBQ (110 E. B St. in Cedar Creek)  
Hog Stop (3621 9th Ave., Council Bluffs)  
This Little Piggy BBQ (Catering only, 402.598.8263)





**“The clear favorite from the People’s Choice was Boxer BBQ in Council Bluffs, while the judges favored Uncle Earnie’s and Ozark Smoked Meat Company, which are both located in Omaha.”**

Participating restaurants were asked to enter at least one category but could enter as many as they wanted. Available categories were Ribs, Brisket, Specialty Meats, Pulled Pork, Barbeque Sauce and Side Dishes. Attendees were invited to vote for their favorites and nearly 200 votes were cast. The Food & Spirits esteemed team of judges — Bill MacKenzie (former president of the Greater Omaha BBQ Society), Derek (from GatronomicFlightClub.com), FSM writers Marq Manner and Jeremy Hunter — were also on hand to vote for their favorites as well.

As always, the competition was fierce, but a few clear favorites emerged from both the People’s Choice and Judge’s Choice. Surprisingly, there weren’t a lot of similarities between the results from the attendees and judges but both were just as enthusiastic in their praise for the vittles. The clear favorite from the People’s

Choice was Boxer BBQ in Council Bluffs, while the judges favored Uncle Earnie’s and Ozark Smoked Meat Company, which are both located in Omaha. That being said, there was wide variation in the scores and every participating restaurant ranked in the top three in at least one category from either the judges or the attendees. So, without further ado, here are your top three winners in each category:

#### **RIBS**

##### **People’s Choice**

Hartland, Uncle Earnie’s and Ozark

##### **Judge’s Choice**

Swine Dining, Hog Stop, Boxer and Ozark (tied for third with Boxer)

#### **BRISKET**

##### **People’s Choice**

Boxer, Uncle Earnie’s and Hartland

##### **Judge’s Choice**

Famous Dave’s, Swine Dining and Uncle Earnie’s



**SAUCE**

**People's Choice**

Hartland, Uncle Earnie's and Boxer

**Judge's Choice**

Ozark (Hot), Ozark (Regular) and Uncle Earnie's

**SPECIALTY MEAT**

**People's Choice**

Uncle Earnie's, Swine Dining and Chef Mike's

**Judge's Choice**

Uncle Earnie's, Ozark (Sausage), Ozark (Feather Bones)

**PULLED PORK**

**People's Choice**

Boxer, Chef Mike's and Hartland

**Judge's Choice**

Uncle Earnie's, Chef Mike's and Hog Stop

**SIDE DISH**

**People's Choice**

Boxer, Hog Stop and Chef Mike's

**Judge's Choice**

Ozark, Hog Stop and Chef Mike's

Plans for the next "Booze, Bands & BBQ" event are already under way with a tentative date set for October 15, again at The Waiting Room. As you might suspect there will be copious amounts of booze, bands and barbecue.

**Winner of the 2010 "The People's Choice" for Best Brisket, Pulled Pork and Baked Beans by Food & Spirits Magazine!**



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# The *Pathos* of COOKING

by Ann Summers

fsmomaha.com

*Romance, comfort, grief — food triggers emotions in all of us.*

If we agree that cooking is a method of persuasion, of dialogue, then we can explore the formal Aristotelian components of persuasion — ethos, logos and pathos — to reveal how cooking forms and informs our relationships. In cooking, ethos means translating character through food, and speaks to history and tradition, and the relationship of food to us, us to food. The logos of cooking is the exactitude and knowledge of what we are doing with or to the ingredients. For the third part of my series, let us now delve into the pathos of cooking, or the emotional upwelling associated with food — something most cooks and diners know all too well.

All of us, no matter how poor the food or fabulous the chef, have been subjected to at least one meal where drama, emotion and pent-up aggression came pouring out like cheap beer at a fraternity kegger. Surely one of the very first hominids, some five or so millions years ago, weathered a matriarchal fit in the family cave when someone paid more attention to his buddies than to his loving mate's spit-roasted wombat. Someone's drunken relative has, no doubt, made something slimy out of grease and raw dough, and with little care for taste-buds made sure everyone ate the abomination. Some of us might never be able to stomach Yorkshire pudding again.

Still others have fallen short of enjoying a relatively pleasant meal because of the endless and anxious interruptions of the cook waiting to second-guess and question every morsel of food on the table. "I put in too much salt. Not enough sugar. It's a little soggy. Is it too spicy? Not spicy enough? I overcooked it, didn't I?" The suffering diner becomes more willing to chuck the full plate at the cook than eat it.

There are arguments and the earth-shattering announcements saved for the dinner table, too, where acting out is more fun with a captive audience. Starting a fight at the onset of the evening meal gets everyone's attention. But it all comes back to the old Feng Shui principle that says bad energy is transferred to the food. Put more simply: angry cooks and strung-out diners make for bad eating.

These emotional insults to food discourage people from eating together, and perhaps even prevent them from eating altogether. Maybe the folks who still eat together, and are supposedly closer as families, do so as a cause and not a result. In other words, they mediate their disputes elsewhere, and let everyone eat in peace. Is it true? Lots of talking, laughing and a little eating — plus a few compliments to the chef — and we get happy, healthy diners? Well, why not? If we prepare food with love and come to the table with

joy, we nurture in a much deeper fashion. Doing otherwise is like bringing smart phones and excessive gas into a yoga session.

**“Made with love and served with grace and generosity, these are the soul healers... remedies for broken hearts.”**

*COMFORT FOOD*

Good food made with love is the ultimate gift. That's love, not hovering co-dependency. Think of biscuits and scones, chocolate covered chocolate biscotti, fried chicken, duck and cornbread sage-dressing, chicken almond curries, bison burgers, braised lamb shanks, pork with rosemary and apples. Think of gravy, or pancakes, or rice in clear chicken broth. Made with love and served with grace and generosity, these are the soul healers, cures for the blues, staunches for remorse, and remedies for broken hearts. Given freely and greeted with respect, these foods can revive us like a glass of water after a day of Ramadan fasting.

*ROMANTIC FOOD*

No one wants to eat fried chicken and then reach past a distended stomach for one's amour, smearing them with salty grease. Well, except for in a bad 80's movie. Romantic cooking is about lightness and playfulness. Cupid demands flavor but not much substance. Imagine steamed mussels, garlic grilled shrimp, oysters (always de rigueur), seared scallops, poached trout and salmon, grass-fed beef tartare, sweet and sour soup with Thai spring rolls, or if you know your Hamachi, sushi. But not too much. If on the town, exorbitantly priced date food is a pitiful display of over-compensation, but a nice quiet place with tasty food is an easy recipe for continued passions.

**“Don't think you'll just nip out to the wholesale club... Choose something simple and make it ahead.”**

*SOCIABLE FOOD*

Someone once said: “The only thing worse than not eating good food is eating it by yourself.” And what brings us together more than a picnic? Or a potluck? Or a ball-game barbecue? A party? Or a holiday feast? Pile on the homemade goodies, but hold the incessant fussing, the treasured family recipes that no one eats, and the number of things that must

be done just so because they have always been done that way and no one even knows why anymore. If you think on it, no one really cares about Great Aunt Filbert's sacred pumpkin roll recipe, or your triumph over the Ancient East-Anglian Four-Day Turkey Ordeal. They just want to get together, tell bad jokes and eat. Offering to open a vein and sacrifice yourself on the altar of barbecue perfection never impresses or pleases anyone, and they would much rather have you present and laughing over a glass of wine than covered in ash and meat drippings, cussing your uncooperative grill. But don't be thinking you'll just nip out to the wholesale club and get a bucket of gluey pre-fried wings to drown in sauce. Your diners deserve some part of you, just not the whole corpse. Choose

**“Some foods call for socially boisterous consumption, others beg for contemplative reverence. Allow yourself both.”**

something simple and make it ahead. If your meal plan balloons, be creative, call in reinforcements or buy something from someone who knows how to cook. At the very least, change your menu and place your own joy and that of your guests ahead of your ego.

*SOLITARY FOOD*

There have been gourmets, the great Elizabeth David among them, who prefer to keep some foods to themselves — and there are certainly times when salivating over a perfect Macintosh apple or the ultimate crispy fried okra is something we'd rather not be seen doing. As long as it doesn't translate into auto-erotic bingeing and lead to health problems, there is nothing amiss with opening a can of smoked kippers, levering them onto a crunchy baguette, dressing them with too much Dijon mustard, and polishing off the entire thing with black tea so strong it makes your eyes water. I've never known anyone to do this, mind you, I'm just saying it's OK. Some foods call for socially boisterous consumption, while others beg for contemplative reverence. Allow yourself both.





**GRIEF FOOD**

Whether from loss of love or loss of a loved one, grief has never been nor ever will be fixed with food. There are opposing attitudes to loss, ranging from W.H. Auden's stopping of all the clocks self-immolation to the reeling potato-and-single-malt-stained hiccup of an Irish wake. Whether the bereaved feel like eating now or not, they will eventually be hungry, and food must appear in front of them even though they may cry into it. To provide food for the

grieving is a civil and moral duty, in the form of casseroles or soups and fresh bread or fruit pies. Pray we all have someone willing to return the favor when we grieve.

**“Cheers for everyone who opens a package, peels a carrot, boils water and turns on a stove when they’d really rather just sit down.”**

**EVERYDAY FOOD**

Not to be underestimated are the regular old, day-to-day, pyramidal nutrition or five-food-group meals that sustain us for another school or work day, football game or swim-meet. From the bottom of our empty, rumbling stomachs, we must bless the tireless and bighearted souls who feed us. Hats off to before-and-after-school openers of juice boxes and cheese sticks for little people whose hands are too clumsy to manage them. Kudos to moms, dads and grandfolks who plough through cookbooks and grocery aisles each week simply to complete the often unrewarding task of providing calories and (hopefully) nutrition to those that depend on them. Hurrah for chefs, line cooks and dishwashers who help make food when we just can't face it. My grandmother cooked for a huge gaggle of children in south Arkansas, and fed the tenant and paid farm hands as well — even though she was just as poor as they were. She made biscuits, dumplings and greens every day out of practically nothing, and no one knew what it cost her. So, three cheers for everyone who opens a package, peels a carrot, boils water and turns on a stove when they'd really rather just sit down.



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# The Top Dishes & Drinks of 2011

**MENU of MENUS** brought to you by: **The Reader**

by Sarah Wengert and Kyle Tonniges  
photography by Brady Hess



Crispy Asian Salad (In-gre-di-ent)

Welcome to the 2011 Menu of Menus. The menu items featured here were the top vote-getters in *The Reader's* yearly online poll of Omaha's top dishes and drinks in 11 different categories. Those are Best Salad, Best Comfort Food, Best Entrée, Most Exotic, Best Burger or Sandwich, Best Soup, Best Cocktail, Best Appetizer, Best Dessert, Best Steak and Spiciest Dish. Hundreds of dishes were nominated by lovers of the local food scene and the voting was extremely close — so consider these dishes as truly the best of the best for this year. Thank you to everybody who voted and enjoy — literally!

## BEST SALAD

Thunderbird Salad, Omaha Press Club: A winning combo of crisp greens tossed with “famous” Thunderbird dressing, bacon, bleu cheese, mozzarella, chives, roma tomatoes and homemade croutons made this hearty creation the go-to house salad at many Midwest clubs. It's no wonder OPC Executive Director Steve Villamonte has his Peruvian-born chef father Luis' recipe trademarked.

— SW

Build Your Own, Spirit World: Have it your way the healthy way. Choose small or large, romaine or mixed greens, your signature fresh toppings and a homemade or fat-free dressing, and bask in your unique veggie vision. New owners took the helm at Spirit World in 2008, but maintained the quality of the classy deli.

— SW

Crispy Asian Salad, In-gre-di-ent: Thai-chili glazed steak, Napa cabbage, bok choy, glass noodles, edamame, red peppers, snow peas, carrots and spicy cashews with sesame ginger dressing, prove that this eatery lives up to its name. A garnish of crispy wonton strips is the proverbial icing on this much-healthier-than-cake delight.

— SW

Grilled Asian Chicken Salad, Granite City: Chicken is marinated in pineapple juice, sherry and soy sauce, then charbroiled and tossed with shredded iceberg and cabbage, cilantro, carrots, green onions, peas, cucumbers, sweet red peppers and crispy wonton strips with a lime-sesame dressing. Topped with a Szechwan peanut sauce, this one has the works.

— SW

Arugula Salad, Pitch: Pitch's pizzas are so scrumptious you'd almost forget they serve anything else — except that their top-shelf salads, sides and appetizers don't let you. Here, the marquee arugula is served with prosciutto, candied walnuts, pears, Maytag blue cheese and finished with balsamic vinaigrette, resulting in a Pitch-perfect flavor profile.

— SW

## BEST COMFORT FOOD

California Taco, California Taco: A favorite midtown source for lunch and dinner, Cal Taco's titular offering is a filling combination regardless of whether you opt for chicken, beans or steak. Topped off with a generous dollop of their red and/or green salsa, and you're good to go. One is filling. Two is a commitment.

— KT

Chicken Enchilada, La Mesa: Chicken was picked as the best, but La Mesa also offers beef, cheese and bean. All four options are topped with healthy amounts of sauce, cheese, lettuce, sour cream and tomato. With all four heaped onto one plate, the enchiladas at La Mesa are a real value.

