

FOOD & Spirits[®]

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Issue 12

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

MAGAZINE | OMAHA EDITION

Activity Book Inside!

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Omaha's Food Scene pg. 23

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& PUZZLES!

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Our Highlights Issue. A photo of the food from The Grey Plume along with a preview of your Brian O'Malley punch-out paper doll chef. Photo by Jessica Orth. Art Jeff King.



No. 12

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EXPERTS PANEL

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



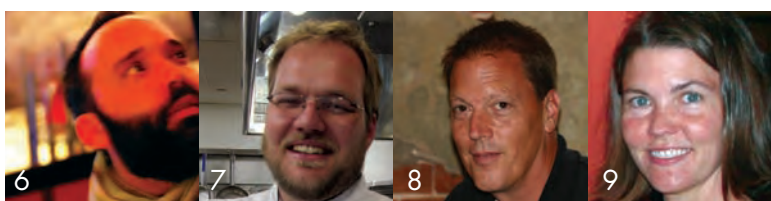
1 Michael Campbell

2 Dan Crowell

3 Alex Diimig

4 John Finocchiaro

5 Marq Manner



6 Jason McLaughlin

7 Brian O'Malley

8 Ron Samuelson

9 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. He is the author of *Are You Going To Eat That?*, a collection of fifty humor essays.

2 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://liberationassociation.blogspot.com>.

3 Alex Diimig

Alex Diimig is the general manager of Jake's Cigars and Spirits in Benson. He goes after small batch bourbons and oddity liqueurs with a voracious appetite. With tastes catering to the pursuit of glut and vice, he is adamantly particular without being too pretentious. With a snifter and a cigar in hand, he's always happy to tell you what you should be drinking.

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 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.

6 Jason McLaughlin

Jason holds the rank of National as a BJCP judge (Beer Judge Certification Program), is a craft beer aficionado, a writer for the Nebraska Beer Blog, 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.

7 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.

8 Ron Samuelson

Ron is co-owner of M's Pub and Vivace, which recently celebrated 15 years of operation in the Old Market. His restaurant career has spanned from Dallas and Denver to Omaha, with stints in the kitchen as well as front of house management for both corporate and locally owned concepts. Currently serving a five year term on the board of the Downtown Business Improvement District, Ron has also served as President of the Omaha Restaurant Association and is an inductee into the Omaha Hospitality Hall of Fame.

9 Ann Summers

Ann R.B. Summers is a healthy living author who writes professionally about food, science, nature, nutrition and fitness. Check out her blog site at annrbsummers.com for more on her recipes, children's science books, her newly updated e-book, and her online nutrition and fitness articles. She is a cook, food fanatic, mom, jewelry designer, editor, and a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators.

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



We think this issue of *Food & Spirits Magazine*, our 12th – which marks our 5th year in business, is pretty special.

This issue of FSM features some of the best writers we've had over the last five years. In food, Ann Summers delights as always and takes on pickling in her most recent piece. Ron Samuelson is back to give you his take on creativity

in the restaurant world and Brian O'Malley presents an excellent article on the 20 most important contributions in the Omaha restaurant and food scene – all from an insider that knows his way around the industry.

“This issue of FSM features some of the best writers we've had over the last five years.”

The spirits section also has a fine complement of writers on board this issue. Dan Crowell is back with his always informative Libation Conversation and Bar Chat, while Alex Diimig makes a return to tell you about some unique pairings for cigars and beer. And as always, John Finocchiaro holds down the wine section.

In both sections there are also outstanding contributions by Jason McLaughlin, Lucas Korth, David Adams, Sarah Lewis, Charles Schussel, Michael Campbell, Marq Manner, Miranda McQuillan and Rachel Mulder. Our writers are the heart of FSM and I know you'll enjoy their contributions as much as I do.

To put the cherry on top of all those great articles, we've got some fine photography this issue with some outstanding contributions by Jessica Orth, Jacob Herrman and Lucas Korth.

You'll also notice a little something different this issue. For those of you that remember *Highlights Magazine* or old school activity and puzzle books, this issue should look familiar. For the cover we went with a retro *Highlights*-style cover.

“Pose with your punch-out Brian O'Malley doll and send us the results – we've got some pretty great prizes for those of you that impress.”

On the inside you'll notice a few more special items. There's a special, limited-edition, punch-out Brian O'Malley paper chef doll (illustrated by Jeff King) along with a very rare and collectible Brian O'Malley trading card. This is a feature that we'll have in every issue from now on so nominate your favorite chef that you would like to see immortalized as a paper doll and trading card.

To go along with this issue's theme, Jeff also stepped in to do a hidden picture puzzle, a dot-to-dot and color by number – all of local establishments, people and dishes.

So, color your hearts away or pose with your punch-out Brian O'Malley doll and send us the results – we've got some pretty great prizes for those of you that impress.

We truly hope you enjoy the stellar articles and pictures and have a good time with the special features in this issue of *Food & Spirits Magazine*. We surely enjoyed working on it and we did so with the hope that we could give you something a little bit different than what you normally see. Something that engages you; Something that makes you feel like it was worth your time to read what we created.

And remember – because we do – that this is your magazine too. As always, if you see something you like, let us know, and if you don't like something, let us know that too – we're always listening.



COMINGS & GOINGS

FOOD & SPIRITS MAGAZINE EVENT NOTES AND NEWS



Omaha's Largest Pizza Review Results

Food & Spirits Magazine held the 4th Annual 'Omaha's Largest Pizza Review' on June 25th at The Waiting Room Lounge, and once again, the crowd turned out in a big way. Selling out for the fourth consecutive year, participants voted for their favorite Omaha Pizza while also supporting the Heartland Chapter of the American Culinary Federation.

With students from the ACF and Metro Culinary Institute on hand to serve it up, new pizza stars emerged while old favorites also found themselves on top of the voting. 16 different pizza restaurants from around Omaha showed up to present their finest pies to hundreds of devoted attendees: La Casa (4432 Leavenworth St.), Vivace (1108 Howard St.), Mangia Italiana (6516 Irvington Rd.), Mama's Pizza (715 North Saddle Creek Rd.), Pizza Shoppe (6056 Maple St.), Clancy's (72nd & Pacific St., 114th & Dodge St.), Orsi's (621 Pacific St.), Villagio Pizza (6922 N 102nd Cir.), Extreme Pizza (741 North 114th St.), Dante Pizzeria (16901 Wright Pl.), Sgt. Pepper's (1501 North Saddle Creek Rd.), Portovino (220 South 31st Ave.), Valentino's Pizza and Godfather's Pizza.

While enjoying the musical stylings of Andrew Bailie and Matt Cox, pizza lovers voted Mangia Italiana as their favorite for the fourth year in a row while Sgt. Pepper's was a very close second. Vivace and Pizza Shoppe tied for third with Extreme Pizza rounding out the top five for the People's Choice.

Food & Spirits Magazine's illustrious panel of judges named Extreme Pizza their top pick. Vivace came in second, Villagio Pizza and Sgt. Pepper's tied for third, and Pizza Shoppe took fifth. The Publisher's Pick goes to Ashley from Extreme Pizza who showed up dressed as a slice of pizza – that's some dedication.



Benson's Best Bloody Mary – October 21st

Food & Spirits Magazine's 1st Annual Benson Bloody Mary Bash is set for October 21st at The Waiting Room Lounge (6212 Maple). Doors open at 2 pm. Benson's finest bars and restaurants will be on hand serving up samples of their very own Bloody Mary. Cast your ballot and vote for your favorite.

SUBMIT!

Open Art Call for the Next FSM Cover

Food & Spirits Magazine and the Petshop Art Gallery are holding an open art call for the cover art for the upcoming issue of *Food & Spirits Magazine*. The theme is simply food and/or spirits and the deadline is December 1. Submissions must be on canvas or paper – no photographs please. For more information, please contact Erik Totten at eriktotten@fsmomaha.com or at 402-203-6145. The winning piece of the open art call will appear on the next cover and it will be unveiled along with the other entries at an art showing at the Petshop.

Activity Book Contest

Pose your pop-out Brian O'Malley paper-doll chef or send us your prettiest color by number. We'll post the entries, let the people vote and give the winners loads of gift certificates to area restaurants and bars, along with some other cool prizes.

Pickle or Die

by Ann Summers

Long ago, people ate what they grew, and grew what they ate. If they couldn't gather or grow it, so it is said, they didn't eat it. If they didn't eat, they died, so they stayed busy. If they caught a fish, they had to skin and cook it. If they killed a deer... well, anyway.

If there were thousands of blueberries, they had to eat them all at once even though their tongues were black and they were sick to death of fruit. Then one day, someone took the time to invent canning. Then they could eat blueberries whenever they felt like it.

We planted a small pear tree in my front yard. The first five years it bloomed and rewarded us with misshapen green blobs the size of shrunken kiwifruit. Then the sixth year we got small, tasty pears – laundry baskets full of them. We ate pears, poached pears, pear breads and muffins, and gave away sacks of pears.

Last year – year seven – brought us avalanches of large, tasty, firm pears... hundreds of them from that one tree, plopping into the street and rolling into neighbors' driveways, clogging the cul-de-sac's street drain. I made and canned pear butter, but one can only make and eat so much pear butter in a lifetime. This will be year eight, and I watch each fist-sized green oval growing, ripening, and longing to roll rampant. As I picture the laundry baskets brimming with pears, I shudder.

“If you are overwhelmed by produce, then truly you have only one way to save yourself: You must pickle.”

If you are overwhelmed by produce, are on the receiving end of a prodigious garden or growing co-op, or you have a neighbor who is generous to a fault with his zucchinis and cukes, then truly you have only one way to save yourself: You must pickle – but not hastily.

Pickling is an act that requires the deliberation, forethought and redirection of a magician's water-tank-immersion escape trick. Then, like David Blaine strapped into a sunken half-box freezer, you must work magic of the most banal and ordinary sort. Nonetheless, like a stage magician, crowds will be gobsmacked at what you know to be

quite simple, once you know the trick behind it.

Now there is preservation – and then there is canning. Preservation runs a huge gamut from brining and smoking (yummy), to formaldehyde injection (definitely not yummy), to food caches of the Arctic peoples who buried and mummified their roots, berries and caribou in a subterranean permafrost freezer (passably edible). Here we shall deal with what is known non-eponomously as canning which derives from an old Germanic word *Kanne* (from the 1933 OED) meaning, “metal container for liquid.” It is not called jarring – which sounds unpleasant – but canning (even though it now involves preserving food in jars rather than cans).

More on cans in a moment. You might be wondering how not to kill the ones for whom you can. Lovers of food safety history know that the evil bacterium which causes botulism wasn't quite choked out unless cooked to a right old boil at 250 degrees. Even in an anaerobic environment, such as a sealed can, deadly toxins could thrive like bad internet memes. Modern canning practices are much improved and safe as houses even though historically, housewives may have been like the Queen of Hearts in Alice and Wonderland, having often “believed in as many as six impossible things before breakfast”. They knew how to can without poisoning people.

My 1889 copy of *The White House Cookbook* by Hugo Zeimann (Steward of the White House) and Mrs. F.L. Gillette (celebrated housewife) devotes three entire chapters to preserving, one of those solely to pickles. It offers this wisdom: “In putting away pickles, use stone or glass jars; the glazing on common earthenware is rendered injurious by the action of the vinegar.” Heaven knows what Mrs. Gillette meant by “rendered injurious,” since pasteurization was not made common in the US until the 1930's, but we will give her the benefit of the doubt and say that at least she knew to sterilize and boil, and also not to put acid in constant contact with metal (it eats



through the metal—the reason you see coatings on the inside of canned acidic foods like tomatoes.)

It is this acid in the vinegar solution which is then mixed with brine (salt, sugar, and water, usually equal parts) to steep or pour over vegetables or fruits to make a pickle. The White House reckons that with a little spice (such as turmeric, dill, garlic, cinnamon) and some fresh piles of veggies, one can produce serviceable pickled cucumbers (or just pickles, as we call them) and pickled cauliflower, mushrooms, green tomatoes, cabbage, okra, mango, plums, grapes and oysters, as well as mixtures known as chow-chow, piccalilli and Indian pickle.

Let's not stop there. For those of you with pears, carrots, tomatoes, peppers, zucchinis, corn or musk melons, you can really pickle anything. A good first step toward canning is reading. A second baby step is parking yourself in front of the canning supplies at your local cheapo-mart and staring long and hard at the actual hardware. Don't be frightened though, if Mrs. Gillette and your grandmother could do it, so can you. Not to underestimate your granny, but honestly, how was she with a smart phone?

You'll also need vinegar (white or cider), which will lead you to something like a very simple recipe (along the same lines of the ingredients needed for making tea). Acidity levels inside the closed jars is important, and online resources are a click away if you want to know the starting-out acid levels of various foods and fruits. Vinegar, while it may seem obvious, is acidic and inhibits bacterial growth, and so vinegar recipes don't require added acid or the full-metal-jacket protection that pressure canning (or home-pasteurization) will give you. Read a few blogs and you will see an

agreement to disagree on whether tomatoes have enough acid to safely can without vinegar or need added acids like lemon juice or powdered citric acids (all usually found near the canning hardware).

You need jars and jar lids (duh!), and yes – you do actually have to boil them to sterilize them; they are probably sterile already, but do it anyway. Then, prep your pears – or whatever – by slicing, chopping or coring. Afterwards, put on a saucepan of water and add the same amount of vinegar, water, salt, sugar and whatever spices you would care to.

You can taste this mixture, and if the final canned outcome seems too hard to gauge, simply make a little two cup batch of your liquid, heat it to just under boiling, pour it into a glass bowl containing your prepped and chopped produce and let it steep

“For those of you with carrots, tomatoes or peppers, you can really pickle anything.”

in the fridge for a night. Taste and adjust. In fact, this is how my grandmother made “refrigerator pickles,” which are made with sliced and peeled cucumbers, a few pieces of sliced onion and a garlic clove, some chopped dill, and the brine I spoke of. If you like it a little sweet, add more sugar. If not, add less.

There are other ways to produce acidity without vinegar, which is a fermented product. If you can get fermentation going with the addition of a brine and a good bacteria culture, then the fermenting process will (like yeast multiplying in bread, eating sugars and making carbon-dioxide) break down the sugars in the food into lactic acid. While not the same as lactose in milk, this acid will be sour and will provide a pickle of sorts.

This is the way kimchi is made, and various Japanese pickles have, for years, been packed in the lees from wine (like vinegar, only this was rice wine) or in miso, a fermented soy product. I have made Thai-style pickles by putting chopped, drained cukes into peanut butter with turmeric. Sounds disgusting, but it is really good. Most of us are comfortable with the taste and texture of plain vinegar brine, and that is as easy as pie – easier, I'd say.

If you want to pickle and provide gifts for the people who've been generous with you all year, you will need the jars, lids, a giant multi-quart stock-pot or lidded casserole, towels, tongs (those grippy ones for jars are actually very handy—it's like they are designed to lift jars out of boiling water or something) and some counter (or floor) space. You can get a little round metal grill or grate to place in the bottom of your pot so your jars are set up away from the direct heat and will not shatter. But that's another over-engineering precaution.

The only real difficulty in pickling is making everything come together all at once. It usually goes something like this: 1) Boil and dry jars: check. 2) Core and peel canning vegetable or fruit: check. 3) Heat up pickling brine: check. 4) Line up jars: check. 5) Fill jars with fruit or vegetable: check. 6) Pour brine over jars to cover fruit or vegetable: check. Run out of brine or fruit and repeat step 2 or 3: check.

Now that you've captured everything in those cute little jars, it's time to seal them. Oh? Did you think you were finished? Hey, put that phone down. No more coffee for you, and the dog can wait. Hustle everyone back out of the kitchen: “What do you mean you're hungry again? You just ate breakfast! Oh, yes, well I see that it is two p.m.... Have some dry cereal and get out, I'm canning so we'll have good food to eat!”



that it is two p.m.... Have some dry cereal and get out, I'm canning so we'll have good food to eat!"

Looking back, I understand why my grandfather disappeared when the jar lids came out and didn't show his face again until the whole garden was tucked into the dusted shelves of the storage room. When my grandmother started canning, you couldn't hear yourself think over all the box fans and furiously boiling water and clinking. The birds flew away, the silent carport baked in the heat and we grandchildren sought refuge in the quiet air-conditioned public library.

Woe betides anyone who happened back too early. The destruction in the kitchen was like the Tunguska explosion, with my grandmother in the molten center without a drop of sweat, but an apocalyptic gleam in her blue eyes. We'd back out slowly. "Oh! I forgot my library book! The one on clinical indications for conjunctivitis!" But she wasn't listening to me, she was listening for the little "thoink" sound that the lids on the jars make when the heat outside the jar has been greater than that inside, and upon cooling, forms a vacuum inside, causing the jar lid (which is engineered for just such a thermal transfer miracle) to indent.

I hope that canning day at our house is less hectic, or at least more fun than it was at my grandmother's. For one thing, my family's livelihood doesn't depend on what I can and we do it because it is fun. After we've filled and screwed on the lids to all the submerged pickles, we lower the jars into the big honking pot of gently boiling water and time it accordingly. The little "thoink" usually takes a bit of sitting on a thick towel on the floor. All over the house, you can hear the little jars going off like culinary fireworks. We all pause and yell, "Opa!" and grin like idiots and go back to enjoying what's left of the summer.

Here's a recipe I tested on store-bought pears in preparation for this year's bounty, and it is lovely. Salvation!

Pear Pickles

6 lbs. cored pears, sliced into wedges (like pickle spears)
1 ½ c. cider vinegar
1 ½ c. white or red wine (red makes pink pickles)
3 c. water
6 tsp. pickling salt (or coarse salt with no iodine)
6 tbsp. sugar
2 tsp. whole cloves
1 tbsp. black peppercorns
12 mini-sprigs rosemary

Combine wine, vinegar, water, salt and sugar and bring to a boil. Turn off heat. Place one rosemary sprig, a clove or two and a peppercorn or two into each jar and pack pear wedges on top. Pour brine slowly into the jars. Use a wooden chopstick to remove the air bubbles and add a bit more brine if needed. Wipe rims, apply simmered lids and screw on lid bands.

Time in boiling water for 10 minutes. Then remove jars from canner and let cool, undisturbed on a towel-covered flat surface. When jars are completely cool, remove rings and test seals by grasping the edges of the lid and lifting the jar. If the lids hold fast, the seal is good.

Store in a cool, dark place for up to one year. Pickles are good to eat after one week of curing.

And so, as my family drifts off to sleep at night, I imagine we are all having visions – not of sugar-plumbs, but of pickled plums, and pears, and okra. And when the Nebraska snow is thick on the ground, we will open these little packages of summer with some hot bread and hard cheese and think, "Boy, canning wasn't so much work, now was it?"



RAW FOOD:

Raw Chocolate by Rachel Mulder

In honor of the Great Omaha Chocolate Festival coming up on September 30th, I've decided to tell y'all a little about raw chocolate and why it's just so much better than a Hershey's bar. I'll admit it, I've become a bit of a food snob as a result of my occupation and the knowledge I've acquired along with it.

“Touted as a superfood, raw cacao was believed to have medicinal properties by ancient civilizations.”

My work at Jane's Health Market, training as a raw food chef, and enrollment in the Health Education program at UNO has required me to learn how different foods and their nutritional components affect your body. I've spoken to a lot of customers about their particular conditions and ailments, and most of the time, all they need to do is tweak their eating habits and maybe take an herbal supplement or vitamin to drastically improve their condition. The positive feedback that my coworkers and I get back lets us know that we're doing something right.

What is raw chocolate?

Raw chocolate, or cacao, is minimally processed; generally cold pressed or simply ground whole cacao bean. The lack of manipulation allows the products made from cacao to retain all of the beneficial properties of the original bean. Foods in their raw state contain enzymes. Your body needs enzymes to catalyze digestion and they improve your metabolism. Without enzymes, your body cannot utilize any of the foods you ingest. Since raw chocolate maintains its enzymes, it can be digested easily and converted into energy. The heat used in conventional cocoa



processing destroys most the enzymes and leaves you with a sluggish digestive system.

The main thing in chocolate that gives you energy is the alkaloid theobromine. Theobromine is a non-addictive, mild stimulant that is primarily found in chocolate products, though it can also be found in smaller doses in green tea and the kola nut. In fact, Theobromine derives its name from the genus cacao and belongs to Theobroma, which means “food of the gods”. Theobromine is believed to act as an anti-depressant and can cause an increase in the neurotransmitter, anandamide, which could explain that happy

“Raw chocolate contains high levels of magnesium; an essential vitamin and electrolyte.”

feeling you get when you gorge yourself on chocolate. All chocolate contains this substance, but its levels are highest in the raw variety.

Touted as a superfood, raw cacao was believed to have medicinal properties by ancient civilizations. In addition to the enzymes and alkaloids, cacao is one of the richest sources of antioxidants known to man. Antioxidants reduce the number of free radicals in your system, counteracting the physiological process of oxidation. Free radicals are highly unstable atoms or molecular fragments that go around your body stealing atoms from your DNA, cells and



proteins causing damage. Antioxidants neutralize free radicals, giving them no charge and thus, no reason to damage other cells. Antioxidants are said to be great at reducing the effects of aging. A recent study by Cornell University concluded that raw chocolate has almost twice the antioxidants found in red wine.

Raw chocolate contains high levels of magnesium. Extreme farming practices have resulted in soil depletion and consequently have resulted in a magnesium deficiency in most people. Magnesium is an essential vitamin and electrolyte that maintains a steady heartbeat, keeps your bones strong, improves immune function, maintains normal muscle and nerve function, and is necessary in over 300 biochemical reactions in the human body. It is also vital in regulating blood sugar levels and normal blood pressure. Magnesium is often used to calm the nerves and help people relax.

Generally, made with better ingredients and less sweeteners than traditional chocolate treats, products made with raw cacao don't contain as much fat and sugars. The sugars that usually appear in raw cacao products are agave or an unprocessed natural sugar which doesn't cause the same spike in blood sugar that white sugar or corn syrup cause. The fats used in raw chocolate are usually cacao butter or coconut butter and contain no cholesterol.

Preparing foods with raw cacao is generally simple. You don't have to worry about burning it and the only appliance you really need is a food processor or blender. Making chocolate bars is as easy as blending cacao, agave, and coconut oil until you get to your preferred consistency and sweetness, spreading the mixture into a pan, and cooling it until it's hard. The same recipe can be used to make a healthy version of the magic shell for ice cream. The coconut oil facilitates the quick hardening of the chocolate.

There are many delicious ways to prepare foods with raw cacao and I encourage you to get creative. I love adding lavender, raisins, and almond to a basic chocolate bar, it creates something lovely and really special.