Pot Roast, Wheatfield's: Officially dubbed the “Alsacienne Baked Beef” on the Wheatfield's menu, this is Omaha's alpha pot roast. Slow roasted “meltaway” beef is served with mashed potatoes, vegetables and warm butterbuns, smothered in a hearty gravy. This is where simplicity meets divinity.

— SW

## BEST ENTRÉE

The Don, Lo Sole Mio: There's a reason this dish is named after the boss. Beef tips, green peppers, onions, tomatoes and mushrooms



California Taco (California Taco)

unite in a light Marsala wine sauce. Enjoy the savory sauce, with ample meat and veggies, over your choice of fettuccine, linguine, spaghetti, angel hair, penne, shells or bow tie pasta.

— SW

**Tandori Chicken, Jaipur:** Chicken is marinated in yogurt and fresh, ground spices then cooked in the tandoor oven until tender and packed with flavor. Choose between a full or half-size portion. Be sure to wash it down with a pint of Jalapeno Ale, brewed onsite in small batches.

— SW

**Carbonara, Vivace:** Pancetta, red onion, peas and egg yolk are tossed with olive oil and pasta in this lighter take on carbonara. Enjoy it over one of Vivace's trademark fresh, housemade pastas, choosing from radiatori, campanelle, conchiglie, fusilli, cayenne quadrilini, rigatoni, fettuccini or capellini. Meat, seafood and veggies are available as add-ons.

— SW

**Chicken Fried Chicken, Grandmother's:** With wonderfully crisp breading on the outside giving way to tender chicken on the inside, this down-home dish is served with homemade mashed potatoes, corn, creamy gravy and still-warm fresh baked bread. It's not just like grandma used to make; it's better.

— SW

**Veal Parmigiana, Caniglia's Venice Inn:** This tender Veal Parmigiana is one of the Caniglia family's signature Sicilian style Italian dishes, topped with melty mozzarella and Venice Inn's traditional red sauce. They've been in business since 1957 and the authentic, old-world Italian steakhouse feel and decor add to the dining experience.

— SW

### MOST EXOTIC

**Poor Man's Noodles, Laos Thai Market:** Thai-style noodles are stir-fried with egg, bean sprouts, crushed peanuts, garlic and veggies, then lightly dressed in a tangy-spicy sauce — all

custom-cooked to your preferred level of spiciness. The dish is named for its simplicity, but additions of beef, chicken, tofu, shrimp or even more veggies are welcome.

— SW

**Oxtail & Gnocchi, Dante Pizzeria Napoletana:** Fresh, housemade and hand-fashioned gnocchi is paired with oxtail, roasted mushrooms and grana padano (a hard, salty cheese, similar to parmesan). Although many dishes have exotic appeal, Dante locally sources much of its meat, herbs, eggs and vegetables. Try the housemade ricotta as a starter with this adventurous dish.

— SW

**Lamb Shank, Ethiopian Restaurant:** Technically termed key wat, this slow-roasted lamb shank dish includes hard-boiled egg and a spicy sauce of onions sautéed in clarified butter with chile powder and a trove other fresh ground spices. The meat is prepared in daily batches and served over injera, a spongy flatbread that doubles as utensil.

— SW

### BEST BURGER OR SANDWICH

**Reuben, Omaha Press Club:** It may have originated at Omaha's Blackstone Hotel, but the OPC has perfected this classic selection. Your choice of turkey or corned beef is sandwiched with Swiss cheese, Villamonte Thousand Island dressing and sauerkraut on grill-toasted pumpernickel.

— SW

**Black & Bleu Burger, Goldbergs:** This 8-oz burger comes charbroiled to medium-well, seasoned with a blend of Cajun spices, topped with homemade bleu cheese dressing and served on a toasted ciabatta bun. Word to the wise: Upgrade to a side of potato wedges or sweet potato fries for the perfect partner to this savory burger.

— SW

**Bronco Burger, Bronco's:** Lord knows we have plenty of burger options, but few satisfy on the level of the mighty Bronco's. For fifty years they've been serving up simple, cheap burgers that always hit the spot. Whether you go for the classic Pony Burger or opt for a



The Don (Lo Sole Mio)



Dixie Burger (Dixie Quicks)

cheese or BBQ-sauced Hickory burger, few drive-through burgers satisfy like Bronco's.

— KT

**Burger, Fuddruckers:** The appeal here is creating your own burger: Choose from four patty sizes. Pick standard beef, or go exotic with buffalo, wild boar, elk or ostrich. Add cheese, hickory-smoked bacon, grilled mushrooms and onions at your own discretion. Embellish with lettuce, tomato, peppers, pickles and more at the toppings bar.

— SW

**Dixie Burger, Dixie Quicks:** This traditional offering holds its own on a menu known for flavorful and unique items. Dixie Quicks offers a fresh, upscale approach to comfort food — with a Southern/Cajun/Southwestern bent — at decidedly non-upscale prices. This mammoth meatravananza piled with crisp veggies on a tasty bun fits right in.

— SW

**Cheeseburger, Tish's:** This comfy Council Bluffs restaurant began as a seasonal walk-up joint serving ice cream and sandwiches, but since 1995 it's been a full-service destination for American fare with a contemporary feel. Try Tish's classic cheeseburger with one of their signature margaritas to round out the experience.

— SW

**Steak Trim Burger, Gorat's:** Perhaps one of the best kept secrets of Warren Buffet's favorite steak joint is Gorat's special edition burgers. Made from steak trimmings, it's quite possibly the best burger in town and one of the cheapest, at \$6.75 for a meal that includes a salad and fries (add another twenty cents if you want cheese).

## BEST SOUP

**Minestrone, Sgt. Pepper's:** The classic Italian soup house soup is offered daily at Sgt. Pepper's, but it's so good they'd serve it eight days a week if they could. It's made with beef and chicken broth, tomato,

zucchini, yellow squash, carrot, celery, cabbage, spinach, onion, basil and northern beans.

— SW

**Potato Soup, Market Basket:** Because it's done so well, breakfast is the meal most often associated with The Market Basket. But the restaurant/bakery/deli/foodie retail outlet also puts on great lunch and dinner spreads, with one star of those meals being the much-loved creamy potato soup with chives, cheese and bacon.

— SW

**Gumbo, Shucks:** Although the lobster bisque, clam chowda and San Fran cioppino are fabulous, Shucks' gumbo is the favorite of the four fishy housemade soups. It's easy to see why with a perfect balance of Cajun flavors laying the foundation for the thick bayou stew of veggies, rice, andouille sausage and, of course, fresh seafood.

— SW

**Clam Chowder, Grandmother's:** Although the French onion is Grandmother's house soup, voters sing the praises of their clam chowder the loudest. The creamy base is chock full of clams, diced potato, onion and celery. Once again Grandmother's hits the spot with a quality, cozy-inducing dish.

— SW

**Chicken Tortilla Soup, Dixie Quicks:** A pico de gallo style blend of tomatoes, onions, zucchini, yellow squash and peppers (poblano, anaheim, jalapeno) is simmered in a chicken broth, with chunks of chicken and plenty of fresh cilantro, then served with tortilla chips and avocado. This soup made "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives" host Guy Fieri moan.

— SW

**Hot & Sour Soup, Chopsticks House:** A piping bowl of hot & sour soup is a staple at Chinese restaurants, but the Menu of Menus poll rated Chopsticks House's as the best. Balancing spicy and sour, the broth is has a perfect consistency and features a bounty of ingredients.

— SW



Minestrone (Sgt. Pepper's)





Meatballs (Pitch) photo by Brady Hess



Nutty Irishman (M's Pub)

### BEST COCKTAIL

Martini, Blue: With 23 varieties, Blue not only brings the martini party, they get creative with it. To get your sake fix too, try the Classic Saketini (Grey Goose vodka, sake, fresh-squeezed limeade) or Samurai Saketini (unfiltered sake, cucumber-infused vodka, fresh-squeezed limeade). Bonus: House martinis are just \$5.50 during happy hour.

— SW

Margarita, La Mesa: In addition to the famous house margarita, made with gold tequila, triple sec and a secret mixer recipe, La Mesa offers Midori, Bahama Mama, Blue Milagro and 1800 Grand variations, plus top shelf margaritas. Join the tequila club and sip your way through their 100+ varieties of tequila.

— SW

Cosmopolitan, The Boiler Room: A standout when it comes to classy mixology, The Boiler Room itself is so cosmopolitan that voters chose it for the Metro's best cosmo. In addition to nailing the trendy cocktail, they offer many other fine drinks like the Pisco Sour, Old Havana and French 75, plus apertifs and digestifs.

— SW

Nutty Irishman, M's Pub: This simple yet blissful pairing of Baileys and Frangelico will have you doing a happy jig. Get it on the rocks or shaken and served martini style.

— SW

### BEST APPETIZER

Bang Bang Shrimp, Bonefish Grill: Bonefish's signature Bang Bang shrimp sounds simple enough on the menu: "tender, crispy shrimp tossed in a creamy spicy sauce." But once you've tried the

crunchy, craveable appetizer doused in a blend of sweet, sour and spicy, you'll understand why it's one of their most popular dishes and one you'll come back for.

— KT

Crab Cakes, Dixie Quicks: Crab cakes can be a crapshoot. All too often they're stuffed with too many bread crumbs, veggies or other filler. Not here. Dixie Quicks' crab cakes are light, feathery pillows of crunchy crab goodness that'll have you wonder why you order them anywhere else.

— KT

Crab Cakes, Firebirds Wood Fired Grill: A good crab cake is like a little bit of heaven. At Firebirds real lump crabmeat is laced with Old Bay seasoning then covered with crisp panko breadcrumbs and served with tortilla slaw and mango haba ero chutney.

— SW

Meatballs, Pitch: Listen up meatball lovers, these Calabrese style meatballs in a San Marzano tomato sauce with grana cheese are the appetizer for you. The tasty spherical fare is also available on Pitch's pasta and at lunch you can try them sandwich-style with fresh mozzarella and arugula.

— SW

### BEST DESSERT

German Chocolate Cake, Delice: Delice has so many delish desserts voters had a tough time time choosing just one, but the decadent German Chocolate Cake emerged the favorite. Layers of velvety chocolate cake intermingle with coconut-pecan filling and chocolate frosting.

— SW

Cupcakes, Jones Bros. Cupcakes: Jones Bros. means business when it comes to their cupcakes, each as cute as they are scrumptious. Try one of 10 everyday cupcakes, like red velvet, lemon and chocolate, or choose from 15 more offered only on certain days of the week, like chai honey, coconut and tiramisu.

— SW

Fried Ice Cream, La Mesa: The local master of the margarita also excels with its fried ice cream. The crispy, fried outer crust conceals cool vanilla ice cream and is garnished with chocolate sauce, whipped cream and even a cherry on top.

— SW

Napoleones Torte, Lithuanian Bakery: There are desserts and then there is the Lithuanian Bakery's Napoleon Torte. A symphonic blend of multiple slivers of pastry, creamy custard and apricot, it's what God serves for dessert. Yes, it's that good.

— KT

Seasonal Pie, Wheatfields: It doesn't get better than Wheatfields fresh pies baked daily with only the best seasonal ingredients. The rotating cast of pies includes caramel apple, blueberry, strawberry rhubarb, key lime, coconut cream, pumpkin, pecan, lemon meringue and more.

— SW



Cupcakes (Jones Bros. Cupcakes)

### BEST STEAK

**Ribeye Steak, Texas Roadhouse:** This chain eatery promises “legendary food, legendary service” and the Ft. Worth Ribeye is proof that they do deliver on that Texas-sized promise. Choose between 10-, 12- or 16-ounce portions, saddle up and enjoy.  
— SW

**T-Bone Steak, Piccolo Pete’s:** One of Omaha’s enduring steakhouses, Piccolo Pete’s has the goods when it comes to the T-Bone. Offered in 16- or 20-ounce servings, they start with USDA choice beef, cut into steaks in-house. Be sure to order the hash browns as your potato; their’s are the best in town.  
— SW

**Native Filet Mignon, Johnny’s Café:** This storied Omaha steakhouse is situated in the heart of the old stockyards. The Native Filet Mignon is one of their signature dishes and their most tender cut, served at 9 ounces. Or you can opt for the Petite version, which at 6 ounces is one of their healthy selections.  
— SW

**Prime Rib, Pink Poodle Steakhouse:** Crescent, Iowa’s Pink Poodle is a fun little jaunt for local foodies. It’s also well known as the destination for the area’s best prime rib, served with a standout au jus. Choose from the regular cut, cut-and-a-half or the big time Diamond Jim Cut, “for the extra-hearty eater.”  
— SW

**Prime New York Strip Steak, Mahogany Prime Steakhouse:** Mahogany offers fine steaks in a classy atmosphere, helping make this satisfying 14-ounce New York strip a voter favorite. All steaks are seasoned with kosher salt, black pepper and butter. Diners can

add a béarnaise, hollandaise or peppercorn sauce to dress it up even more.

— SW

**Hawaiian Ribeye, Charleston’s:** This 14-ouncer is marinated then grilled to order over hardwood. The five-state chain also offers distinctive sides like burgundy mushrooms, sweet glazed carrots and fried okra alongside the more typical French fries, baked potato, rice and others.

— SW

### SPICIEST DISH

**Pepper Steak, Thai Spice:** Thai Spice offers an array of cuisine at its two locations, but the Thai-style pepper steak is the voter favorite for spicy. Tender slices of beef are sautéed in a light Thai sauce with onions, red and green bell peppers and carrots, then served over steamed jasmine rice.