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Publisher's Picks

by Erik Totten

I often get asked for a recommendation on where to go eat, where to go drink, who has the best prices, cheapest drinks, best cocktails, the meal you can't live without, you name it. So, in the interest of saving us all some time, while still sending you to some of the best places in town, I present to you my Publisher's Picks. Each issue I'll give you four of my favorite places, dishes or drinks, so that you can boldly go where I've gone before.



Rose & Crown (515 S. 20th St.)

Home to one of the best (and I'm not sure who has one that's better) decks in Omaha – trust me, checking out the tree-house like deck is worth the trip alone. It's got a sort of dive bar type of feel, but in the best ways possible – a wide array of patrons, cheap drinks and friendly bartenders. I don't want to get anyone in trouble, so I'm not going to say they serve up their drinks pretty stiff, but I'm not going to deny it either.

B&G Tasty Foods (7900 W. Dodge Rd.)

This is one of my favorite places that I've just discovered over the past couple of years. B&G has been around for over 50 years and specializes in – among other things – a loose-meat sandwich called a Bee Gee. Don't let the name scare you off – it's delicious and I often find myself seriously craving them. From 4-6 pm during the weekdays, they can be had for

just a dollar too, which makes them one of the best value-for-money sandwiches around. I don't know if it's 'the loosest meat in America' as they claim, but I also don't know what that means.



Jake's Cigars & Spirits (6206 Maple St.)

Any list of my favorites would be remiss if it didn't have Jake's Cigars & Spirits on it – and excluding Jake's would also cause anybody that knows my weekly schedule to rightly call me a liar. Jake's has one of the largest selections of liquor

and whiskey in the area and a commendable selection of beers on tap, along with an ample humidor of cigars. On top of that, their prices are consistently the best in town. They also make their own infusions that provide a base for classic and neoclassic cocktails alike. Featuring two bars – one of which cigars can be smoked in – and an outside seating/smoking area, Jake's offers up the homey feel of a dive bar without the shabbiness that is oftentimes associated with them. The servers know their booze and beers and are usually willing to offer up some advice if you're not sure what you want.



Dixie Quicks (157 W. Broadway in Council Bluffs)

After 10 years in North Carolina, southern foods have a place that's near and dear to my culinary heart. But unless you're gunning for Cracker Barrel, those foods and that type of dining are hard to find in these parts – except for one notable exception. Long a talked about 'secret' on Leavenworth St. in Omaha, Dixie Quicks moved to Council Bluffs last year and into the beautifully restored former Hughes Brothers Auto Dealership. While their location has significantly changed, the food remains just as delicious as it's ever been. Featuring a chalkboard menu that changes depending on what is fresh and available, Dixie Quicks specializes in Southern-style dining with Cajun, Tex-Mex and Southwest elements.



B&G's loose meat sandwich.

Finding the Food

Exploring Wahoo's Newest Eatery by Marq Manner



The recent opening of Lake Wanahoo just outside of Wahoo, Nebraska got me thinking about the area and what might be out there for food options for visitors. In my country drives I used to end up in Wahoo from time to time. I would take up a spot at their local keno joint that had great burgers and good odds, considering the game was strictly Wahoo-based.

Coming into Wahoo, I am welcomed by my favorite aspect of the town – which is its older homes with large porches and a ton of Americana. Driving through town, I saw that the keno spot I used to eat at is now a church and the Big Red Keno (Omaha) signs shine brightly in the town's bars. I stopped in at one of these bars and I asked the bartender about the food options in the town and she mentioned both a Mexican and Chinese restaurant. I have never had a good experience with either food type in small towns. I had just decided to move on when a guy playing the “crack machine” shouted out that I should try a place called ‘Chip’s’ – just up past the church (my ex-favorite keno lounge).

“Chip’s provided a very satisfying meal that had me driving back to Omaha still thinking about it.”

The sign at Chip’s read “opens Wednesday” and the building looked freshly built with new landscaping. I walked in and was greeted by a waitress who stated I could sit anywhere, so I chose a seat at the large bar that had Chip’s logo burnt into it. Looking at the full bottles of untouched top-shelf liquor and noticing that everything was new and shiny, I knew that I was at a newly opened establishment. The waitress confirmed that they had only opened a few days before.

The eatery is adorned – not overdone (we all know what that looks like) – in Husker, boxing, billiards, golf and other sports memorabilia and decor. They have a nice, large gated outdoor area with a big Husker “N” on the gate. The four TV’s in Chip’s were all set to various ESPN channels and pop music played at just the right level throughout the room. Chip’s is very comfortable and seems like a place that would be welcoming to all ages.

My waitress was very friendly and attentive, taking my drink order at the bar as I perused the menu. Chops, steaks, burgers, brisket with bacon, portabella mushrooms, salads, soups, fried chicken, wings, beer battered pickles, fried chicken salad, wings,

fish & chips and a Reuben all popped off the menu. I ordered a chopped steak wrapped in applewood bacon and a baked potato with a creamy tomato soup. My waitress suggested I might like bleu cheese on top of the steak and I took her up on the suggestion.

The soup was hot and flavorful and the potato was baked in foil. The bleu cheese was not a sprinkle on top of the beef, but quite a bit slathered on. I appreciated the generosity, but it was too overpowering in that amount. I took most of it off and the remaining covering gave an excellent kick to a tender, perfectly cooked, medium-rare steak. The rest of the bleu cheese I put on the potato to spread some of the kick around – my strategy worked well.

Chip’s provided a very satisfying meal that had me driving back to Omaha still thinking about it. It is a comfortable place with an attentive wait staff and – surprisingly – no noticeable kinks considering they had only been open a few days. The wide variety on the menu allows for many to enjoy the restaurant. An eatery like this is needed in the area, especially with all of the Wanahoo traffic coming in. If you are in the area, I recommend Chip’s for yourself or the family after a long day of the great outdoors.



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Go Goat

by Miranda McQuillan

As one of “the other milks” in cheese making, goat cheeses have textures, tastes and truths that will take your sense of taste on a whole new adventure. Though goats and sheep are common in many foreign countries, they are a bit foreign to us. This makes sense, considering that they are not a major part of most American’s culinary or cultural diet. Beef, pork, chicken – even turkeys get more love.

“Goat cheeses have textures, tastes and truths that will take your sense of taste on a whole new adventure.”

Goats get plenty of love when it comes to cheese. It’s Goat Cheese Month in America – time to celebrate the beautiful, talented and mysterious goat and it’s versatile, delicate and delicious cheese.

My introduction to goat cheese began in Besancon, France. We were all new students at CLA (Centre Linguistique Appliqué), which was my school for the six months I was there. It was a center for the study of language, and an amazing environment to learn French. There were people from all over the world, and French students that were studying to teach French to people – us – from all over the world. There was always someone to meet, talk to, and learn from. However, in the beginning of new and exciting experiences, sometimes the best moments are the self exploration you are willing to do – breaking from the herd, so to speak.

I decided to go walk the stone street along the Doubs River and I found an outdoor market, tented and protected from the rain outside. Although I had been to the spring markets in Paris when I was in high school (many of which were more flea rather than food oriented) I had never been to a winter or spring local market. Those amazing mountains and valleys brought forth some of the

freshest, most fragrant, real food that I had ever experienced. Root vegetables, hearty winter greens, grains and herbs, meat and sausage counters with the stark white butcher paper – and of course, the Cheese. At the time, I was completely and rather hopelessly unaware of the extraordinary variety of Chevre (French for goat cheese). Let me tell you, there is no shortage.

Goats milk is quite sweet and delicate. It comes young or aged, soft or hard; there are goat bries, goat cheddars, and goat blue cheeses. It is also easier for us to digest than cow cheese. When you curd it in its earliest, least aged form, it is what the French call Chevre: soft goat cheese. It has a tanginess like sour cream and a texture like a semi-crumby cream cheese. This is a good cheese to use in salads, on sandwiches, pizzas, crostinis, hot or cold, in place of sour cream and with a wide variety of foods – even desserts. A good jumping-off point for any goat cheese novice is to introduce the goat cheese into things you already eat, easing your taste buds in.

My favorite goat cheese is called Bucheron, and a good brand for that is Soignon. It is a French goat cheese company that also makes standard goat brie; delicious, delicate and creamy. The Bucheron comes in a big 2.2lb log, with a touch of brie mold. Due to the thicker log, you get the soft at the edges and richer, thicker goat cheese in the middle for an amazing treat – like two cheeses in one. Served with rustic bread and fresh pears or peaches, you can’t go wrong.

There are English-aged goat cheddars, and Dutch goat’s milk goudas, middle-aged goat crottins, (which is French for a little biscuit or barrel shape cheese that can continue to age until it molds even). I had a customer that would wait to buy them until they were older/more aged, then let them sit out on her table for a few days – *THEN eat it!*

One of the very first goat cheese makers and providers of goat cheese was Laura Chenel. Her amazing and simple Chef’s Chevre,



was originally sold to chefs, as they were the ones using goat cheese and creating this current demand to create their dishes in our own homes. She has since expanded her line to include her version of some of the best goat cheeses from around the world.

Inspired by Chenel Goat cheese, Mary Keehn got herself a goat and began making what today is considered one of the best goat cheeses in the world: Humboldt Fog, at Cypress Grove in Eureka, CA, along with the delectable aged Midnight Moon (in regards to when one of the milking happens) Aged Gouda. This year is the 20th Anniversary of Cypress Grove.

“Goat cheeses from local dairies like Honey Creek Creamery are served in many local spots... you can find it on some of the great pizzas at Pitch in Dundee.”

As these companies grew, others joined the ranks, like Cowgirl Creamery in California, Capri Farms, Capriole, and Haystack Mountain Goat Cheese and MouCo Co. in Colorado.

Goat cheeses from local dairies like Honey Creek Creamery are served and sold in many local spots, including Dixie Quicks, Lot 2 in Benson and at the Old Market and Aksarben Farmer’s Markets. Visit Shadowbrook Farm and their Dutch Girl Creamery, a small family-owned produce & dairy farm just west outside of Lincoln to meet and greet the cheese makers and to pick up some of their amazing Chevre. You can find it on some of the great pizzas at Pitch in Dundee.

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Rediscovering an Old World Way to Time Travel

by Charles Schlusell
with photos by Jacob Herrman

Look at food as much more than just a way to experience incredible flavors and wonderful new taste sensations – I see food as a portal that can transport us to another time and place. It can touch us at the depths of our soul and allow us to spend time with loved ones long gone, or remember dear friends that are separated from us by vast distances. Food opens and triggers cascading memories that flood the spirit with warm and wonderful emotions like nothing else can.

“Food opens and triggers cascading memories that flood the spirit with warm and wonderful emotions like nothing else can.”

Even though she is long gone, one bite of chicken elderberry and I travel back through time to find myself sitting in my mother’s kitchen savoring exotic flavors. I can clearly see her smiling face, hear her caring voice and feel the touch of her hand on my shoulder as she lovingly watches me take the first bite of the family recipe passed down from her mother’s mother.

We all have certain dishes that are much more than just flavors on a plate; the ingredients combine with fond memories of our loved ones coalescing into an experience that satisfies not just hunger, but nourishes our hearts at the deepest levels. I truly believe that we need to take a cue from Europe and not fall into the American trap of shoveling our food down our gullets as fast as we can, so that we can then race to the movie or party or the main event of the night.

Instead, let’s learn how to dine again. Slowly savoring each bite, not just drinking the wine but also taking in deep draughts of our friend’s smiles, their laughs and the sparkle in their eyes. Purposefully living in and reveling in the moment. My goal and challenge when I invite friends over for a meal is to feed not just their bellies, but also their souls. I want to consciously create an environment that fosters an atmosphere where beautiful memories are formed. If I’ve done my job well, years from now when I’m long gone my friends will be able to go to their recipe box and pull out not just a recipe, but a memory.

Awhile back, I was in Florida visiting two of my dearest friends. One evening we had a particularly delightful meal at a great French bistro, the “Brasserie”. We started the meal with a tuna carpaccio accented with Asian flavors; all the components of this dish came together to create a memorable and delicious first course. After returning from Florida, my fond memories of that evening caused me to create my own version of that wonderful carpaccio, employing a plating technique that uses a martini glass turned upside-down over a salad of baby greens. The bottom of the glass becomes the serving plate for very thinly sliced tuna, drizzled with spicy Asian citrus vinaigrette.



Tuna Carpaccio with Spicy Asian Citrus Drizzle

Serves 4 as an appetizer

- 8oz sashimi grade tuna (frozen)
- 1 box mixed baby greens

Spicy Asian Citrus Drizzle

- 1 tsp. Thai bird or Serrano chili finely diced
- 1 Tbs. rice wine vinegar
- 1 tsp. soy sauce
- ¼ cup fresh orange juice
- 1 Tbs. each fresh lemon & lime juice
- 1 ½ tsp. fresh grated ginger
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 3 tsp. honey
- ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil

Garnishes

- Zest of 1 orange, lemon and lime
- Black sesame seeds
- 1 bunch each cilantro, mint and chives chopped
- 2 tsp. tobiko (flying fish roe, available at Asian markets)

Combine the first eight ingredients of the drizzle, then slowly whisk in the olive oil in a thin stream till it thickens. Add salt and pepper to taste and set aside.

Lightly coat the greens with the drizzle, toss and place under each martini glass. Very thinly slice the frozen tuna and let it set for a few minutes to thaw. Salt and pepper the sliced tuna and then fan it out on the base of the martini glass. Pour a little of the drizzle over the tuna and then sprinkle it with the citrus zest, sesame seeds, chopped herbs and tobiko.

How do you eat it? It's up to you; there is no right or wrong way.



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FOOD SERVICE WARRIOR

What's a 'fried' egg?

by David Adams

Editor's note – Our guest columnist for this issue's Food Service Warrior is a short-order cook – a guy in the trenches, making your food with pride and grumbling at the same time. Oh yeah, he also makes your eggs. Read on for his thoughts.

So you've walked in to your favorite place on a busy Sunday morning/early afternoon and see it is completely full to the gills. The cooks in back are sweating and cursing while servers run frantically in circles, offering weak smiles to everyone who takes more than two seconds to order. You plop yourself down in your chair and stare at the menu.

"Never order just 'fried' eggs. No one here knows what a 'fried' egg is."

Omelettes, benedicts, two-eggs any style, pancakes, French toast and a host of other blood-sugar destroying entrees – and the carbohydrates to accompany them. After you have looked long enough, you become impatient and flag-down your grossly underpaid server who, despite having had three tables before you, manages to arrive with a smile and a ticket book.

At this point, some of you (who will remain nameless), forget what you actually wanted, which is understandable given the immense amount of choices – so you wing it. You look at your sore, dejected server and with a confident smile order two 'fried' eggs. You feel good with your choice – after all, your mother, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and your best-friend in college all made you fried eggs. What a trip down memory lane this will be!

Your server sheepishly smiles, takes your order and walks away with a heavy heart and a looming sense of

dread. Unbeknownst to you, no one else in the restaurant knows what a 'fried' egg is. It's true you have had thousands of them, and we have cooked thousands more, but with eggs available in a variety of temperatures, you have chosen to not reveal what you really want. This will cause the cook who receives your ticket to immediately say something along the lines of "what the hell is this?"

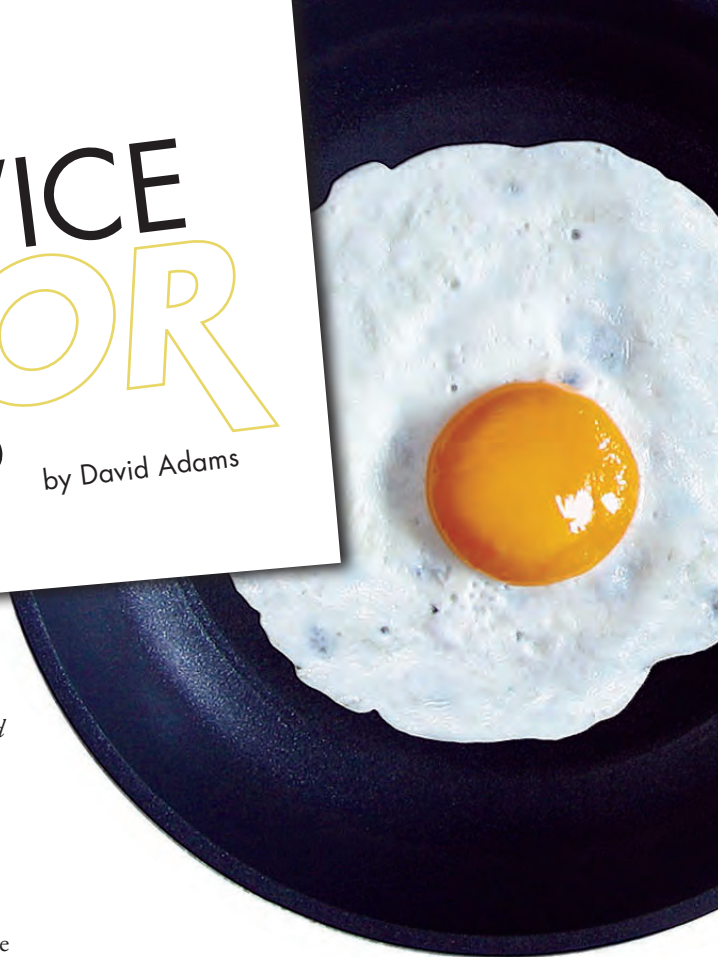
"When you send your 'fried' egg back to the kitchen because it is too hard or soft, now you see our dilemma."

So, here is a brief primer on egg styles you can choose from in most establishments that serve them:

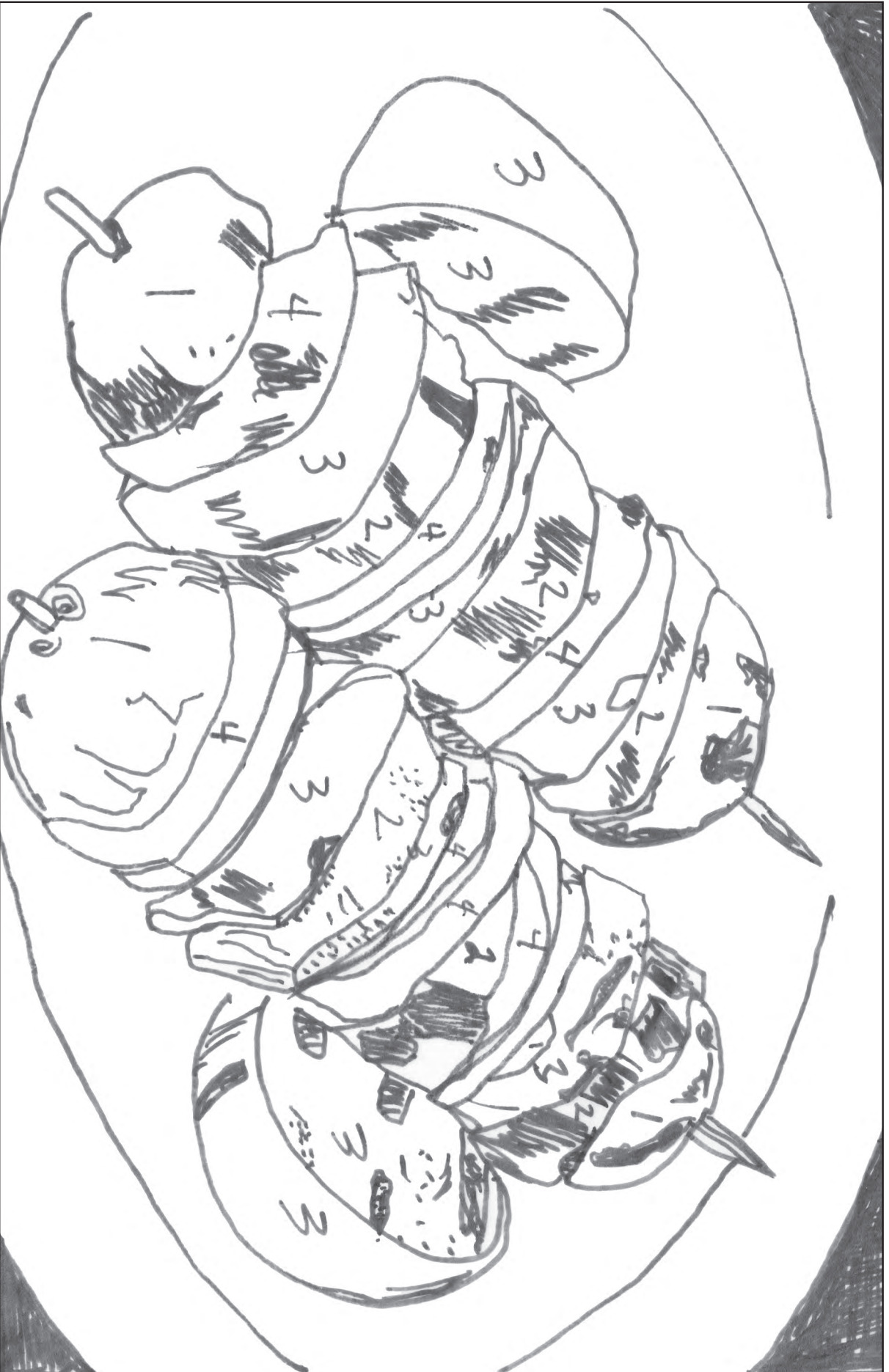
- Over-easy: soft yolk with mostly cooked whites
- Over-medium: hard whites with a semi-firm yolk.
- Over-hard: fully cooked whites with a broken yolk cooked hard
- Over-well: fully cooked whites with a fully cooked, unbroken yolk.
- Scrambled to varying degrees of softness

And now we're getting to the real issue: you see, all of the above are 'fried' eggs. So, when you send your 'fried' egg back to the kitchen because it is too hard or too soft, now you see our dilemma. We really had no way of knowing exactly how you wanted your egg 'fried', and now we've got an irritated cook and a flustered server. Don't get me wrong, I like to see servers flustered, but you get the point.

So, the moral of the story – or the 'take away', if you will – is to never order just 'fried' eggs. When I'm cooking for you and you're in our restaurant, I'll cook whatever you want (within reason). But you see, no one here knows what a 'fried' egg is.