— SW

**Smoked Hot Wings, Bighorn Mountain BBQ:** This locally owned joint is known for juicy, tender brisket, but its smoked hot wings also impress those who love spicy eats. The menu warns diners up front that these are “no joke hot.” As a bonus, all of Big Horn’s sauces are homemade.

— SW

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GREATER OMAHA CHAMBER

# Allez Cuisine!

by Charles Schlusel

## *The Wonders of the Farmer's Market*

Yes, I know some of my friends think I'm a little extreme in my devotion to the joys of local farmer's markets. People stopping by my office on a cold and blustery February morning may find me staring longingly at the brightly colored pictures of fruits and vegetables on a postcard advertising the Omaha Farmer's Market. Many friends will tell me it's way too much trouble; "Why get up early on a Saturday morning, just go to your local biggie mart and save yourself the extra z's — it's all the same, right?" My answer: No. Not even in the same ballpark. Is playing in little league the same as playing in the College World Series? They are both played in Nebraska with basically the same equipment, but the experience is light years apart.

**"Once you experience the incredible taste differences of eating something picked mere hours before consumption, you will be forever ruined."**

At this point I must put a disclaimer in the article. Once you experience the incredible taste differences of eating something picked mere hours before consumption, you will be forever ruined. There's no going back to the biggie mart's idea of fresh produce — something picked halfway around the world, then stored in a warehouse a few weeks or months and then shipped across country where it can sit on the shelf a few more weeks before you take the "fresh" produce home.

To illustrate, several years ago I was at a gathering at a friend's home when he asked if I wanted to take home some tomatoes his neighbor had given him since he really didn't really like them very much. After staring at him in utter disbelief a loud "what"

escaped my lips. "You don't like homegrown tomatoes?" I asked, and to which he replied: "I guess they're OK, but is there really any difference between these and what I get at the store? Plus, we're not really planning on making BLT's or hamburgers anytime soon." At this point I began to extol all the wonders, virtues and joys of consuming an honest to goodness homegrown tomato. Knife in hand I soon had a plate of half-inch slices adorned with only salt and fresh cracked black pepper. He skeptically cut into one, lifted fork to mouth, slowly chewed, contemplated and soon the kitchen was filled with exclamations of "Oh my gosh! WOW! This is incredible!" I sagely nodded my head knowing a new convert had seen the light and would soon be making pilgrimages of his own to the backs of rusty pickups and tables set up in parking lots. Soon, in fact, he was telling me stories of his great finds and of coming home to his family with grocery sacks filled with homegrown tomatoes that he then turned into amazing salsas, salads, sandwiches and more.

**"This is incredible! I sagely nodded my head knowing a new convert had seen the light."**

Tomatoes are just one of the wonderful things awaiting you at the local farmer's market. And don't even get me started on sweet corn. (The longer you wait to eat it the more the sugar content turns to starch.) I hope this will encourage you to visit one of the many local farmer's markets here in the Omaha metro area. My favorite is The Old Market Farmer's Market, which takes place every Saturday at 11th and Jackson from 8 a.m.-12:30 pm. (The first one is May 7 this year, and there is also an off-shoot of the Old Market Farmer's Market setting up at Ak-Sar-Ben Village at 67th and Center, which will be open Sundays 9 a.m.-1 p.m. starting May 8.)

So, how about it? On May 7 pull yourself out of bed and pick up some tomatoes, corn, cucumbers, onions, zucchini, several handfuls of fresh herbs ... and then head on home and go online to your favorite food web site and type in the main ingredients you have, hit search and decide which recipe sounds best. Or better yet, have your own "Iron Chef" moment and create your own succulent variation on today's secret ingredients. In the words of the immortal kitchen stadium master "Allez Cuisine!"



### **RECIPE: Heirloom Tomato & Fresh Mozzarella Tower**

- 4 medium sized heirloom/homegrown tomatoes, thickly sliced
- 4 fresh mozzarella balls (preferably packed in water), thickly sliced
- 3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup each of red onion and Italian flat leaf parsley, diced fine
- 2 cloves garlic diced fine
- 1/4 cup Italian flat leaf parsley chopped fine
- 2 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp dry mustard
- 1/2 cup red wine vinegar
- 1/2 tsp each kosher salt and fresh cracked black pepper (plus extra for seasoning tomatoes).

Whisk last eight ingredients in a bowl until mixed well, then slowly add the olive oil in a thin stream, whisking to incorporate.

**To serve:** season tomato slices lightly with salt and pepper. Layer starting with a tomato slice, drizzle with a dash of the prepared vinaigrette, then add a slice of mozzarella and repeat for two or three layers.



# Finding the Food

by Marq Manner

## *Down Cobblestone Lincoln Highway to the Restaurants of Main Street Elkhorn*

My latest adventure to find pockets of food outside of the Omaha area didn't bring me far away from town. A short jaunt down the historic cobblestone Lincoln Highway brought me to the familiar old main street of Elkhorn. The difference was that there seemed to be an existence of life this time around. The once barren main street was now bustling with four restaurants of different ilk. I decided to call this trip good right there, and started digging into what Elkhorn now offers. The four restaurants on the strip are Boyd & Charlie's BBQ, Bella Vita Restaurante, Heartland Café and Shevy's Sports & Steaks.

I made three trips to the area but unfortunately did not get to Bella Vita before my deadline; I was saving that for last as the authentic Italian restaurant looked to be the most interesting and unique. Here's what I do know: The restaurant's lunch prices are in the \$10-15 range and feature standard fare such as Fettuccine Alfredo, and their Lasagna Rustica to more creative dishes like the Pollo Sicilian, which is listed as marinated chicken breast sautéed with onions, garlic, capers, artichokes, fresh tomatoes and herbs in a white wine reduction. The dish is served with herb-buttered pasta. Their dinner entrée's go from \$15 to just over \$25 and feature, among other items, a New York Strip, a braised pork shank and tilapia fillet. Bella Vita

also features an extensive wine list, and upon peeking in, it looks like a charming place. I look forward to getting there soon.

I got to Boyd & Charlie's BBQ first. I am always going to choose barbecue first. The restaurant has a bar and grill vibe with booths, tables and a bar. It has a bit of a suburban feel due to its knick-knacks and larger items purposely placed around the interior. The first thing that caught my attention was a sign outside the venue stating that

**“What Elkhorn has done with the older part of their town should be something that many small towns near Omaha should look at as a model... a destination spot.”**

on Saturdays one can carry out a \$10 rack of ribs between 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. That is an outstanding deal for tailgating and parties, and I am told it's a popular attraction. I saddled up to the bar, and got a honey BBQ platter that I do not currently see on their online menu.

These were tender, smoky ribs with a delicious sweet honey BBQ sauce — just enough for lunch and not overkill on portion size. They served the ribs with some battered fries — which I am never a fan of — which gave me a chance to taste all of their normal sauces. The vinegary sauces (which I am also never a fan of) didn't compare to the fantastic honey-based sauce that were on the ribs. There was a good bar atmosphere and the prices were reasonable (\$10-15 for entrées); they served fantastic smoked meat with typical sauces. I will go back to try the brisket, pork and other meat items. It seemed like they had the smoking down just fine.

I took a couple of friends out to The Heartland Café the next weekend for an early afternoon lunch. It was a beautiful fall day and our plan was to get full before one of the early-starting Husker games. Outside we were offered a Scandinavian pastry from a very excited “salesman” at Little Scandinavia, a quaint ethnic knick-knack store on the strip. While the pastry was good, this added to the fun “walk-around atmosphere” of the area, something I feel Elkhorn residents and shop owners are going out of their way to create. We chose the patio option at The Heartland Café. It was nicely shaded, with a lawn and some murals painted on the wooded fences surrounding it. It looks like they use the area for events in the summer, and I would love to see some music there this coming year if available. The patio was a nice option but the flies were out in full force, and while this drove some inside, we persevered.

I went for the least healthy choice but the best sounding item on the menu, a meatloaf sandwich with bacon-wrapped meatloaf, served open-faced on homemade grilled rye bread with mashed potatoes and gravy. You can also have it topped with caramelized onions; I opted out of that. This was as devilish as it sounds. The meatloaf was tender and seasoned just right, and the skin-on mashed potatoes and gravy made for a solid, warm and substantial base. It was the rye bread that was winning me over. First of all, I could smell it through all that other goodness, and then it dominated in a good way when I could get all of the ingredients on the same fork. That was real-deal rye bread. The Heartland Café is also a bakery, and I have a feeling I will be making a return trip just to check out the baked goods. One of the friends in my group considers himself a chicken fried steak expert — he has literally walked out of cafés for not having the item on the menu. So he, of course, ordered the Chicken Fried Steak n’ Eggs, and afterwards proclaimed them amongst the best he has ever

had. After listening to him talk about chicken fried steak and some of the stories he has, I would consider this the ultimate compliment. His female companion ordered the Greek Chicken Salad; this was made from scratch with grilled chicken, feta cheese, tomato, red onion and romaine lettuce with lemon oregano vinaigrette. She also expressed a fondness for the salad. The Heartland Cafés website advertises that many blues festivals and roots-based events happened there this past summer. I hope they get the word out more on these events this year. I would like to experience those styles of music in that atmosphere.

The final trip down the Lincoln Highway happened on the first cold day of the fall. The goal was to watch some football and eat some red meat. I was one of the first and only patrons on this early Sunday afternoon. I was promptly waited on by a friendly waitress who suggested the Shevy Melt, which ended up being a sloppy mix of watery cheese and shaved prime rib on an open faced piece of sour dough bread. It was fine, but a thicker slice of meat and melting quality cheese thickly over the sandwich would have been preferred. Again, it was served with battered fries, but these didn’t go over the top and were tolerable. The bar and restaurant has a good mix of meat on the menu, including a walleye, prime rib, a Kansas City Strip, and a Heisman Club Steak. The Heisman serves as a fun theme in part of the restaurant, as they have pictures of every Heisman winner surrounding the party room. There is also the main bar room and a dining room that has an old school feeling to it. I liked the small town bar vibe of the place, and that they were not trying too hard to be this uber-suburban sports bar. What Elkhorn has done with the older part of their town should be something that many small towns near Omaha should look at as a model. Putting a quality and attractive assortment of restaurants and shops will make your area a destination spot.

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# THE BLUES

by Matt Biggins

## Nothing Depressing about Intense Flavors found in Blue Cheeses

As the legend goes, a young man was enjoying a simple lunch of bread and sheep's milk cheese. Capturing his attention was a beautiful woman off in the distance. Stashing his meal in a nearby cave, he dashed off to pursue this lovely creature. As happens so often, his pursuit removed all other concerns from his head. Returning several months later, he found his abandoned meal. Upon closer inspection he realized that his cheese had transformed. Attacked by mold! For whatever reason, be it boldness, foolishness or curiosity (probably a mix of all three), he tasted it. At that moment, the world was introduced to what would become among the most famous of the blues, Roquefort.

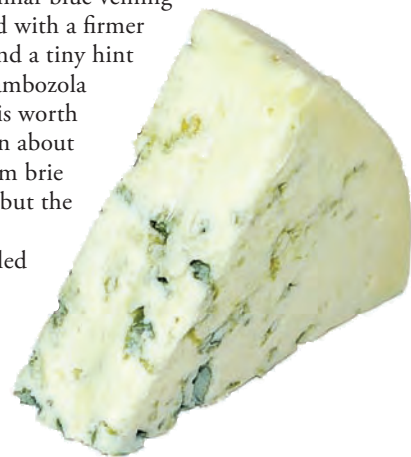
What this man couldn't know at the time was that his cheese had been consumed by the bacteria *Penicillium* (*penicillium roqueforti*, to be precise). This small bug is responsible for the wonderful blue-green veins of mold that transform ordinary cheese into the pungent yet sublime cheeses known generally as "blue." There are a myriad of varieties of *Penicillium* out there, but they all produce some of the world's most seemingly intimidating cheeses. Produced from cow, sheep and goat milk, blue cheeses are generally pungent, sharp and slightly salty. Used to produce the ubiquitous salad dressing, it's also popular on pastas and atop virtually any slab of meat.

For years, the only source of fine blue cheese was Europe. It was thus, if you could find it, quite expensive. Enter Frederick

and Robert Maytag, whose grandfather had started the Maytag appliance company. With the time and money that such lineage affords a person, they were able to take the work of two pioneering microbiologists from Iowa State University, Clarence Lane and Bernard W. Hammer, and begin the production of a domestic blue. The cheese produced by the Maytags has been one of the best-selling and most ubiquitous blue cheeses in the United States. It's a beautiful straight-forward blue, without rind and wrapped in foil. It's very nearly too strong for a cheese plate. But when used in dressings or recipes Maytag, like the sharp tasting Roquefort, is sublime.

Don't let the strength of blue cheese turn you off; there's a tremendous array of blues out there. There are great, subtle varieties out there such as the Rogue River Blue. It's produced in Oregon and wrapped in grape leaves. It has all the wonderful pungency of blue but in a subtler, slightly fruitier wedge. Or try a Shropshire Blue, from the U.K. It has the familiar blue veining with a color similar to cheddar and with a firmer texture and nicely rounded taste and a tiny hint of smoke. One of my favorites, Cambozola (if you can find the black label, it is worth the extra bucks), which I've written about previously, is a blend of triple cream brie and blue cheese. Sure to please all but the most timid eater.

In dressings, atop a piece of grilled meat or by itself, you'd be hard pressed to find more complex and intense flavors anywhere in the food world than those found in blue cheeses. As always, explore, research and enjoy.