COLOR BY NUMBER



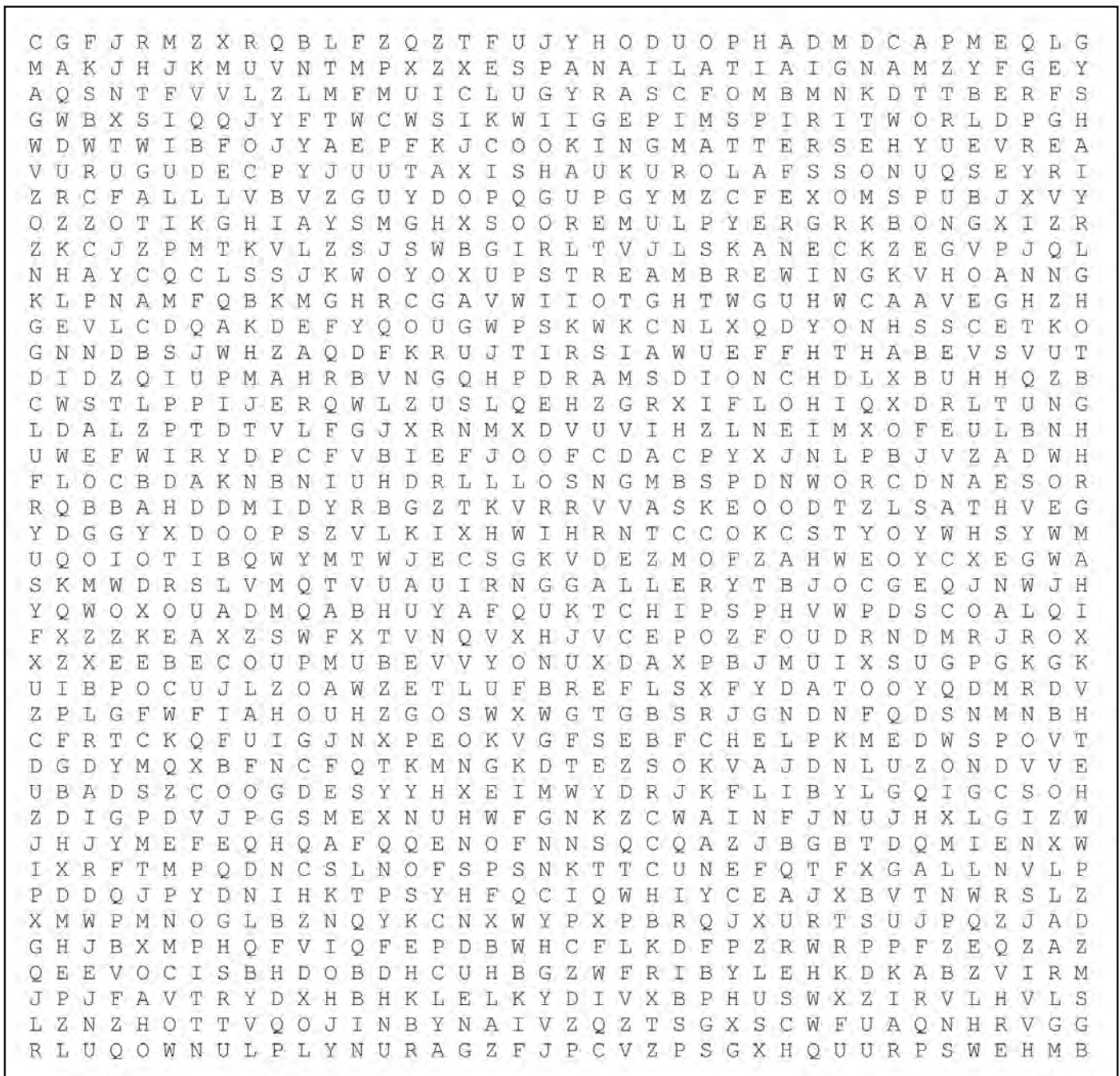
Kabobs from Anthony's Steakhouse 1 - BROWN 2 - GREY 3 - RED 4 - GREEN 5 - WHITE

DOT-TO-DOT



Your favorite bartender at Jake's Cigars & Spirits.

WORD SEARCH



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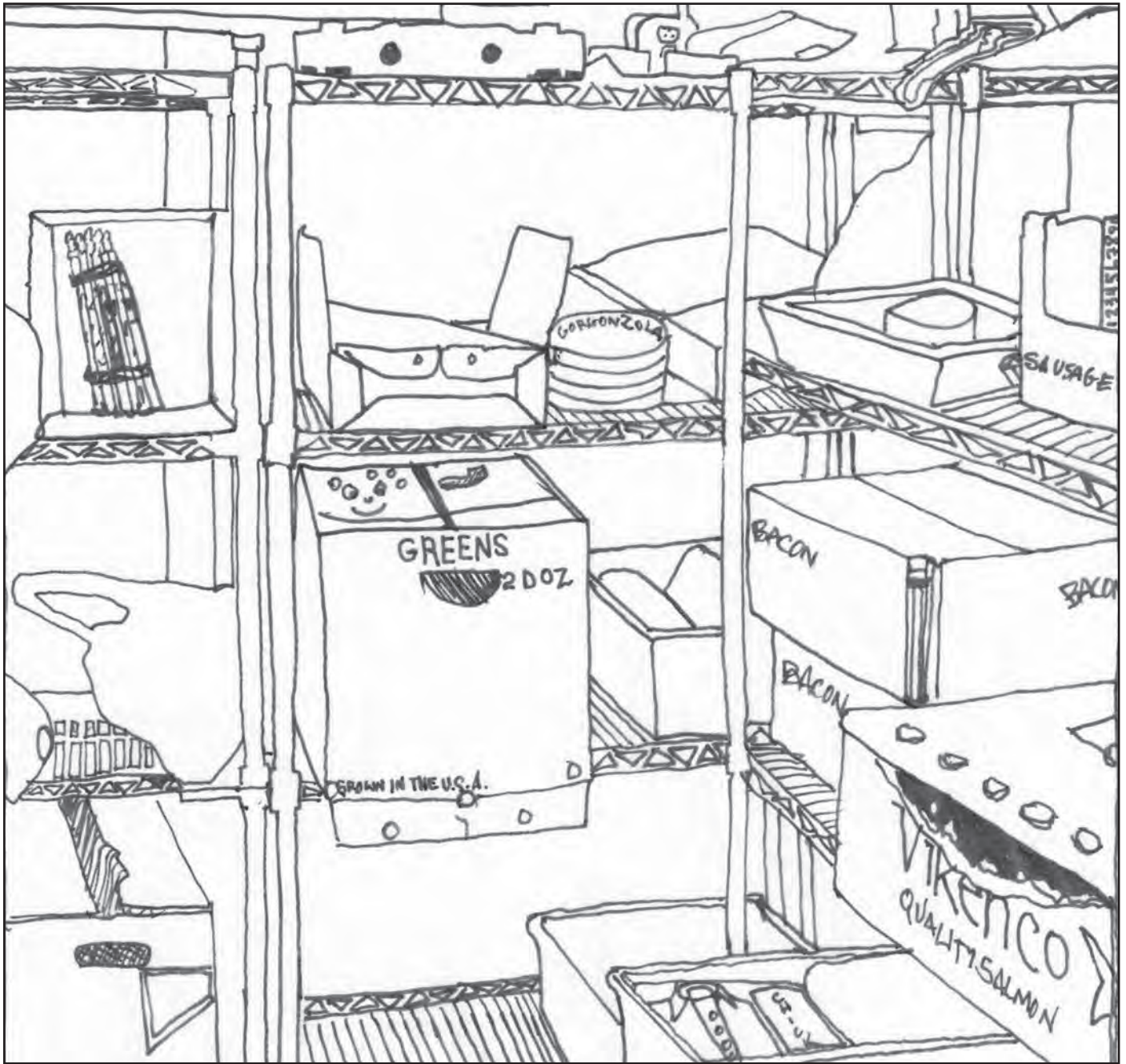
Food & Spirits In Omaha

ANTHONY'S STEAKHOUSE
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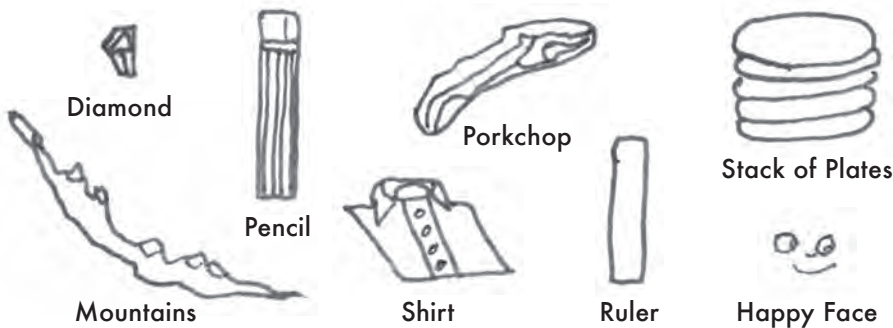
GREY PLUME
 HAUKEUR OLAFSSON
 HOCKENBERG'S
 JAKE'S CIGARS
 JANE'S HEALTH
 LIONEL HAVE
 LOT 2
 MANGIA ITALIANA
 MANTRA
 MIDTOWN CROSSING
 M'S PUB
 ORSI'S

OZONE LOUNGE
 PETROW'S
 PICKLE
 POP ROCKS
 RNG GALLERY
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 SPIRIT WORLD
 TAXIS
 UPSTREAM BREWING
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IMAGE SEARCH



Can you find these items in the walk-in at Dixie Quicks?



Need help?

Look for the Pencil near the the Bacon
 Find the Happy Face near the Greens
 Mountains can be found near Salmon
 The Shirt is in a Hotel Pan
 A Stack of Plates is near some cheese
 A Diamond is near the Sausage
 Look for the Porkchop on the top shelf
 A Ruler is near the Sausage

Still We Rise:

Celebrating Omaha's Food Scene

by Brian O'Malley with photos by Jessica Orth

Creativity is an act of problem solving, defined by how well the immutable constraints of the problem are met, mitigated or massaged. Innovation – real innovation – is different; it is the ability to change the parameters altogether.

Omaha's restaurant scene has always been creative. Chefs, restaurateurs, servers, hosts and busboys have labored tirelessly to solve the problems that have been thrown at them within the means they were given to address them. In the last generation or so – since Mercer's sprinkled their eau de vie like pixie dust all about the intersection at 11th and Howard – there has been a palpable renaissance of dining innovation here in River City.

"In the last generation or so, there has been a palpable renaissance of dining innovation here in River City."



A sampling of what can be found at the Grey Plume, acclaimed as the greenest restaurant in America.

Disclaimer: My birth brought me to Omaha a good five years AFTER this middle-of-the-night-pagan-ritual that I have imagined into existence for storytelling purposes. I am not a historian; I have done no research – except for asking Chef Mar (Janet, not Joel, he is Mahr) – what she thought about the Omaha Food Scene since her arrival in the late 90s. I will make claims that have little to no resonance in the physical world. If you are put off by such things, perhaps now would be a good time to flip over to Ann Summers’ brilliant and factual article while enjoying a pickle.

Early Labor

My first contribution to the Omaha food scene was not a brilliant one. It was 1988 and I was a “busboy” at the Blue Fox, the ridiculously well-polished haven of Continental Cuisine nestled in the evening shadow of the Bronco’s on 120th. My very first night was also the night of the Marian High School Prom. I would say that I was “smitten” by all the pretty girls in their dresses, but Vivian would probably remember it as “distracted.”

Case in Point: my first 12 (make that 11) glasses of water to be delivered to the thirsty table of beautiful ladies – and their dorky dates – were promptly poured down one of their dresses. One was in my hand and I was leaning over to deliver it, but I got a bit

“For our scene to have ‘matured’, many different, divergent, and downright disagreeable streams of operation and consciousness had to converge.”



Jim Olafsson

“distracted” and the remaining 11 on the tray followed my aim. I was 13 years old.

A lot has changed, but a lot remains the same. Those were my introductory days; I didn’t know what food we served; I barely understood the dance of service that I had a part in. I just labored on. So did Omaha, but somewhere in the midst of that labor, a gentle and genuine maturity emerged. Me? I’m still just laboring.

Beyond Laboring

Maturity is a slippery ability to make decisions against the prescribed expectations for your behavior in full awareness of the consequences. For our scene to have “matured,” many different, divergent, and downright disagreeable streams of operation and consciousness have had to converge. It has been tumultuous for sure, and the ride isn’t over.

The great upheavals in our community will continue. The roads we travel on the other side of each upheaval will be less straight and less comfortable; Perhaps more richly scenic and interesting, but frightening nonetheless. Maturity will see us through. Our own willingness to be brave in the face of fear will both increase the certainty that change will come, and that we will be able to manage the path on the other side of it.

There have been some pioneers. The intent of the remainder of this composition will be to recognize those operations and individuals whose creativity, labor, maturity and innovation have lead us here. I intend it as a thank you – from those of us more inclined to spill water down the front of a cute girl’s dress – to those of you that are there to pick us up on the other side to teach us anew how to walk back to the same table and finish the night.

20 of the Most Important Innovators, Innovations and Contributions in the History of My Awareness of the Omaha Restaurant and Food Scene

(in no particular order – and with apologies).

Haukur Olafsson (otherwise known as Jim) of H. Olafsson International Specialty Foods

Without this crazy Icelander, our access to Foie Gras, amazing chocolate, magret duck breasts, and all other manner of unique, rare, exotic or foreign products would be seriously diminished. Jim started out of his house as a relative unknown; pedaling caviar, truffles and smoked salmon to restaurants in the old market in 1996. Today, there isn’t a receiving clerk in the city that doesn’t know Jim’s phone number by heart – 402-342-2770, by the way.

The Nebraska Food Cooperative

The NFC has deepened and broadened access to local food with integrity perhaps more than any other single enterprise. A real co-operative between producers and consumers, ‘the co-op,’ which defines itself as “Nebraska’s online year-round farmers’ market and food distribution service,” has provided a lasting and innovative marketplace for local food. www.nebraskafood.org

Upstream Brewing Company

Making a huge financial bet on the Old Market’s economic staying power – perhaps the biggest since the Mercer’s – Upstream Brewing Company ushered in an era of absolute pandemonium in the Market. They believed in ‘big time’ and beer in a way that Omaha had never seen. The transformation of the Old Firehouse Dinner Theatre was magnificent. The food was good and hearty, the scene was fun. The beer however, was the real transformation. So unique, delicious AND local - most of Omaha spent 1996-1998 on a perpetual tasting flight.

“Planet Mercer”

This is a long and oft-retold story in the Old Market Encounter, so no need to rehash the whole thing here. But as an indicator, I was with Chef Kulik the other day discussing the new opportunity that is being taken in the old French Café space and I asked, “how much remodeling do you think you’ll need to undertake before you’re ready to open... how LONG till the world gets a shot at this new place?” Paul responds lovingly, “I live on ‘Planet Mercer’ – time is not consequential.” Quite beautiful.

Farmers Markets

While the market in the Old Market seems to have been around forever, it was really brought back to life in only 1994 after a 30-year hiatus. That’s right, before 1994 there was almost no access to local fresh produce in the city, aside from the random farm truck here or there. In 2005, the food and health sage Michael Braunstein brought the Village Pointe Farmers Market to life. This doubled the numbers of markets in the metro. Since then, depending on who does the counting and where you draw the line, we have added 3-9 more.

George Paul Vinegar

The birth of an artisan craftsman of the caliber of George Johnson of Cody, Nebraska’s George Paul Vinegar is usually directly related to their actual birth. I mean, people that make world-class, hand-crafted,

“In 2005, food and health sage Michael Braunstein brought the Village Pointe Farmers Market to life. Since then, we have added 3-9 more.”



Omaha’s Downtown Farmer’s Market.



Omaha’s Downtown Farmer’s Market.

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Fish and Chips at the historic Dundee Dell.



Glassware at the Grey Plume.

“Whatever or whomever it is that causes the rise of areas like Dundee, South 24th Street, the Old Market, Aksarben Village, Legacy, Benson and Midtown Crossing, thank you.”

über-polished specialty foods are USUALLY the son, grandson and great-grandson of some redonkulously good craftsmen. But George brought us this silly-deliciousness as a first generation prodigy. If you have not yet tasted it, it’s all over the menus at The Boiler Room and The Grey Plume. Order from www.georgepaulvinegar.com.

Farmstead First Creamery

Nebraska not having a solid artisan dairy and cheese scene is was a great catastrophe of agricultural evolution. Artificial selection notwithstanding, Krista Dittman of Branched Oak Farm’s cow-based operation and Charuth Van Beuzekom of Dutch Girl Creamery’s goat-based operation, decided to play Mendel with their respective output. The resulting cross has given Nebraskans a new, local source for Old-World style cheeses. www.farmsteadfirst.com

Restaurant “Neighborhoods”

I understand very little about commercial property development – or maybe “re”development in some of these cases. Whatever or whomever it is that causes the rise of areas like Dundee, South 24th Street, the Old Market, Aksarben Village, Legacy, Benson and Midtown Crossing, thank you. Walking out of Dario’s after dinner, strolling down to the Dell for a scotch-or-two worth of spirited conversation and then grabbing an order of curry fries from AFK after midnight for the trip home is to discover the Essential Omaha – for Omahans and visitors alike.



Professional Organizations

The culinary and hospitality industry is now a respectable career. It used to be considered only a hold-me-over-through-college-til-I-can-get-a-job-with-benefits option for anybody that could get out. Today, people choose to be a professional cook for life. With that professional longevity comes the opportunity for trade organizations to make a real contribution to the members of this industry. For the industry's craftsmen, managers, and owners to find real benefit from being engaged with the likes of the Omaha Restaurant Association (ORA), American Culinary Federation (ACF), National Association of Catering Executives (NACE), Chef's Collaborative, Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society (NSAS), etc.

“This here is food ‘culture’, an ‘Omaha Food Culture’; a culture that is set to produce more and more innovation; a culture that holds on.”

People are hated, ostracized, and outcast by society at large for doing something that they love. The American Dream is supposed to be wrought through tireless days of slaving away at a job you hate. People that give themselves to the world of food love their jobs, therefore making a membership at the Country Club or Kiwanis a little less comfortable (and honestly, less likely financially). But sittin' around talking shop at an ORA social – that's like discovering a gold mine already dug in the backyard.

Artisan Beef, Lamb, Pork and Chicken... oh yeah, AND TROUT!

The world seems to be clamoring for greater connectivity and integrity in their protein sourcing. Omaha's restaurant scene is perhaps a bit behind in both supply and demand compared to the rest



Clayton Chapman

of the country. It's sad given that we are in the heart of cattle country, however, the availability of artisan meats like heritage pork, grass fed beef, free-range chicken, cold water steelhead trout and local lamb has been on the rise in recent years. This is in no small part due to the incredible work of the individuals willing to be the change they want to see in the world.

Chicken: Dean Dvorak Plum Creek Farm, Burchard, Nebraska

Pork: Travis Dunacacke TD Niche Pork, Elk Creek, Nebraska

Lamb: Ken Thilges Bluff Valley Farms, Rulo, Nebraska

Beef: Paul Rohrbaugh of Pawnee Pride Meats and Luke Jacobsen of Range West

Trout: Jeff and Amber at Blue Valley Aquaculture, Sutton, Nebraska

Ashley Jacobsen, Cheeseburger Eater

As we Rise, it has been essential that we all remain constantly connected to the core definition of who we are. Ashley, a lone, random Omahan, keeps us faithful to the truth that we must still care deeply about our cheeseburgers, coconut chicken salads, Ruebens and ice cold American pilsners. An innovation that is about staying the same at the same time as you change.

The Strength of the Non-Restaurant Business Community

Some years ago, TD Ameritrade moved hundreds of people from its offices in NYC to our fair city. They brought a taste for sushi and wallets to pay for it. ConAgra Foods sponsors stuff like the food bank's annual fundraiser where a chef of international consequence comes to our city to contribute a little to all of us, and in the process takes a little of our story forth to the chef world elsewhere. Try to get a reservation in any awesome restaurant during Berkshire Hathaway weekend; shall I continue?

James E. (Jim) Trebbien, Dean, Institute for the Culinary Arts at Metropolitan Community College

Before Jim, culinary education in Omaha was not connected and integrated into the community. So hyper-connected, well-respected and tenured is Trebbien now, that I would happily give \$100 of my wife's money to anyone on this list that can prove that he has not positively affected their enterprise. [Legal disclaimer: that was a joke to prove a point. I can't really afford to give away my wife's money.]

Fierce Integrity – The Grey Plume

While there are quite a few restaurant/game-changers that have come on the scene in the last few years, each with a deep commitment to upholding their self-defined and crystal clear ethics, nobody landed with quite as much of a splash as “The Grey Plume.” Acclaimed as the greenest restaurant in America, mentioned in James Beard and other massive award conversations, home to Culinary wunderboy (now 25ish) Clayton Chapman AND downright delicious. TGP is as important to the Omaha scene today as Maxine's was a generation ago and the Crystal Tree Ballroom a generation before that – the benchmark by which other contemporary operations to measure themselves. No pressure, chef.

The Bagel Bin + The Dundee Dell + Stella's + M's Pub

If the contemporary operations measure themselves against The Grey Plume, everyone else should measure themselves against joints like these. Decades in business, still true to their word, and growing up every day. If new operations are the tides that raise all boats, these three are the rest of the water in the ocean. Being different by being immune, maybe better said as ‘above’ the trendy, hip, or fleeting.

Food Media

I believe in storytelling. We are flush with good outlets and growing. Some will survive, some will change, some will fade away. One thing is for sure, the Omaha media consumer WANTS food coverage.

I also believe in critique. Like Ray Zalinsky says, “sometimes you gotta take a [restaurant] out back, tie ‘em to a tree, and bash their head in with a shovel.” Not that I ever want anyone I love to bash or be bashed, but there are runts in our litter that have survived for reasons past understanding. I commend, admire, and fear those brave and educated members of media that are willing to use their keyboards like shovels.

The French Bulldog

A cured meat and cheese shop in Dundee. In a great demonstration of charcuterie karma, they are in a space formerly occupied by Subway. That last sentence is the short version of this entire article. Omaha’s Rise: National Sandwich Chain Closes – Space Now to be Renovated by Locally Driven Artisan Charcuterie Shop. Welcome to 2012, or back to some other halcyon time as you prefer.

Bread

The Bread Oven might be to blame for the contemporary re-emergence of proper artisan baking in the city, but now they have companions. Le Quartier in Countryside Village and La Buvette in the Old Market, to name a few. On the Italian side, let’s not forget what we get from the still-hand-crafted Orsi’s and the nationally-recognized, powerfully consistent Rotella’s.

“The Bread Oven might be to blame for the contemporary re-emergence of proper artisan baking in the city, but now they have companions.”



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Pastries at the Bread Oven.





Pastries at the Bread Oven.



Some of the cheese available at the French Bulldog.

“We already had some legit outlets for specialty provisions and now we have even more since Wild Oats folded up their tent.”