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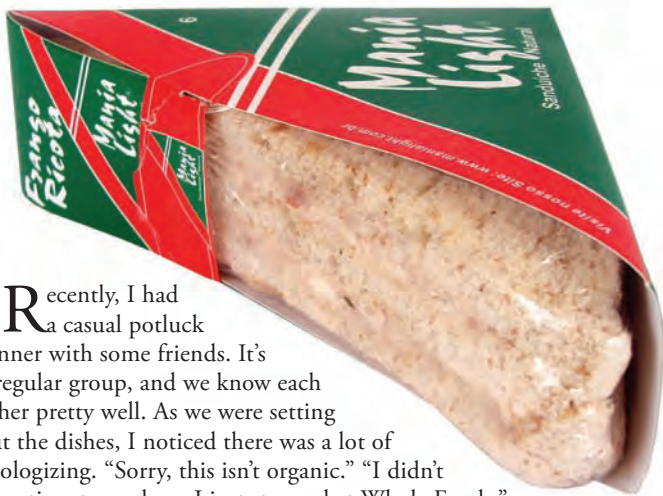
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# Food Guilt by Brian Smith

## *Eat it now, apologize never*



Recently, I had a casual potluck dinner with some friends. It's a regular group, and we know each other pretty well. As we were setting out the dishes, I noticed there was a lot of apologizing. "Sorry, this isn't organic." "I didn't have time to cook, so I just stopped at Whole Foods." "I know this is totally junk food, but the kids wanted it."

It shouldn't surprise anyone. Americans are riddled with anxiety. We think people are always watching us and judging us. Our friends, our partners, our co-workers, our families, even complete strangers. This phenomenon extends to food in a big way. Pay attention to your thought process when ordering a meal at a restaurant. Oh, sure, you'll start off thinking about what sounds good, but you'll end up wondering what your dining partner will think of your choice before your drink comes.

Food culture and media is full of ever-shifting advice. Don't eat so much fat. Don't eat so much salt. Alcohol might increase your chances of heart disease. No, wait. Red wine is good for your heart. Drink it anyway. Go vegetarian. Do the Paleolithic Diet. Eat full-fat like the French. And then there's Jesse, the eco-warrior on "The Simpsons": "I'm a level five vegan. I won't eat anything that casts a shadow."

**"We think people are always judging us. This phenomenon extends to food in a big way."**

In his cult classic book, *The One-Straw Revolution*, Japanese farmer Masanobu Fukuoka calls these "diets of principle." They are decisions we make based on philosophy or social pressures. They have nothing to do with food, nutrition or the human's place in nature. Fukuoka contends that the more discriminating we become, the further from the truth we become. If you consider all the confusion we experience with our food choices, you might think that he is right.

Our modern food system is astonishing. If we all went back to farming and ate what we produced locally, you'd never have another drop of coffee or tea. No hummus with sesame tahini. No sushi in this landlocked state unless you were desperate enough to eat something raw from the Missouri river. At least we could drown our sorrows in beer since barley and hops will grow nicely in Nebraska. These days, due to our ability to ship and store produce and process the hell out of it, we can generally get any food we want, any time

we want. I'd like to see more people grow food, but I'd argue that the pendulum has swung too far in the last 100 or so years.

Interestingly, this timeline coordinates with a lot of food fanaticism and extreme health claims. John Kellogg, creator of those little corn flakes, advocated for vegetarianism and yogurt enemas to heal various diseases. Sylvester Graham, the cracker man, also advocated a vegetarian diet, mainly to "cure" sexual urges and alcoholism. Kellogg, Graham and other health advocates of their day were highly religious and members of the temperance movement. They had a lot of influence over how we approach food and health.

Of course, they weren't the first to cause worry over diet. All ancient cultures had food laws and rules over who could eat certain things. Kosher and halal laws have survived many generations. There's nothing new in feeling like people are watching you. They are. The guy at the grocery store checkout comments on everything you buy. Your waitress thinks you should really consider a salad instead of the Alfredo. And your entire family can't believe how many desserts you ate at Thanksgiving when you were little. It's natural for us to observe and comment on what other people are doing. We're only human.

So, friends, the next time we eat together, don't worry about apologizing to me. I will love you just the same, even if I do wonder what the hell you were thinking when you bought that junk.

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# FOOD SERVICE WARRIOR

Why Serving Others — Especially Groups — is Cool  
by Tammi Hunter


If you've read this article at all for the last few years, you would notice that the writers were always men. Not to say that I don't want to hear what they have to say about serving or bartending or the like. I do. But maybe it's time to hear what a woman would say about this industry of "cool." OK, so what, I think what I do is cool. Can you say that about your job? I've met and waited on some crazy famous people. To name a few: Tyra Banks, Warren Buffet, LeBron James and Alexander Payne. I don't have a chat with them about modeling or money or movies, but I do find out interesting tidbits to tell all my friends and family. That's cool to me.

**"Ask, 'What will make this night seamless for you?' And then make it happen. That is what makes you money."**

If you are a woman in this industry, you know smarts count. Knowing about wine and food preparation is invaluable, but really, knowing how to multitask — and for lack of better terms — knowing how to get it done. Everyone wants someone around that knows how to handle ANY situation well. If you are that girl you can lead a party of 50, no problem. I want that opportunity every time it's available.

**"Good days and bad days come without fail... But that day you walk in and get the best party, you remember why you started doing this."**

Step up, girl, and greet the host of the party with a smile and ask, "What will make this night seamless for you?" And then make it happen. When everything goes right and the stars align and everything is perfect for them (the key here is them) — nothing beats that. That is what makes you money. They want the perfect party, and out of nowhere they would like appetizer platters and a \$125 bottle of wine. They might want 10 of them. But you pull it off without a hitch — what a great feeling! I get to leave work with



a pocket of dough and a cold beer waiting in the wings, or at least at the late night hang out. And no homework. What a wonderful day ... and maybe the next day I won't have to work at all.

Good days and bad days come without fail. It all kind of turns into a wash in the end. But that day you walk in and get the best party, you remember why you started doing this. You thank god that you went to the last wine tasting so you knew some strange information about the bottle they wanted to open. It sold the night, and made your night in the process. It is fun when we all go to work, get our ass kicked, and show up at the bar ready to drink and tell a great uplifting story about the wonderful night of knowledge and excitement and tips — tips make it fun. Makes my day, every time. Even when it's eight long lost ladies rejoining for a 55 year high school reunion. They are my party for a while.

**"Big groups have rhythm, ebb and flow of what is done, and it almost leads itself. It puts me in the groove..."**

Normally six or more of anyone is fun. Parties want time and that's what any server can give them. Take a party of eight in a business meeting. They want wine, cocktails and lots of uninterrupted time. Couples are great as long as they aren't "making out" the whole time or on their cell phones, which not only drives each of them crazy but me, too. Cell phones kill — beware. Just trying to get their attention to see what they want for a salad, except that they're on their phone — unbelievable!

Big groups have rhythm, ebb and flow of what is done, and it almost leads itself. It puts me in the groove just like them; cocktail, appetizer, wine, salad, more wine, main, then coffee and desserts. Couples can do this, too, it is just rare. Ebbs and flows are what happen in this industry. I can't tell you if I will magically come home with three to five hundred dollars, but I have a better chance than anyone in a regular job.

# Cigar Bars Reviewed

*Reviewing the Cigar Bar Exemption and Five of the State's Seven Cigar Bars*

by John Larkin



With Nebraska's Cigar Bar exemption to the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air Act celebrating its first birthday, I thought it would be a good time to take a closer look at the landscape that this hard-fought bill created. During the debate of LB 355 (The Cigar Bar exemption) State Sens. Arnie Stuthman (Platte Center) and Bill Avery (Lincoln) argued repeatedly that the health of all Nebraskans would be at risk if this bill passed because every bar would become a cigar bar to skirt the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air act enacted in the previous session, and that rampant lying and misreporting would go on by these businesses just so that their customers could smoke cigars indoors. Well, one year after the bill became law, I would take a good deal of satisfaction if these senators would humbly admit they were dead wrong (I won't hold my breath).

**“There have been only seven establishments throughout the state of Nebraska to take advantage of this exemption... five in Omaha, one in Lincoln and one in Grand Island.”**

Since the new class of liquor license became available, there have been only seven establishments throughout the state of Nebraska to take advantage of this exemption. There are five in Omaha, one in Lincoln and one in Grand Island. Hardly the tidal wave of cigar bars predicted by the anti-tobacco at-all-costs activists. Of these seven, five were established businesses hurt deeply by the smoking ban and may not have continued functioning if not for LB 355. I know of at least two others that had to close because of loss of business caused by the ban. Only two new businesses have opened to take advantage of this law.

Obviously these small numbers would point to facts stated by the bill's sponsor Senator Scott Lautenbaugh during debate that this is a niche business and that false reporting by licensees to be highly unlikely given the Liquor Commission's heavy hand in dealing with such. And that smoke causing problems with neighbors would also not be a problem given the section of the law dealing with proper air purification.

In that light I, for one, appreciate Sen. Lautenbaugh's determination to get this done for those of us in the cigar business. Creating jobs in the small business sector and not eliminating them through legislation should be commended at this time in our nation's history.

With that, I'll get off my soap box and give you some useful information on our state's cigar bars.

## **The Havana Garage** 1008 Howard St., Omaha ([thehavanagarage.com](http://thehavanagarage.com))

Located in the Old Market, The Havana Garage is owned by Chaz Kline, who's also owner of S.G. Roi cigars. First thing you'll

notice walking up is the old school ceiling fans. Big tropical blades rotate on a motor and belt system that instantly makes you think of an open-air café in the Caribbean. Havana Garage specializes in rum and rum cocktails as well as single malt Scotch and bourbon. A walk-in humidor in the basement offers a good selection of cigars, although they're priced at slightly above retail. Try their signature cocktail, aptly named the "Havana Garage," a wonderful drink that will take you to a truly relaxed state.

## **Cigarros** 13110 Birch Dr., Suite 108, Omaha ([cigarrosomaha.com](http://cigarrosomaha.com))

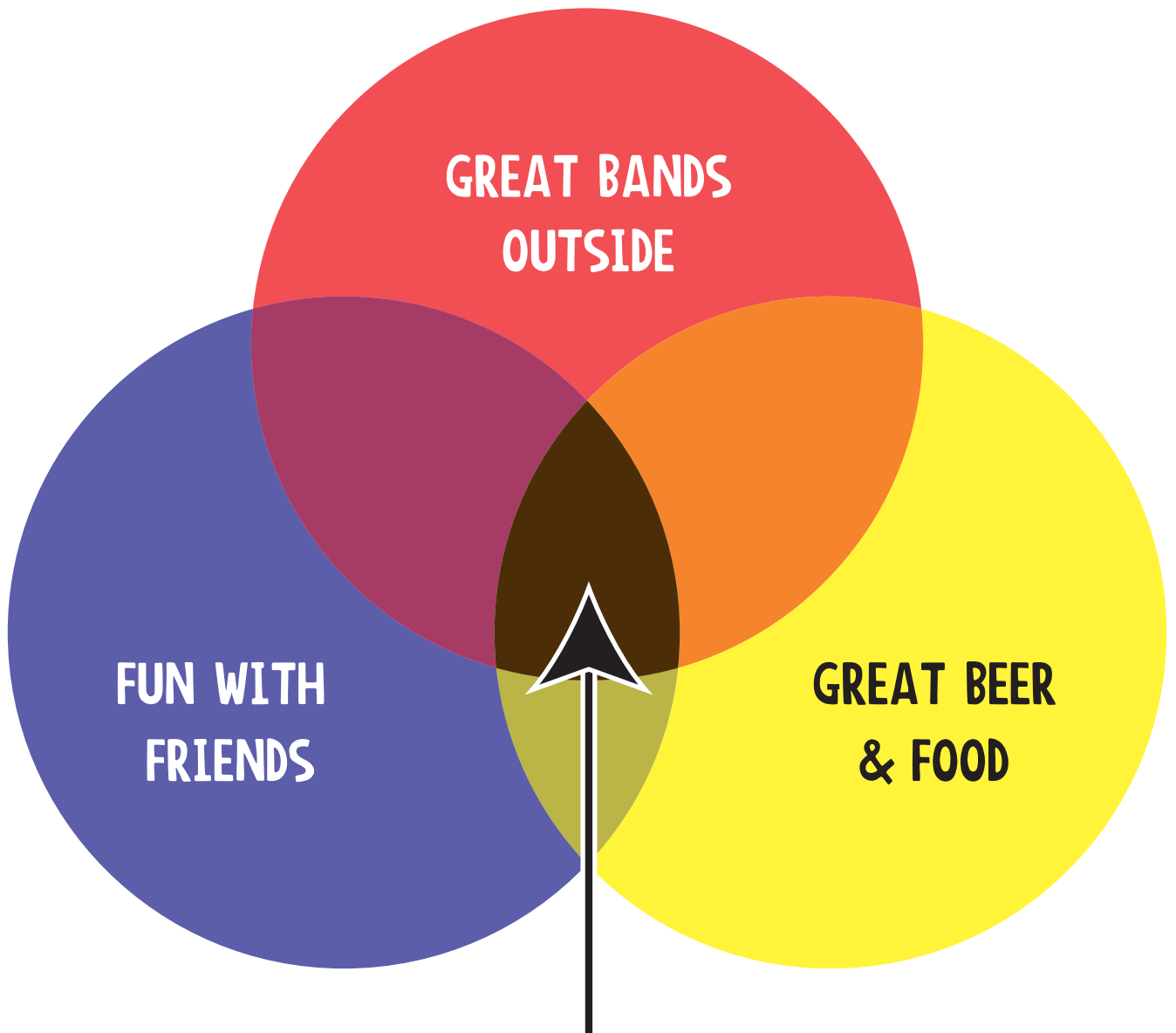
Omaha's oldest true cigar bar, you can find Cigarros in the strip mall off at 132nd and Maple Street. With comfortable tables and leather lounge chairs you'll be as comfortable as possible as you enjoy a drink and a smoke at this establishment. Wonderful woodwork gives the building a warm and exclusive feel. Cigarros boasts a humidor that's as beautiful as it is big with an amazing selection of handmade cigars from across the board. But with all the class and opulence comes a price. Expect to pay a few more bucks a stick for your cigars and drinks than normal at Cigarros, but with that comes an experience more akin to country club than your every day bar.

## **Jake's Cigars & Spirits** 14th and P St., Lincoln 6206 Maple St., Omaha ([jakescigars.com](http://jakescigars.com))

In the heart of the Benson bar and music district, Jake's has two bars to serve your needs. The larger of the two is non-smoking but provides a heated indoor/outdoor smoking patio and beer garden. The cigar bar, while smaller, provides comfortable high-backed stools and custom made tables adorned with cigar bands from throughout the industry. While specializing in craft beer with 12 rotating taps and 140-plus bottled beers Jake's also has an impressive selection of high-end vodka, tequila, rum, gin, liqueurs and of course, bourbon and Single malt scotch. A well-stocked humidor charging market retail prices will keep you from feeling angst about buying your smoke at the bar. A friendly and inclusive atmosphere prevails in one of the city's most exciting and up-and-coming neighborhoods in Omaha. When you're done drinking, grab some off sale for the road from the full service liquor store located in the front.

## **Ravenite Ultra Lounge** 2615 S. 144th St., Omaha

The second of the new cigar bars, Ravenite also doubles as a hookah lounge. Beautiful wood paneling adorns the walls along with good use of slate tile, giving Ravenite an upscale feel. They have a well stocked — and well-priced Scotch — selection to go along with their walk in humidor. Comfortable lounge chairs around glass coffee tables make smoking here very relaxing. Ravenite also features DJs on the weekend for entertainment and dancing.



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# Chardonnay by John Fischer

## *Matching its Many Styles with Food*

Chardonnay is the most planted wine grape in the United States. Although it is somewhat of a trendy wine, there is little doubt about its popularity: Chardonnay is the most loved wine in America. Why? It's hard to say, as the wine has certainly had its ups and downs in both quality and price. However, the American public knows the wine, and familiarity seems able to support its popularity.

Chardonnay is a wine with several faces. The many styles of this wine can be attributed to a number of factors. Perhaps the most prominent among these factors are the ministrations performed on the grape by the crafty hand of the winemaker. These include such methods as malolactic fermentation (converting tart acidity to mellow acidity), oak aging and yeast selection. Other factors are related to grape farming: climate, soil, location, clonal type and root stock.

Because Chardonnays can span the full gamut style-wise, it is difficult to know what any particular bottle of Chardonnay will taste like. The wine can be big, oaky, rich, soft, round and bursting with tropical fruit on the one hand — while at the other end of the spectrum it can be crisp, fresh, light and steely with citrus and green apple flavors. In between these two extremes can be found a multitude of various styles. We'll approach the many styles by considering the country of origin.

**“Because Chardonnays can span the full gamut style-wise, it is difficult to know what any particular bottle of Chardonnay will taste like.”**

Chardonnay's origin is uncertain; nevertheless, there is little doubt that its reputation was established in Burgundy, France. Here we again find a spectrum of styles. The wines of Chablis are light, tart, fresh and crisp, with green apple-citrus flavors and steely minerality; these contrast with the big, rich, ripe, opulent tropical fruit flavored wines from Mersault. Yet, taken as a whole, French Burgundies are tarter and less encumbered than those from California and Australia, and have the greatest longevity of all Chardonnay wines.

In California you can find just about any wine style you can imagine. This makes the selection of a bottle of wine very difficult, short of tasting the wine. However, you will find cooler climate wines to be brighter, fresher and tarter. Oregon wines are more defined. The natural acidity in the grape provides the wine a certain verve and freshness that persists even when the wine is lightly aged

in oak. The apple-citrus flavored wines from Washington are gifted with the same fresh, crisp, bright acidity. Barrel fermenting adds a little more body and toasty, buttery flavors, yet the wines retain their freshness.

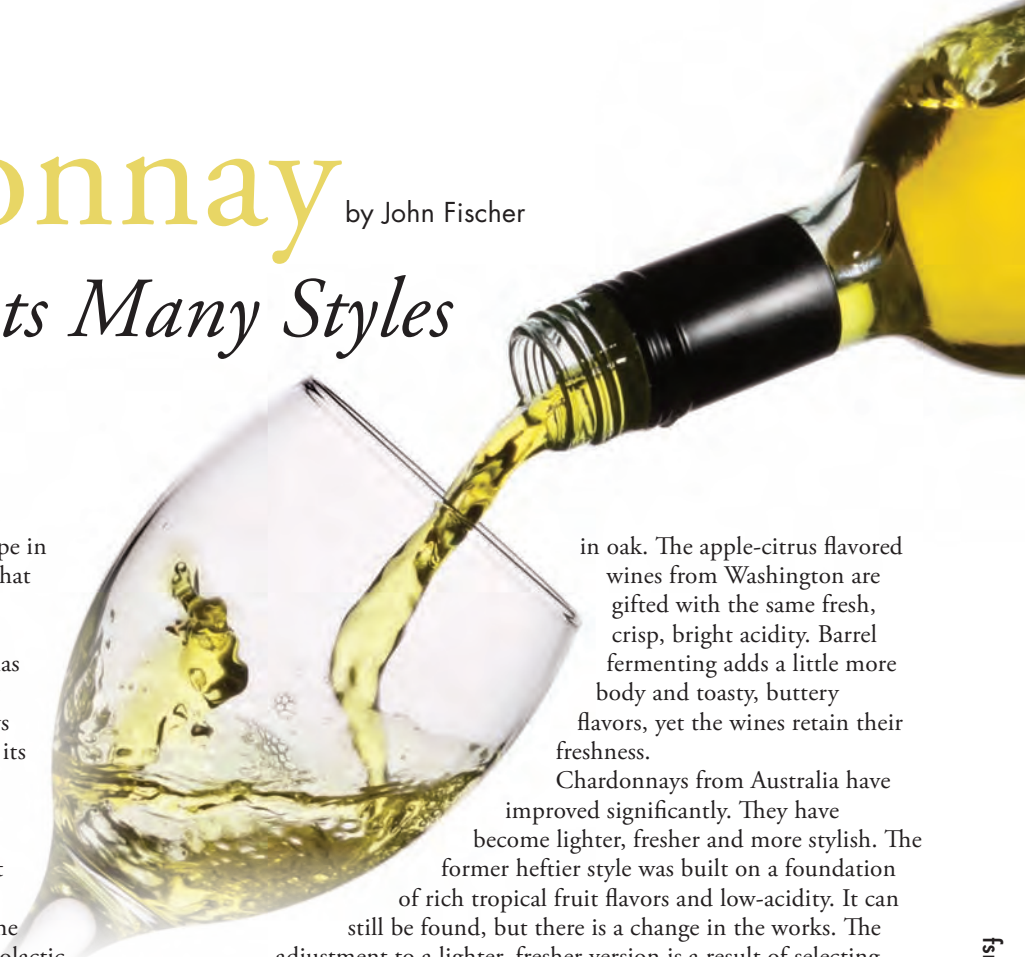
Chardonnays from Australia have improved significantly. They have become lighter, fresher and more stylish. The former heftier style was built on a foundation of rich tropical fruit flavors and low-acidity. It can still be found, but there is a change in the works. The adjustment to a lighter, fresher version is a result of selecting grapes grown in cooler regions: Margaret River, Adelaide Hills, Yarra Valley and Tasmania. The better wines see less oak and are light, crisp, fresh, and stylish.

Although New Zealand is best known for fabulous Sauvignon Blanc, don't underestimate their wonderful Chardonnays. The cool climate imparts sparkle and vitality to this varietal making the wines bright, fresh and citrusy. When oak and malolactic fermentation are used, there is care to see that it is done with great restraint. It is uncommon to come across big, toasty, buttery and vanilla-scented wine styles.

One of the prime considerations when pairing a wine with food is to match the weight of the wine to that of the food. That presents a big problem when you attempt to marry a big, heavy, oaky, buttery Chardonnay, which characteristically are low in acidity, with a big heavy dish. Without the benefit of weight-reducing acidity, the match is almost certain to be cloyingly heavy. Can you picture in your mind's eye a pairing of such a hefty wine with the likes of Fettuccini Alfredo? The wine is heavy, the food is heavy, and so will be the sensation you experience in your stomach.

The best type of Chardonnay to match with food is the light, fresh, crisp, citrusy, unoaked (or lightly oaked) style that is grown in cooler climates. Let me give you a few examples of such savory matches: The briny flavors of the sea found in fresh, raw oysters will match flawlessly with a mineral, steely flavored French Chablis. What could be better than a bright New Zealand Chardonnay with savory grilled redfish? Another great match is a tart, light, Oregon Chardonnay with a touch of buttery flavor paired with boiled lobster and buttered corn. Try to accent your pairing with flavors found in both the wine and food, as the buttery flavor does in the above example.

Look at the wine regions listed above and let your imagination roam. I'm sure that your sybaritic inclinations can come up with a number of great wine-food matches.



# Wine Q&A by John Finocchiaro

## The Best, the Worst, the Most and the Least

Wine, with all of its complexities, is basically a very simple product at its core. Grow some grapes, pick them, crush them and allow them to ferment. Serve at room temperature or chilled. That's it. But the mystique and intrigue surrounding the production and consumption of wine continually stirs debate, opinion and lively conversation. Here are a few of my favorite wine questions, along with my rather opinionated answers.

**“Merlot is safe. It is neutral. Kind of like elevator music. Or paint thinner.”**

*What is the best way to preserve a half-empty bottle of wine?*

There are a plethora of wine preservation systems on the market. All are based the theory of minimizing wine's contact with the open air, which causes spoilage over time. Some of the more popular systems over the years were hand pumps with special toppers, and aerosol cans filled with inert gases for spraying into the bottle prior to sealing the remains. Do they work? That's debatable. There are also high dollar Enomatic and Cruvinet systems, which work tremendously well but are not very practical — or affordable — for us common folk. So where does this leave us? Fear not. There is good news to report. The most practical, easiest and most effective way to save the “other half” of that bottle of wine is also the least expensive. Simply pour that half full bottle into a smaller container. An empty bottled water container is perfect. And fill it to the top; the less air space, the better. Trust me, it works. Pouring your fine wine from a water bottle may not create your preferred ambiance, but sipping on still-good wine will.

*What is the worst wine preservation system you have ever seen?*

Have you heard of wine “marbles?” Once upon a time there were wine marbles to drop into your partially-full bottle to displace

the air. And they were completely machine washable, with a cute little wine marble bag (yes, that's really what it was called). I firmly believe that this system does keep your wine fresh. And such a system would be all the rage if only one, all of our best stemware was made from lead, and not lead crystal, and two, earplugs and a spare “splatter” shirt were provided with every purchase. Also, we would need a manufacturer's guarantee against the breakage of that wine marble bag in your dishwasher. One can only imagine the gentle sound of Uzi shots ricocheting against the inside of one's dishwasher. Fun for the entire family.

*What is the most overrated wine variety?*

Placing a value on any wine is highly subjective. There is no right answer here. But since you are asking, I will say that the Merlot phenomenon that first hit this country a generation ago will never cease to amaze me. There are many great merlots in the world. The most renowned come from the right bank of the Bordeaux region of France, and they can be of world-class quality. But historically merlot was primarily used as a “filler” grape or as an additive to soften powerful, tannic cabernets and other various wine varieties. Merlot is also used to increase the supply of these other wines, as U.S. laws allow for the addition of up to 25 percent of other grape types in a varietally-named wine. Merlot was never really meant to stand on its own, with the exception of the aforementioned right bank of Bordeaux. By itself, most merlots — not all — tend to be inoffensive and pleasant but pretty forgettable. While the great wine regions of the world justifiably tout their exceptional Pinot Noir, Cabernet, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, etc., you just don't hear a lot of clamor over the fine Merlot regions of the world. Maybe there's a reason for that. Merlot is safe. It is neutral. Kind of like elevator music. Or paint thinner.

*What wine variety represents the best value?*

Five years ago I would have said that New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs were a steal. Since then, prices have crept up and are more

in line with their quality. Today I would say that the Malbecs from Argentina are the best bargain around. Once the masses of red wine aficionados discover them, prices will rise. Check them out before they do.

**“Malbecs from Argentina are the best bargain around. Once the masses of red wine aficionados discover them, prices will rise.”**

*And the most underappreciated wine is?*

This one is easy. Remember rose’? If you don’t, then you are obviously much younger than I. And if your idea of rose’ is a California White Zinfandel then you are not alone. Unfortunately you are also completely missing the boat. True rose’ is originally from France, is not innocuously sweet, and can be produced from many different grape types, in many different blends, in a wide range of styles. Rose’ can be a terrific accompaniment to many foods. They can be delightfully simple, or surprisingly complex. And their diversity is unmatched. Best of all, you do not have to pay a fortune for a good bottle of rose’. The irony here is that French rose’ is neither in short supply nor overly expensive but can be very hard to find. They are simply misunderstood and, therefore, scarcely represented in Midwest wine departments and largely omitted from restaurants wine lists. Do yourself a favor and search them out. You will be glad you did.