Serious Grocery Stores

When Whole Foods and Wild Oats came to town a few years ago, there was real buzz. The truth is, we already had some legit outlets for specialty provisions when they got here and now we have even more since Wild Oats folded up their tent. I love me some Hy-vee for broadline shopping, but you cannot be connected to the Omaha food scene if you are not at least a semi-regular at one or more of the following shops:

- Jacobo's
- Wohlner's
- Broadmoor Market
- Patrick's Market
- Tomayto Tomahto (phonetics weren't ever my strong suit)
- Trader Joe's (Not local but Awesome)
- Varied Ethnic Markets – See the Omaha Reader's Article "A Pantry of Immigrants" 6/24/2012

Culinary Genealogy–Lionel Havé

Where you're from and who you are matters most when your tree is respectable. In Omaha, for years we have promoted and proclaimed that the "self-made chef" was to be most highly elevated. That's until we all realized that most of us share an uncle on our mother's side and his name is Lionel Havé. Omaha Country Club beware, the last place to lose Chef is vacant.

There are so many more things to put on this list. Given the amount of amazing things that weren't even mentioned here – Buy



Tomatoes from the Downtown Omaha Farmer's Market.

Fresh Buy Local Nebraska, Dante Pizzeria, the new Food Truck rodeo-thing-a-ma-bob that they just threw, TD Ameritrade Park, The Flagship Restaurant Group, – there are perhaps another 20 deserving of mention right now. Oh yeah, what about all the amazing chef-round-up events that solidify the camaraderie amongst the pros? Things like Art and Soup or the March of Dimes Great Chef Event, or the Emerging Terrain blowouts these last two years or, or... it will continue forever.

By the time everyone that is at it now is recognized for their work, another 20, 30, maybe 50 new things will have happened that deserve announcement (like whatever Alexander Payne is gonna do now that he supposedly owns King Fong's). It's bigger than a food "scene"; a scene you can understand through a couple of well-conceived snapshots. This here is food "culture", an "Omaha Food Culture"; a culture that is set to produce more and more innovation; a culture that holds on.



A bite of deliciousness at The Grey Plume.

79th & Dodge Omaha, Nebraska BGTastyFoods.com

B&G Tasty Foods

Have you heard of our famous Bee Gee loose meat sandwich? No? Where have you been? That's okay... Well it is simply seasoned ground beef on a bun! The fantastic people of Omaha have been enjoying them ever since 1953. It is never too late to try...

the Loosest Meat in AMERICA

Cooking Matters Spotlight:

Chef Rebecca Coatney by Sarah Lewis



Chef Rebecca cooking with two young Cooking Matters attendees.

Share Our Strength's *Cooking Matters*™ empowers families at risk of hunger with the skills, knowledge and confidence to make healthy and affordable meals. With the help of volunteer culinary and nutrition experts, course participants learn to select nutritious, low-cost ingredients and prepare them in ways that provide the best nourishment possible for their families.

Chef Rebecca Coatney has been volunteering with Cooking Matters since the summer of 2009. By sharing her strength and passion for cooking, many children and families have taken Chef Rebecca's classes and have learned that cooking can not only be healthy and affordable, but it can be fun as well. She has a degree in Culinary Arts from Johnson & Wales University in Providence, RI and has over 25 years of culinary experience including, but not limited to, Assistant Restaurant Manager, Assistant Pastry Chef at The Town and Country Club in Saint Paul MN, Dining Room Manager for the University Club in Lincoln NE, Banquet Chef with Marriott Hotels, and extensive cooking experience for institutions.

“Many families have taken Chef Rebecca’s classes and have learned that cooking can not only be healthy and affordable, but fun as well.”

Currently, Chef Rebecca is serving as the Kitchen Manager for Dawes Middle School with Lincoln Public Schools. She has been involved with Share Our Strength for 25 years, cooked at The Taste of Minnesota and performed demonstrations at The Taste of Omaha. Chef Rebecca volunteers as a Chef Instructor with the Cooking Matters program and she is very active with the wellness programs at Dawes Middle School. She also holds membership in the School Nutrition Association on the district, state and national level.

Chef Rebecca first became associated with Cooking Matters through its parent organization, Share Our Strength. She completed some nutrition education in conjunction with Johnson & Wales University and Share our Strength while in college, and she stayed involved because she felt that the food service industry must play an active role in ending childhood hunger and forming good nutritional habits. She feels that the most valuable lesson she has learned so far by volunteering with Cooking Matters is that hunger and undernourishment occur on all socio-economic levels here in the United States. She always lets her students in the Cooking Matters classroom know that there are no “bad” foods – only incorrect portion sizes.

In regards to healthy eating these days, Chef Rebecca believes that the biggest factor we need to address in promoting healthy eating habits is time management. By living in an “on the go” society, many kids don't cook enough, but if we help teach families good meal planning strategies and food preparation techniques, that will make it much easier. When we give families the tools and encourage them to plan, shop for and prepare meals together, their quality of life will improve.

“As a kitchen manager for a middle school, Chef Rebecca is working hard to provide healthier foods for kids.”

Chef Rebecca was very excited about the USDA replacing the “My Food Pyramid” with “My Plate” because the My plate makes teaching and learning good nutritional habits so much easier. She believes that the drive for better nutrition is really forcing everyone – consumers, producers, suppliers and food service industry leaders – to take a hard look at the whole facet of the food industry. Consumers are becoming much more aware and better label readers and we (the industry) need to be aggressive in meeting those demands. As a Kitchen Manager for a middle school, Chef Rebecca is working hard to provide healthier, low/reduced fat, baked instead of fried, lower sodium and 100-calorie packed foods and a la carte items for kids.

Volunteering with Cooking Matters is important to Chef Rebecca because she has always appreciated the fact that the organization dedicates itself to fighting hunger here in the United States. She believes that due to economic conditions in the past decade, it has become increasingly evident that Cooking Matters is a necessary program in our country, and she wants to be part of an organization that is proactive rather than reactive. Chef Rebecca is honored to partner with the VNA of Omaha because the services they provide to the Omaha community places them in a unique position to be able to identify key concerns, such as lack of food, food desert areas and under nourished persons. It also means that we are not duplicating services in the area and allowing all the organizations and resources to be maximized. Cooking Matters is nationally and locally sponsored by ConAgra Foods® Foundation and Walmart, and is also a program of the Visiting Nurse Association in Omaha and Council Bluffs.

ACF NEWSLETTER



2012-2013 OFFICER LIST

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CHAPTER UPDATE

Dear Chapter,

We have installed a new board and are moving forward conducting the business of the chapter. The most exciting update is the addition of Chef Cedric Fichpain of Le Voltiare as the new Membership chair. If you are interested in membership, please feel free to reach out to Chef Fichpain.

A new board brings in new ideas and responsibilities.

Stewardship as defined by Mirriam-Webster's dictionary: "the conducting, supervising, or managing of something; especially: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care."

As an instructor at MCC, nobody has to remind me of the immensity of this daily action. I want to see all our students' successes shine. At the end of each quarter, I watch with anticipation their technical skills and execution as they prepare a meal for us and others. It is their time to shine – and shine some do.

On occasion, we leave the evaluation room wondering if we taught to our best ability – what did we miss? Where did we miss that critical component which helps them to succeed? Don't get me wrong, many students pass, and a few students pass leaving us humbled by their own abilities.

Yet, I can't help but wonder, was I a good steward? What can I do to promote learning? I want to extend that question to all of you ACF members as we are rejuvenating our ACF Chapter. Share and spread the love of your talents. Be a good steward.

The Heartland Chapter is in a rebuilding process. I want to encourage any and all to join. Eligibility is open to all; if you are engaged in the culinary profession, allied employment, or you're a person of the general non-food professional community that has a passion for the culinary arts. If you have talent and time to share in a leadership role, please connect with me. There is much work to do and many new projects yet to be undertaken.

It is up to us to be good stewards and

share our talents. Thank you and keep seasoning,

Jo Anne Garvey CEC
Chapter President

CULINARY TEAM NEBRASKA

2011-2012 Season Results

JOHN JOYCE INVITATIONAL
November 2011

Silver Medal Hot Food Team
Silver Medal Cold Food Team
Bronze Medal Individual Student
Competition: Frank Centamore

MAD CITY CHEFS INVITATIONAL
January 2012

Silver Medal Student Team
Silver Medal Individual Student
Competition: Frank Centamore

ACF CENTRAL REGIONAL
COMPETITION
April 2012

Silver Medal Student Team

2011-2012 TEAM ROSTER

Angelyn Weiss Beth Anderson
Andrew Cutler Yuka VanNorman
Kevin Rowe Jesse Wester
Chase Grove Jason Titze
Katie Arant Frank Centamore
Ashley Hill Max Piles
Drew Christenson Bethany Weaver
Kyle Shoemaker Vanessa Jones
Yuka Vannorman Zach Bury

2012-2013 Update

The Annual Culinary Team Training Camp will run from August 16th – 20th

This year's theme is Show your work. All former team members and industry chefs are encouraged to share their talent with the new members of the team through mentoring, tasting and critique.

Contact Chase Grove, Team Manager and Chapter Nominee for ACF Student Chef of the Year if you are interested: cagrove2@mccnebraska.net

Follow us on facebook at Culinary-Team Nebraska.

Creativity as a Spiritual Business Practice

by Ron Samuelson

“It is not change that is painful, it is the resistance to change that is painful.” – *Anonymous*

Everything changes; That is perhaps the only constant in life, but to a business, change must be part of a plan, and plans need to start with creative, solution-based problem solving. Not everyone likes to problem solve, but those who resist it generally go out of business quickly rather than slowly. Personally, the quicker I can identify the problem, the quicker I can act with a solution. This is where creativity comes alive in my business.

In its purest form, creativity is a perfect marriage of intellect, intuition and passion. In its function, it is the ability to transform an idea into a product, quickly adapt a plan when disaster strikes, or to fundamentally transform an ineffective organization into a more efficient one. Creativity is more than a thought process – it is a spiritual process. In business, the aptitude for and implementation of creativity is worth more than raw intellect, personality or experience.

“In business, the aptitude for and implementation of creativity is worth more than raw intellect, personality or experience.”

Creativity comes in many forms, and some are valued more than others in our society. In my life, the study of music and the culinary arts that have helped nurture that energy. In business, I have had to learn a narrowing of the discipline, and it is here where I have found the energy of creativity to be vastly misunderstood – and usually misguided. In general, it is usually thought to be the art of creating a new product or entity. It is also looked upon as the way to change the culture or philosophy of a company, and is where leaders in charge generally go astray.

There is a temptation for knee-jerk reactions by many leaders to challenges – or worse, the idea that the company must change simply for the sake of change. These are a fundamentally unsound practices, usually leading to confusion, loss of direction and lowered productivity. When change is handled properly, however, it is well-founded and necessary, and it builds confidence, replacing stale energy with newfound verve. The agent of thoughtful change leads with grace and power, and those that defy it look shortsighted and weak by comparison.

Whether it is reworking a menu item, an entire menu or revamping an ad campaign, there are numerous ways that creativity plays a role in our restaurants every day. The fear of failure is always the enemy of creativity, so it should not be forced, but it should also never be stopped.

When the energy of creative change begins, it takes a life of its own. It is a force of nature, and always a force of good. All things in life are either growing or disintegrating, so the natural instinct for survival, whether by an individual or a group, is through its chosen growth path.