*How can I avoid drinking too much wine at one sitting?*

Wine is not beer. And if we are calibrated to drink wine in the same quantity, therein lies the problem. Know this: alcohol tends to dry one’s palate. As a result, alcoholic beverages may be the only liquid on the planet whose consumption actually increases one’s thirst. Discipline yourself to consume at least an equal amount of water when you drink wine. It’s easy, costs nothing, and it works. Glug the water for your thirst. Drink the wine for the taste.

*What’s the best way to improve the quality of your wines?*

Serving wine at the proper temperature is certainly advisable. And storing wine properly on its side is also a wise move, especially for those intended to age for long periods of time. But the best way to improve the taste of all of your wines, all of the time, is to invest in quality stemware. If you are not sold on the influence of quality stemware, try this simple test. Pour the same wine in two different wine glasses and try it yourself, and then try the same taste test with a friend, not revealing that it is the same wine in both glasses. Ask which wine is preferred. Watch their reaction when you tell them that it is the same wine in both glasses. Trust me, you will become a believer in the power of quality stemware. It may be overkill to have separate stemware for each different wine variety in your arsenal. But a quality red wine glass and white wine glass in your cupboard is a must.

So there you have it. Hopefully the above questions and subsequent answers have sparked some of your own opinions, and possibly some passionate disagreements. If so, then know that the magic of wine has once again succeeded in stirring lively conversation among friends. Salut!



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# YEAST INSPECTION:

*The mystical world of wild ales* by Jason McLaughlin



## **New Belgium Brewing Co. La Folie**

**6.0% ABV**

**Appearance: 3/3**

Pours a clear ruby red color with a large ivory colored head, leaving a blanket of lacing on the walls of the glass.

**Aroma: 9/12**

The nose is dominated by a sharp tart cherry aroma with a crisp note of acetic sourness. Other dark fruits (plum and lemons) come through as the beer warms.

**Taste: 19/25**

The flavor leaps into tart cherries with an additional black cherry complexity. Sourness is bracing initially, but balances mid-palate with bready malt sweetness. Notes of ripe stone fruit (plums and dates), berries, lemons and a faint bitter chocolate-like character create intense complexity. Acetic acid lends a vinegary quality. Medium in body and moderate carbonation with a dry finish and lingering acidity.

**Overall: 8/10**

An expertly-crafted version of the Belgian-style Flanders Red Ale. The tart fruitiness paired with the crisp acidity creates a symphony flavors. This is one of the great examples of an American made wild ale.

**Total Score: 39/50, A-**



## **Upstream Brewing Co. Grand Cru**

**9.4% ABV**

**Appearance: 1/3**

A hazy, coppery orange color with a small, bright white head. Lacing was minimal, but left a web of foam clinging to the glass.

**Aroma: 10/12**

Oak-aged white wine and sour grapefruit aroma pound through, leading to notes of barnyard funk and a mild sweetness of fresh candied apples.

**Taste: 18/25**

A fruity, malty sweetness builds in the flavor, balancing the acidity. Moderately sour with a tart citrus character complimented by candied apple and orchard fresh peach. A horse blanket quality from the wild yeast adds to its depth and complexity. Moderately dry finish partially due to barrel tannins. An oak and citrus character lasts long into the finish.

**Overall: 7/10**

The sweetness of this beer shines through more than most wild ales, and balances the acidity nicely. The complex fruit flavors blend well with the barrel characteristics. This beer was made quite some time ago, and may continue to develop even further. I suggest grabbing bottles for your cellar now, as this one will not be on shelves much longer.

**Total Score: 36/50, B+**



Wild ales are among the most mystical of all beers. Distinctively sour, utterly complex, and made from strains of yeast and bacteria shunned by most breweries, these beers rank among the most fascinating and flavorful of styles. The roots of wild ales are primarily in Belgium, where brewers to this day still use primitive brewing equipment and rely on indigenous wild yeast and bacteria to drive the fermentation process. A Belgian wild ale can contain hundreds of strains of these organisms, producing a beer that is incredibly unique. These Belgian wild ales are often aged for years in oak barrels and later blended to taste.

The sourness of wild ales does not appeal to all palates, and the experience of their lush fruitiness and acidity has often been compared to tasting wine. Those that do enjoy the complexity and crisp sourness of wild ales often find themselves increasingly drawn to the style (cravings and favoritism have been reported). Since the production of this type of beer is both time and labor intensive, be prepared for fine wine-like price tags as well.

Although wild ales have an immense historical background in Belgium and the surrounding region, many American breweries have begun to produce expertly made versions of their own. If you have never experienced what positive aspects *Lactobacillus* and *Brettanomyces* can contribute to your favorite carbonated adult beverage, may I please introduce you to the lively world of wild ales.



### **Odell Brewing Co. Deconstruction Ale**

**10.5% ABV**

**Appearance: 3/3**

Pours a hazy and vibrant golden orange color. A huge, bright white mousse-like head lasts virtually forever and blankets the glass with thick lace.

**Aroma: 10/12**

Sweet pineapple, fresh citrus zest and passion fruit dominate the nose with a soft, subtle spicy yeast character. Oaky notes from the barrel give this beer a rustic feel.

**Taste: 23/25**

There's a wallop of luscious fruit starting with ripe yellow pear and apricots, moving into sweet pineapple, mango and red grapefruit. A hint of Bourbon comes through with an oaky, vanilla character, and has a drying effect that helps balance the sweet fruit cocktail. Wild yeast adds a complimentary tartness. Dry finish, with spicy white pepper and oak that lasts into the aftertaste.

**Overall: 9/10**

Incredibly complex, this can be picked apart for hours. The high alcohol content is hidden well, and can sneak up on you. The wild yeast creates endless amounts of fruit flavors and aroma. This is a wonderful wild ale, and will develop well over time.

**Total Score: 45/50, A+**



### **Cantillon Kriek 100% Lambic**

**5.0% ABV**

**Appearance: 2/3**

Presents a brilliantly clear, deep apple red color with a thick, bright pink head that quickly dissipates, leaving sparse lacing around the edges.

**Aroma: 8/12**

Tart cherries burst out during the pour, turning into dark berries and currants. The sourness stands out with no sweetness on the nose. Subtle notes of horse blanket and peppery spice.

**Taste: 20/25**

As the gripping acidity mellows a tart cherry and currant flavor leads the way to notes of lemon, vanilla and leather. A subdued oaky character is present, as well as a grape vinegar quality. A very dry finish with a sourness that lasts long into the aftertaste.

**Overall: 8/10**

Intensely sour, this is a display of how far the style can be taken. Fruits are deep and dark, but the balance falls far into the lap of acidity. For those who love sour ales, this is the far end of that spectrum. If your taste buds can hang, this is the top of the hill, but you may want to check that you still have some enamel left on your teeth.

**Total Score: 38/50, A-**

# Bar Chat

by Dan Crowell

## *An Interview with Steve Jamrozy of The Side Door Lounge*



Steve Jamrozy, the creative force behind the Flatiron Café since its inception in 1995, has earned a reputation for doing things differently than pretty much everyone else out there. His unorthodox approach seems to me to be fueled by a refreshingly honest fascination and zest for life, along with a determination to draw willing adventurers and/or the blithely unsuspecting into experiencing his version of it. Whatever it is that drives him, the results of his efforts have been successful enough to afford him the opportunity to finally do something he's wanted to do for a very long time, which is open a bar. Not just any bar, though. A bar that doubles as a window into his world. Drinks that fascinate you. Visual cues that draw you in. An atmosphere that makes you feel comfortable and welcome, yet with an air of unpredictability about it.

**“People have asked me, ‘How did you find this place?’ Well, it really found us... I guess we found each other to give each other new life.”**

In an unobtrusive, yet beguiling little building located at 3530 Leavenworth St., Jamrozy has created the Side Door Lounge. The building itself is easily missed if you're not looking for it (not surprisingly, there is no front door), which is of course fits with the plan. Like the Flatiron Café, the Side Door is a paradox of bold understatement.

I had a chance recently to sit down for a conversation with Jamrozy about his latest creation.

**FSM: Tell me about your background.**

SJ: I take pride in being from the South Omaha packing house district. There's a little of that inside me. My father was a cattle driver in those yards. My parents were born here in Omaha, but all my grandparents were from Poland. Education wasn't big, so I started at the age of 15 at the French Café. That was the beginning of my formal education in this field. Even at a young age, I got burned out a little bit so I worked in the Stockyards for a year. That was way too brutal after the restaurant business, so I went back into it.

**“It was interesting. Great education. But I wasn't a corporate person.”**

I lived in Austin, Texas from '78 to '90. Staying in that field, I worked as a maître d' at the Paggi House (an Austin institution) and I worked for caterers. That was a great learning experience because my boundaries were wide open. I was able to experience every area of the service industry, from working behind the bar to cooking over open pits out at Governor (Mark) White's place and LBJ's ranch. Great experience. Fell in love with my wife on a trip back here. We became family teachers at Father Flanagan's Boys Town and did that for over two years. Then we started to have kids and this new project came around, Boston Chicken, which became Boston Market, and I was one of the first ones in. It was interesting. Everything was made fresh. Great education.

But I wasn't a corporate person. I didn't fit that mold at all. So then Jack Baker (Baker's Supermarkets) took me under his wing and I was serving decaffeinated coffee to blue-haired poodle walkers



at 5:30 in the morning. They'd ask for a 10 percent discount on a 25 cent cup. I couldn't do the math. "Let's see, 25 cents, 10, uh, 2.5 cents, ah, whatever you want to put in the jar." We looked at opening a chili restaurant, doing a variety of interesting chilis, and it was going to be small and a very casual thing. But it just didn't happen. It's like tornadoes touching the ground. Sometimes they're ready to touch and then they just dissipate. That one didn't quite touch. Then my grandmother died. She had this little old house in South Omaha that she willed to my brother and me. He bought me out for \$20,000. That \$20,000 went into the bank and that's what started that crazy thing (the Flatiron Café).

**FSM: Describe your philosophy behind the Side Door.**

**"They're leaving us love notes and saying this and that. Does it get any better than that?"**

SJ: People have asked me, "How did you find this place?" Well, it really found us. It's such a community project. Prior to this, being Benson & Williams Pharmacy, it was a hub for the community. It was an active scene. Then it had disappeared for so many years. So I guess we found each other to give each other new life. The direction was brought on by it. I followed its wave. Ultimately, my mind is about the music – I want to grow into that – and the craft (of creating cocktails). That is a new frontier and a great opportunity. We're all embracing it and we can grow with it. This has to be an oasis and a think tank for whoever wants to really come out and express themselves.

**FSM: So the Side Door is the result of two entities coming together that just needed to be together.**

SJ: Absolutely! It's a beautiful marriage. It's a great romance and love affair, and I think it's one of those things that can go on and get stronger and become a bit of an institution. I really believe that. But it has to take it at its pace. I can't force anything. I can put a few players together, hang out, open and shut the door ... people say it's mine, but you know what? It's not mine. I've given it to everybody who comes in. It's yours. Make it yours. And I mean that. Not even on a business end. Where we hang out, where we work, where we live, who we live with, where we have our cocktails; these are important parts of socializing and solving problems. It's where ideas are going to come about.

**FSM: You purposely avoided predetermining what the Side Door was going to be?**

SJ: There was a time when I agonized over it slightly, like, "What is it?" But once that front was sealed in and the bathrooms were framed in, and I jumped off the fence, or the bridge as I call it, and put in acoustical panels, it was clear as a bell. All of the sudden it had identity. We're going to be available for singer-songwriters, music, poetry, comedy – we had a poetry reading our first week. I love that!

**FSM: What has the feedback been from your customers?**

SJ: I am a stimulation junkie. It's nice to get patronized, but the love note is what I'm all about. The love note charges me. Are you kidding? I'm coming in and they're leaving us love notes and saying this and that. That is what it is all about. That's romantic! Does it get any better than that?



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# Libation Conversation by Dan Crowell

## *Oaxaca Old Fashioned*



Observant devotees of *Food & Spirits Magazine* may have stumbled across a column of mine a while back that took a closer look at what's called the Old Fashioned cocktail. In that column I sang the praises of this simple yet fascinatingly complex cocktail made typically from Bourbon (or sometimes Rye) whiskey, bitters, sugar (usually in cube form), a dash of water and muddled orange and cherry. I also made the point that the historically accurate Old Fashioned cocktail is a representative example of the original definition of the word "cocktail" itself. To wit:

**"Thoughtful experimentation can sometimes be richly rewarded... In the case of the Oaxaca Old Fashioned, the results are exceptional."**

"One of the earliest definitions of the word 'cocktail' committed to print appears to describe fairly closely the original Old Fashioned. The May 13, 1806 edition of the Hudson, N.Y. periodical, *The Balance and Columbian Repository*, in response to a reader's inquiry, defines the cocktail in this way:

"Cock tail, then, is a stimulating liquor, composed of spirits of any kind, sugar, water and bitters ... it is vulgarly called a bittered sling, and is supposed to be an excellent electioneering potion inasmuch as it renders the heart stout and bold, at the same time it fuddles the head."

One of the countless great things about cocktails is that thoughtful experimentation can sometimes be richly rewarded. It's important to have a healthy respect and pay attention to the classics, those venerable old concoctions whose elegance and sublime

balance have stood the test of time. To have an unquenchable desire to embrace and incorporate the flavors of new or newly discovered spirits, elixirs and essences. These pursuits in concert with one another, and with a dash of creativity and adventure thrown in, can yield fascinating results. In the case of the Oaxaca Old Fashioned, the results are exceptional. I discovered this cocktail recently while researching Mezcal and its associated cocktail applications.

**"Access high-quality mezcals in the U.S. has increased in recent years, which has turned the tide in favor of incorporating them into a variety of cocktails that highlight their rich, intriguing complexity."**

"Mezcal" and "cocktail" are two terms that one rarely sees together. A deeper look into the history, production and traditions surrounding mezcal reveals how and why that has come to be the case. Mezcal and tequila share a common heritage, which dates back to the Spanish Conquistadors applying the knowledge of distillation they learned from the Moors to a derivative of the drink of choice of the indigenous Aztecs, "pulque," the fermented sap of the agave plant. Tequila and mezcal also share a great many similarities in terms of production. In fact, Tequila is a specific form of mezcal, much as Cognac is a specific form of brandy, with its own proprietary rules and restrictions. Mezcals are produced throughout Mexico (the state of Oaxaca is famous for its mezcals) from a number of varieties of the agave plant, whereas tequila is produced from only one variety of agave, the Blue Agave or agave azul tequiliana weber, and is produced almost entirely within the Mexican state of Jalisco.

The production of mezcal differs from that of tequila in a few important ways. Instead of steam baking the cores, or pinas, of the agave plants in clay ovens to derive fermentable sugars, mezcal producers bake the pinas in wood-fired rock-lined earthen pits, allowing the pinas to absorb the flavors from the earth, rock and wood smoke that surrounds them. This creates a distinct, earthy smokiness on the palate that distinguishes mezcal from tequila. Also, many mezcals are single distilled whereas tequilas are double distilled. This tends to give tequila the advantage in the smoothness category. These elements can render mezcal a more challenging element to utilize when creating a cocktail.

However, access to very high-quality, single-village mezcals in the U.S. market has increased in recent years, which has turned the tide in favor of incorporating these spectacular liquids into a variety of cocktails that highlight their rich, intriguing complexity.

Enter the Oaxaca Old Fashioned. Here's one recipe:

## Oaxaca Old Fashioned

¼ - ½ oz agave nectar (to taste)

½ oz Del Maguey Crema de Mezcal

1 ½ oz Jose Cuervo Tradicional 100% Blue Agave Reposado Tequila

2 dashes Angostura bitters

Flamed orange peel (garnish)

Combine all ingredients (except garnish) in a cocktail shaker with ice. Stir for 15 seconds. Strain into ice-filled rocks glass and garnish with the flamed orange peel.

In order to dissect this drink and learn the secret to its magic, let's look at each of its elements compared to the elements in a traditional Old Fashioned: whiskey, bitters, sugar, water and fruit.

First of all, there are no sugar cubes and no splash of water. How can this "thing" call itself an Old Fashioned without them? The answer lies where nearly all the mysteries in this cocktail can be traced back to, the agave plant. Agave nectar is a natural sweetener and a healthy, lower-carb alternative to cane sugar and can be found in an increasing number of retail outlets and in an increasing number of forms. Raw agave nectar is now available in addition to standard agave nectar and 100 percent blue agave nectar, and is similar in flavor to turbinado sugar, with its increased molasses-like tones. Since this sweetener comes from the same plant as the spirits in the cocktail, there is a certain harmonious flavor balance at its core.

**"Raw agave nectar is similar in flavor to turbinado sugar, with its increased molasses-like tones."**

Secondly, no whiskey? Surely this is an indicator of shenanigans afoot! If you consider the elements that contribute to the flavor profile of a bourbon or rye whiskey, certainly the influence of the charred oak barrels necessary for aging these whiskeys would have to be close to the top of the list. Both the tequila and the mezcal elements in this cocktail have seen time in oak, lending a familiar, toasty, vanilla-leaning spiciness to the palate. Not to mention, the pinas used to produce the Mezcal were baked in the aforementioned smoky pits, thereby contributing a hint of smoke reminiscent of a rich, complex whiskey.

Finally, no orange wheel? No cherry? No muddling? What kind of perversion is this? If you happen to be one of those observant devotees I mentioned at the beginning, you'll recall that there was no "fruit salad" in the original Old Fashioned. Only a decent-sized hunk of lemon peel. I happen to enjoy the addition of orange in some form to an Old Fashioned, so this cocktail serves both masters. You'd be surprised at what a correctly executed flamed orange peel garnish can add to a cocktail. It's the perfect touch.

Both locations of Stokes Grill & Bar in Omaha (1122 Howard St. and 646 N. 114th St.) are now featuring the Oaxaca Old Fashioned in their newly implemented cocktail programs. I encourage — nay, I implore you — to try one for yourself.

LOCAL  
SPOTLIGHT

by Jason McLaughlin



**"An easy going beer with loads of flavor."**

## Spilker Ales Hopluia

### Appearance: 2/3

Pours a very clear ruby-amber color with a couple fingers of a creamy, off-white head, leaving a ring of lacing of on the glass.

### Aroma: 8/12

Huge notes of melon — notably cantaloupe — and a dominating floral hop bouquet. Light malt character shines through with hints of roasted nuts, caramel and toast.

### Taste: 19/25

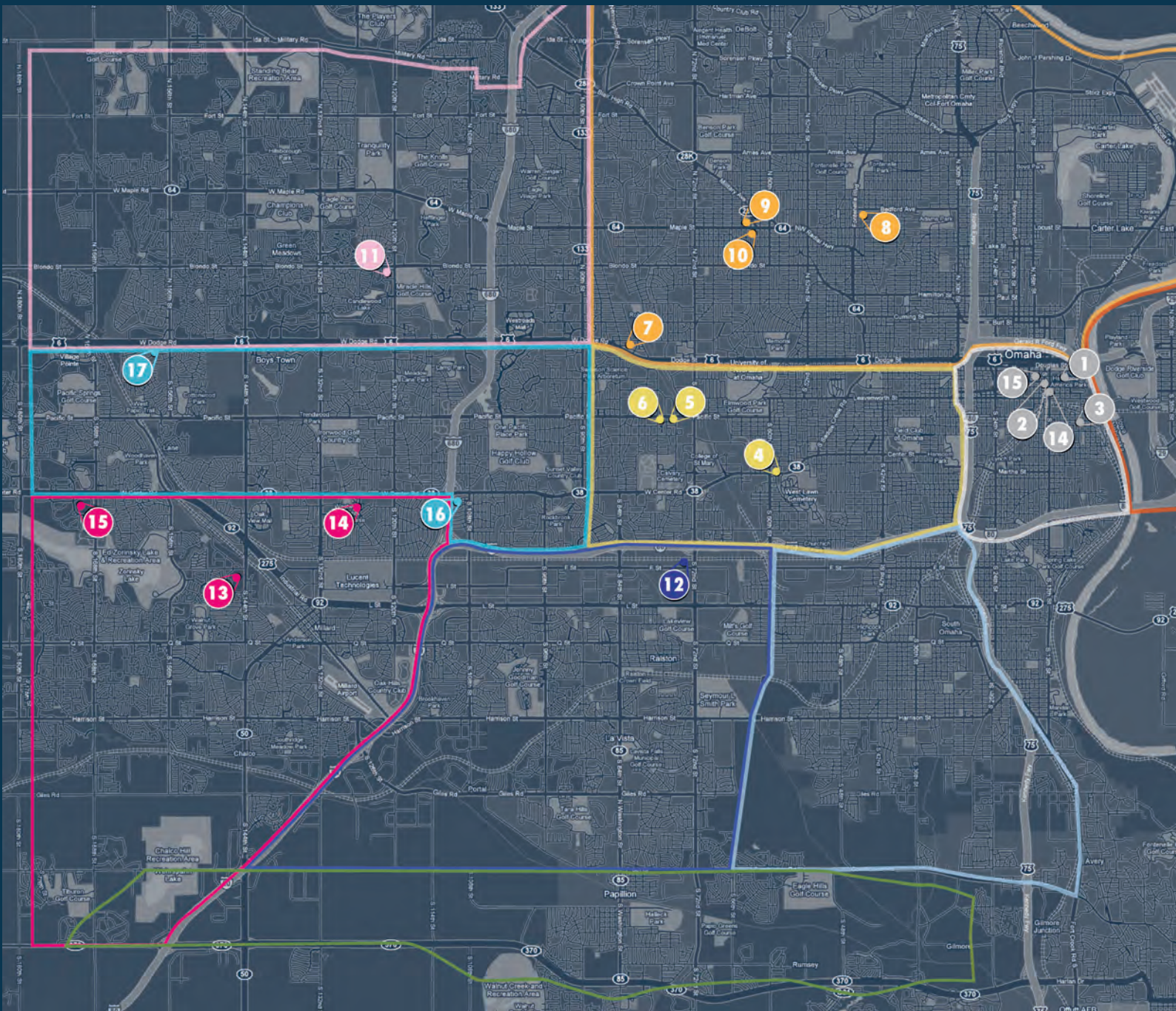
Again, luscious cantaloupe dominates the flavor, along with caramelized pear. The hop flavor is filled with floral and fruit notes, with a very restrained hop bitterness. Sweet malt with notes of toasted bread and roasted nuts again come through in the flavor. Dry finish with cantaloupe and toast lasting into the aftertaste. Light in body with moderate carbonation.

### Overall: 8/10

This is a delicious session ale with a low ABV (alcohol by volume), making it possible to have a second without worrying about getting bombed. The cantaloupe character is incredible, and the hop profile seems to lay heavily on late additions because of the low bitterness. This is always a treat, and one I go to often when in the mood for an easy going beer with loads of flavor. Did I mention cantaloupe?

# SELECTED OMAHA RESTAURANTS, BARS & LOUNGES

- Downtown
- Central Omaha
- North Omaha
- Northwest Omaha
- South Omaha
- South Central Omaha
- Bellevue
- South West Omaha
- West Omaha



**1 M's Pub** 402-342-2050  
1110 Howard St



M's Pub has been serving Omaha's discriminating diners in the heart of the Old Market for over 33 years. Our cutting edge, award winning cuisine is complemented by the Wine Spectator-recognized wine list, and served by our knowledgeable, courteous staff! Make reservations today and join us...

**2 Orsi's Italian Bakery** 402-345-3438  
621 Pacific St



Orsi's Italian Bakery in the heart of Omaha's Little Italy has been family run since 1919 and in the same location since 1934. Famous for their pizza and bread products, Orsi's now features an Italian deli including Italian cheeses and meats, homemade Italian sausage and imported olives. Hours: Tues - Thurs, 8:30 am to 8 pm, Fri 8:30 am to 9 pm, Sat 7:30 am to 8 pm, Sun 7:30 am - 6 pm. Closed Mondays.

**3 Vivace** 402-342-2050  
1110 Howard St



The owners of M's Pub opened Vivace over thirteen years ago to critical and public acclaim. Serving contemporary Italian fare accented by a Mediterranean flair, the menu is complemented by a Wine Spectator Award-winning wine list, welcoming & attentive service, and the "most beautiful dining room in the Old Market"! Reservations honored @ [www.OpenTable.com](http://www.OpenTable.com)

**4 Petrow's** 402-551-0552  
5914 Center Street



A family owned Omaha tradition since 1957. The whole family will love this original diner's look and taste. The menu features all the classic staples, from hot beef and pork tenderloin to made-from-scratch pies and homemade ice cream. Serving breakfast at 6am, the dinner menu features hand-cut steaks through 9:30pm.

**5 El Basha** 402-934-6266  
7503 Pacific Street



El Basha Mediterranean Grill features of diverse menu of mediterranean inspired cuisine. We're the only authentic Mediterranean restaurant in Omaha serving gyros, shawarmas, falafel, salads, hummus and so much more! Everything is prepared fresh and all salads are made with extra virgin olive oil. Great quality food for great prices! Open Mon - Fri, 11am - 9pm. Closed Sundays.

**6 Spirit World** 402-391-8680  
7517 Pacific Street



A gourmet deli, specialty wine, beer and liquor store located in midtown Omaha. For food, wine or spirits, our staff can help you make the perfect selection. Enjoy a glass or bottle of wine with a cheese plate, homemade soup, salad or sandwich from our deli and browse our amazing selection. For your next meeting or gathering, we cater and deliver. Visit [spiritworldwine.com](http://spiritworldwine.com) for an events calendar and info on wine & spirits tastings.

**Downtown - BARS & RESTAURANTS**

BARRY O'S	402-341-8032
JOE BANANA'S	402-342-9902
MR TOAD	402-345-4488
MYTH	402-884-6985
NOMAD LOUNGE	402-884-1231
ROSE & CROWN	402-346-8242
THE MAX	402-346-4110
WELCOME INN	402-341-4473
11-WORTH CAFE	402-346-6924
ETHNIC SANDWICH SHOP	402-422-1040
NICOLA'S	402-345-8466
ORSI'S PIZZA	402-345-3438
THE DINER	402-341-9870
URBAN WINE COMPANY	402-934-0005

**Central - BARS & RESTAURANTS**

BROTHER'S LOUNGE	402-553-5822
THE 49 R	402-554-5841
THE DOWNUNDER	402-342-3806
THE ELBOW ROOM	402-556-0867
CANIGLIA'S VENICE INN	402-556-3111
GERDA'S BAKERY	402-553-6774
GOLDBERGS	402-556-2006
GORAT'S STEAK HOUSE	402-551-3733
HARKERT'S BAR-B-Q	402-554-0102
HECTOR'S MEXICAN CUISINE	402-391-2923
LA CASA PIZZARIA	402-556-6464
LITHUANIAN BAKERY & KAFE	402-391-3503
MCKENNA'S	402-393-7427
SPEZIA	402-391-2950

**North - BARS & RESTAURANTS**

FULL HOUSE BAR	402-558-3133
HOMY INN	402-554-5815
MICK'S MUSIC & BAR	402-502-2503
MUSETTE BAR	402-554-5830
NIFTY BAR & GRILL	402-933-9300
ALPINE INN	402-451-9988
CAMILLE'S SIDEWALK CAFÉ	402-731-9727
ESPAÑA	402-505-9917
HAPPY FAMILY RESTAURANT	402-934-5288
JIM'S RIB HAVEN	402-451-8061
JOE'S CAFÉ	402-556-9428
LEO'S DINER	402-553-2280
LISA'S RADIAL CAFÉ	402-551-2176
RAZZY'S SANDWICH SHOPPE	402-397-2131

## 7 B&G Tasty Foods

402-390-6096  
7900 West Dodge Road



B & G Tasty Foods, Omaha's one-of-a-kind diner, has been serving their delicious, original loose meat sandwiches and other tasty delights since 1953. Come in to B & G's today for a satisfying meal, or an ice cream treat for dessert. You'll find us unrivaled for fast, friendly, family dining! We're open Monday thru Saturday, 11 am - 9pm and on Sundays 11 am - 3pm. Dine in and carry-out available.

## 8 Big Mama's Kitchen

402-445-6262  
3223 N 45th Street



Big Mama's specializes in Soul food and traditional American cuisine. We feature dine-in & carry-out meals, catering services and a banquet facility. Our menu includes a diverse variety of delicious appetizers, cakes, desserts and dinners. For 30 years, we've provided our customers with fresh, great tasting food, exceptional customer service, and the feeling of enjoying a delicious home cooked meal from their favorite "Big Mama."

## 9 Jake's Cigars & Spirits

402-934-9633  
6206 Maple Street



Jake's is an upscale, unpretentious smoke shop and liquor store. Smokers are met by a walk-in humidor as well as the most extensive line of import and premium cigarettes in Omaha. If spirits is more of what suits your fancy, peruse our stock of eclectic and hard to find wines, liquors and beers. Enjoy a cocktail in our stylish, intimate lounge: you'll feel right at home whether you're drinking a cosmo, a Cabernet, or a Corona.

## 10 Jane's Health Market

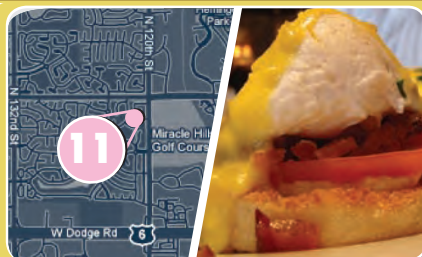
402-558-8911  
6103 Maple Street



Jane's Health Market is a family-owned, quick and healthy food market that has been around for over 18 years in the Benson area. They pride themselves on a diverse selection of food items and a very knowledgeable staff that is always willing to help. Jane's serves prepared natural and raw foods that will satisfy your taste buds. They are also developing a line of organic foods that are tasty but good for you at the same time.

## 11 Taxi's

402-898-1882  
1822 North 120th St.



Taxi's Grille is a neighborhood spot. Developed by Mac Thompsen and Bill Johnette, owners of The Neon Goose, the atmosphere and menu are contemporary casual. The large menu features soups, specialty salads, sandwiches, comfort foods, fresh seafood and steaks. Prixe Fixe items available nightly. Tuesdays and Wednesdays are half price bottle wines. Brunch is always popular with Egg Benedict dishes, omelettes, quiches and more. Call ahead to put your name in.

## 12 Anthony's Steakhouse

402-331-7575  
7220 F Street



For over 40 years, Anthony's Steakhouse has been known for our quality steaks and impeccable guest experience. We start by using premium beef and age our steaks on premise. Our ballroom and banquet facilities are the perfect location for business meetings or wedding receptions. Anthony's is dedicated to bringing you a truly special dining event every visit and hope that you walk away with the experience of a lifetime.

### Northwest - BARS & RESTAURANTS

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DI COPPIA	402-392-2806
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DON CARMELO'S PIZZERIA	402-289-9800
HIRO JAPANESE CUISINE	402-933-0091
HOLLYWOOD DINER	402-445-8000
HONG KONG CAFE	402-493-8383
LE PEEP	402-408-1728
LE VOLTAIRE	402-934-9374
LIGHTHOUSE BAR & GRILL	402-498-3824
RED ZONE BBQ	402-431-9663
VINCENZO'S RISTORANTE	402-498-3889

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JOHNNY Z'S	402-733-9602
HOMESTEAD CAFE	402-738-9989
HOWARD'S CHARRO CAFE	402-731-3776
JOE TESS' PLACE	402-731-7278
JOHNNY'S CAFE	402-731-4774
JOHN'S GRECIAN DELIGHT	402-731-8022
KAHN'S MONGOLIAN BBQ	402-731-4800
TAQUERIA TIAJUANA	402-731-1281
THAI KITCHEN	402-733-0579
ZESTO'S	402-932-4420

### Bellevue - BARS & RESTAURANTS

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HAM'S BELLEVUE BAR	402-291-9941
JAMMER'S PUB	402-291-8282
PHARAOH'S	402-991-9000
PAT AND WALLY'S	402-291-9215
AMARILLO	402-571-2333
CHANDLER INN PIZZA	402-734-0663
CHINA CAFE	402-292-6999
CHINA STAR	402-292-6999
LUMS RESTAURANT	402-733-1646
NETTIES FINE MEXICAN FOOD	402-733-3359
STELLA'S HAMBURGERS	402-291-6088
VARSITY SPORTS CAFE	402-932-0303
VIDLAK'S FAMILY RESTAURANT	402-884-5111



### 13 Charlie's on the Lake

402-894-9411  
4150 South 144th Street



A locally-owned business operated by award-winning chef Yves Menard, Charlie's on the Lake is known primarily as the city's best restaurant for seafood, which can be enjoyed inside Charlie's casual restaurant setting or outside on Omaha's best patio overlooking a lake. In addition to their large assortment of seafood, certified Angus beef, sandwiches, fine appetizers and a big, diverse wine list.

### 14 Julio's Restaurant

402-345-6921 402-330-2110  
510 S 13th St 123rd & Center St



Julio's Restaurant was a casual restaurant before that term even existed. Our Tex-Mex cuisine combines Mexican flavor with big Texas taste. Our staff isn't told to follow a script: they don't pretend to be happy you are there — they really are. Originality isn't a word, it's a continual existence, and Julio's doesn't plan on stopping its quest to be an Omaha original. Since 1977— doing Tequila before it was cool.

### 15 Roja Mexican Grill

402-333-7652 402-346-9190  
17010 Wright Plaza 1212 Harney Street



Traditional Tex-Mex fare with homemade flour tortillas, corn chips and salsa made fresh daily. New mouth-watering combo plates and gluten-free menu available. Voted best margarita 4 years running, made with real lime juice and a choice of more than 80 tequilas. Happy hour specials include 1/2 price appetizers, \$2.50 Dos Equis drafts, \$1.49 tacos and more. Mariachi band performs every 1st Sunday of the month.

### 16 Corkscrew Wine & Cheese

402-991-2927  
10924 Prairie Brook Rd



Corkscrew Wine & Cheese is a wine bar and retail wine shop all under one roof. With 700 wines, we offer everything from California to Chianti; from \$8 to \$300. For your next wine purchase, visit us and we'll deliver a better bottle within your budget. Our wine bar is a great alternative to the bar scene, serving 20 wines by the glass along with artisanal cheeses and charcuterie. Stop by and enjoy a glass and some cheese on our outdoor patio.

### 17 Le Voltaire

402-934-9374  
569 N. 155th Plaza



One of Omaha's finest restaurants, Le Voltaire features classical French cuisine with a flair. Executive Chef and Owner, Cédric S. Fichpain is committed to providing an atmosphere of understated elegance, fine service and extraordinary cuisine. Each dish is prepared using the freshest flavors of the season and ingredients of the highest quality. The wine list is constantly updated, representing the best wine selections from the regions of France.

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Give us a call at 402-203-6145 or email [info@fsmomaha.com](mailto:info@fsmomaha.com)

**FOOD & Spirits**  
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#### South Central - BARS & RESTAURANTS

MURPHY'S LOUNGE	402-339-7170
RALSTON KENO	402-592-3008
SEAN O'CASEY'S	402-593-1746
STROKER'S	402-331-9900
SUGAR CREEK	402-331-4579
SUNDOWNER BAR	402-733-9225
ANTHONY'S RESTAURANT & LOUNGE	402-331-7575
GRANDMOTHER'S	402-339-6633
JOHNNY SORTINO'S PIZZA	402-339-5050
RAZZY'S DELI	402-537-9600
ROMAN COIN PIZZA	402-339-1944
VACANTIS RESTAURANT	402-331-4999
VARSITY SPORTS CAFE	402-339-7003

#### Southwest - BARS & RESTAURANTS

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FINNEGAN'S	402-333-6181
FRANK'S TREEHOUSE	402-731-3297
FUDDRUCKERS	402-932-7790
GREAT WALL, THE	402-895-3811
JULIAN'S SPORTS GRILL	402-991-2663

#### West - BARS & RESTAURANTS

BAILEY'S	402-932-5577
CHEEBURGER CHEEBURGER	402-884-5554
CHEESEBURGER IN PARADISE	402-289-4210
CHINA GARDEN	402-397-1995
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CICI'S PIZZA	402-991-2992
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OBSERVATORY LOUNGE	402-334-9996
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THE REEL MARTINI BAR	402-884-7885

# The Dumpster:

## It's a Wrap!

by Michael Campbell

I bought a 16MB Flash card for my camera. The card itself is about the size of a Cheez-It. It was packaged in a little plastic box, which was wrapped in a four-inch plastic bubble, sealed in a plastic hanger display 16 inches tall. The identical sized 8MB card was in a package only 12 inches tall, which is supposed to make sense. After I unwrapped the card I had to take out the garbage.

Last time I went to the grocery store I found tomatoes individually encased in plastic balls. It doesn't keep them fresher; they taste exactly like the regular wooden store tomatoes. Is it more sanitary? God knows the customers at my local store are a grimy bunch, but I'm a nose-picker myself, and the solution for all of us is to wash our produce (the food, not the nose-pickings) before we eat it.

We love packaging. The produce section has spools of plastic bags that dispense like toilet paper, even though avocados, for example, come with a perfectly good natural wrapper, hard and brown and wrinkly. When my four loose, toddling avocados rolled up the conveyor belt to the checkout clerk, she recoiled as if I had offered her a quarter on my tongue. The sack boy interrupted the standoff by asking, "Do you want your bag of charcoal in a bag?"

### "Last time I went to the store I found tomatoes individually encased in plastic balls... Is it more sanitary?"

Potato chip vendors now use NASA technology to create chip bags that are ultra-light, impervious to sunlight and impossible to open. Where once I could tear open the bag by pulling at the seam, I now struggle until my eyes bug out and the rest of the bag explodes, leaving me holding what's left of the top. Why can't they make chip bags that split open with the slightest pressure, like they do garbage bags?

In the rush to make everything but food out of corn, engineers at Frito-Lay developed a biodegradable bag in which they dumped their happier, healthier Sun Chips. Unlike the revolutionary taco salad bowls of the 1970s, you can't eat this container. In fact, if you eat the chips and throw the bag on the ground (some say you should do the opposite), the bag will still be there in the morning. And next week. And next year. But in a generation it will be gone, unlike a regular plastic bag that will look as good as new. Indeed,

a church in the city of Turin, Italy, displays a potato chip bag they claim was discarded by Jesus.

Just months after the debut of healthy food in a healthy bag, Sun Chips announced they were removing the Earth-friendly bags from the shelves. Customers had stopped buying the chips because the bag was too crinkly. I couldn't believe my eyes, but I could believe my ears. I picked up a bag at the store and it sounded like firecrackers. The entire aisle was staring at me. I put the bag back. We all want to recycle and have a sustainable planet, as long as we don't have to tolerate anything crinkly. The planet is doomed, but at least it will be quiet.

Take note, ye little old ladies in the theater. No, opening candy wrappers with excruciating slowness isn't quieter. Do you bring them so you don't cough? Surely a quick hack is less agonizing than a five-minute wrap solo. If I can remember to silence my phone before the curtain goes up, you can remember to remove the celloprofane wrappers of your butterscotches in the lobby.

Or are you doing it on purpose? In theater's time-honored tradition of throwing produce at performers, perhaps those crackly little candy wrappers are an act of disapproval. A quick interview turned up at least one patron — I won't say who, but her initials are W.I.F.E. — who unwraps peppermints in the front row to unnerve actors she dislikes. "To be, or..." (crinkle crinkle) "...not..." (crinkle crinkle) "to not ... um ... line, please?"

Yesterday I bought a wastepaper basket for my office. When I got it home I took the wastebasket out of the shopping bag, then put the shopping bag in the wastebasket.



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