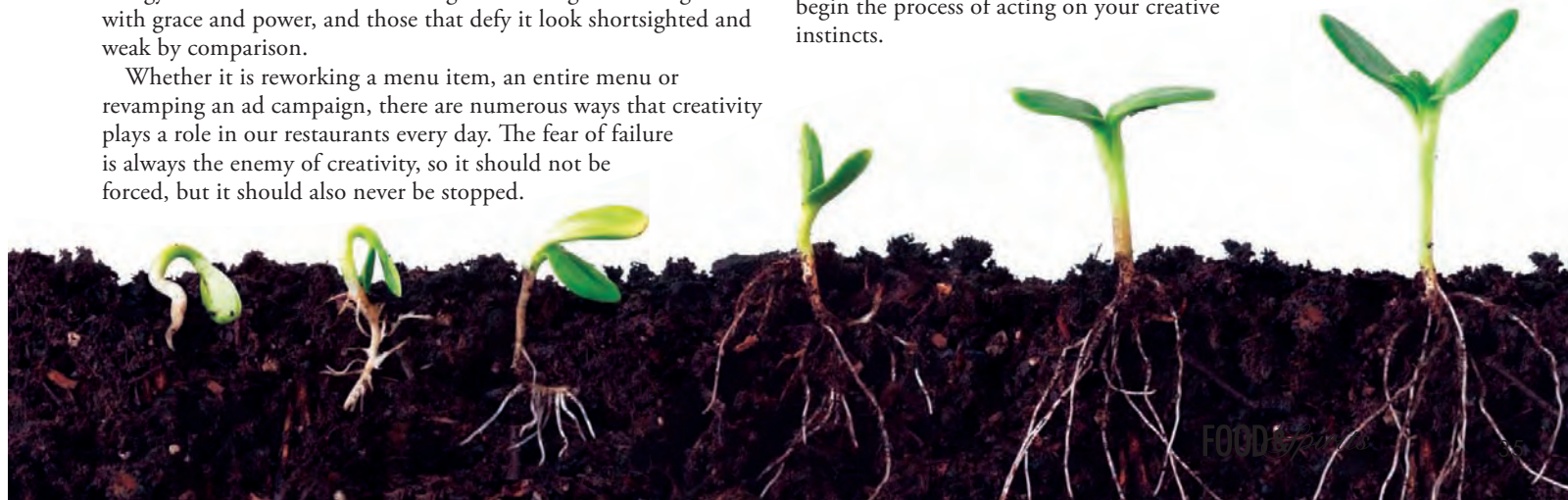
This path is the sole responsibility of the leader. When leaders abdicate their responsibility, a vacuum is created and a problematic power grab ensues. This is why consistency is so important for efficient growth, and why resting on laurels is so dangerous. The creative process cannot be conducted by naysayers; It is a process that must be taken on by optimists. Pessimism is fine in the refinement period – after the evolution of the idea has had time for germination – but not during the gestation period, where the idea is tested by thoughtful contemplation, not fearful negativity.

In a creative environment such as a restaurant, many differing views about any given topic can be found. When there is division or disagreement, the only way through is with communication and respectfulness. This gives all parties an opportunity to share their views and principles, but in the end, it is the leader who must “lead”. One person must be the one who determines the outcome of the discussion, and then execute the plan.

We have a saying: “make a decision, pull the trigger”. It may not always be the popular decision, but one that is in the best interest of the business long-term. As long as the leader has developed trust through the practice of honesty and consistency, the decision will eventually be seen as a wise one, even if it needs to be amended along the way.

In the end, it seems to me that the most gifted creative people have simply honed their creative energy to fit their particular situation better than most. I also believe that the creative energy that some people seem to exude with grace and ease is available to us all, but it is a skill that needs to be identified and nurtured with others of like mind.

There is no substitute for experience, and failure is to be expected – not feared. Some of the best creations I have seen come to life have been preceded by dozens of attempts, and dozens of failures. It is more about learning through the process of action as opposed to learning through the process of thinking. Many great thoughts have never been manifested due to the thinker’s lack of action. The only way to find out where your spiritual creative energy lies is to simply begin the process of acting on your creative instincts.



Gluten-Free Beers That Don't Suck

story and photos by Lucas Korth

I have Celiac Disease. It's an auto-immune disorder that causes the body's immune system to identify gluten as an interloper and attack it. When I found out I had it a little over a year ago, I was told that I had done extensive damage to my small intestine and would need to eliminate gluten from my diet immediately. Even worse, I was strongly recommended to find a new line of work. My career as a brewer was over.

My friend Josh once asked me what beer I missed the most. I was a bit caught off guard. It had been over a year since I last imbibed, and thinking about which brew I longed for most was almost painful. Still, his question had merit and as a former brewer, I suppose I had a unique perspective.

"There is a myriad of different beer styles in the world – and gluten-free folks need more variety."

Unfortunately, I didn't offer him that perspective. Instead, I copped-out and told him High Life. Now don't get me wrong, I love High Life and it will always hold a special place in my heart – but even then I knew my answer was bullshit. The truth was I didn't want to give an honest answer; I didn't even want to think about it. Why torture myself?

I was pissed. I had to quit a job I loved, and my only recourse was to drown my sorrows in Red Bridge? More on that later. I became determined to find a palatable, gluten-free beer in this town – or failing in that, make one myself. What follows is a brief review of the best I could find, and an anecdote about the worst one ever conceived.

Let's start with the aforementioned Red Bridge. April 5th, 2012, Opening Day at Wrigley Field – I can barely contain my excitement. I love the Cubs so much it's embarrassing. Yes, I realize they are a laughable collection of dopes that more resemble a bunch of guys slapping porterhouses together than ballplayers, but I still love them. Gushing aside, I didn't like the match-up this particular afternoon and I was getting pretty antsy.

"Red Bridge... oh my heavens it was bad – don't ever drink it, okay?"

I decided it would be wise to check the concessions for an alcoholic beverage befitting a man of my dietary needs. As luck would have it, the lady at the counter produced a Red Bridge! I had never had one. It being an Anheuser-Busch product, I just assumed it was terrible, but what the hell – it was only 12 dollars. Oh my heavens it was bad. It is not even worth writing about except for this warning – don't ever drink it, okay? I would've rather had a



couple of Old Stiles and dealt with the repercussions for the next few weeks than drink that stuff. Oh, and lest I forget, the Cubs' bullpen walked three straight including the tying run, eventually losing in the ninth. The moral? The Cubs are bad, Red Bridge is worse.

"Out of all the gluten-free beers in the area, New Grist is definitely the easiest to find."

On to the real reviews! Let's start with my old friend, New Grist. Made by the fine folks at Lakefront Brewery in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, its greatest strength is its ubiquity. Out of all the gluten-free beers in the area (not including Red Bridge because it sucks, remember?), it is definitely the easiest to find. It's my personal go-to beer, not only because of its availability, but also because it's quite refreshing. It pours a very light yellow with a rapidly dissipating head (it more resembles a cider in this way), and smells faintly of fresh grain.

There is virtually no hop character to speak of in either the nose or the flavor, which allows the somewhat fruity character of the sorghum to be instantly recognized. This can be off-putting at first (I remember not liking New Grist initially), but I've come to enjoy

it for its own unique flavor. On a side note, do yourself a favor and give the LGK cocktail a try: Two parts tequila, one part Cointreau, a hearty squeeze of fresh lime, two parts grapefruit juice, and top with New Grist. That, my friends, is a summer jam for the ages.

Next up is a new favorite of mine, Bard's Tale. Produced in Utica, NY, it is the closest thing to an actual beer that I have tried, mainly because the traditional brewing process is mimicked as closely as possible, but instead of using malted barley or wheat, malted sorghum is used. Most other gluten-free beers will use a variety of extracts – mostly sorghum – to acquire the sugars necessary for fermentation. “Extract brewing” can result in good beer, but it's much more limited and essentially a brewing shortcut. If you've ever bought one of those brewing kits then you should know what I'm talking about.

“New Planet only comes in four-packs, but it's a must for folks who dig the hops.”

Back to Bard's; it pours a deep copper color with a crisp white head. The malt is strong on the nose with a slightly fruity undertone. The flavor is similar; starting with a strong graininess that rolls fluidly into an aftertaste of acidic fruit. Again, there is little hop character to speak of, but in this particular beer it definitely fits; it sort of feels like a gluten-free version of a lighter German lager – like a Helles. There is a downside, however. At the moment, it is only available in Council Bluffs and Lincoln, and even there it is hard to find. Given its quality, I have to believe it will be more widely available soon.

When Henry Ford said, “People can have the Model T in any color – so long as it's black”, old Hank could have easily been talking about gluten-free beers. There is a myriad of different beer styles in the world – and gluten-free folks need more variety. Enter New Planet's Off Grid Pale Ale and Green's Belgian Dubbel Dark Ale. New Planet's pale pours light amber with a lasting, creamy



head. Unlike the previous two beers, this one appears to have hops in it. There is a heavy, piney nose that gives it a west coast IPA sort of feel. New Planet does have a distinctive fruity flavor from the sorghum, but it actually compliments the hoppy character of the beer and is definitely not a hindrance. It's a bit pricier than the previous two beers and only comes in four-packs, but it's a must for folks who dig the hops.

“Green's Belgian Dubbel is by far the most ambitious gluten-free beer I've ever had.”

Last, but certainly not least (which would be Red Bridge), we have Green's Belgian Dubbel. It's by far the most ambitious gluten-free beer I've ever had, and it comes pretty damn close to hitting the mark. It pours a deep brown with a persistent off-white head and smells faintly sweet with notes of dark fruit. The flavor profile is nearly spot-on, a bit of alcohol on the tongue finishing with a Belgian, sugary sweetness. The familiar sorghum characteristics are present, which are the only things distracting from this otherwise excellent representation of a classic style. It comes as no surprise that this beer is actually produced in Belgium. It is sold individually in 500 milliliter bottles and comes highly recommended.

I hope this served as a good primer for folks who are just entering the gluten-free world – or more importantly, people who only drink Red Bridge (shudder). There are reasonable options out there, and more are showing up all the time. I'll never forget my old favorites, and these beers probably won't make you forget yours either, but health is paramount. As for the rest of you, I only have a few words of advice: enjoy every High Life.

Pairing Cigars... *with Beer*

by Alex Diimig with photos by Lucas Korth



The classic image of cigar chomping aficionados has never been without a glass of whiskey or cognac far off. Sure, great bourbon can manifest a timeless experience for a smoker, but with the rise of craft beer it is time to take on another beverage often overlooked or abused in pursuit of the Good Life.

I often look in horror at someone smoking a pepper laden and cedary cigar while they drink their favorite IPA. Now, far be it of me to tell someone that they are doing it wrong, but I can only imagine the combination of saliva sapping hops and a palette crushing cigar to be a less than savory experience. This isn't to say cigars can't be nuanced, or can't be enjoyed as a delicate accompaniment to the right pairing, but it's important to understand the flavor profiles that comprise different styles of cigars. When you nail it, you'll know it.

“If you have a favorite cigar already, try a flight of different beer pairings and see what really makes it stand out.”

A general rule most smokers have entertained is that if a cigar is big you drink a big beer and if a cigar is delicate you imbibe lightly. There are also those who smoke a vanilla flavored cigar with a vanilla porter. All fine and dandy, but I'm sure we can come up with something more daring.

I called down to Jake's Cigars in Lincoln to ask tobacconist and manager Todd Cox for his thoughts on pairings for cigars. An Ashton VSG, we agreed, is a perfect complement to any well-roasted stout. He also thought, “For general pairings go with an 858 Natural from Arturo Fuente, it has a sweet Cameroon wrapper. It cuts through the bitter of any IPA. Its floral quality can complement a range of beers and the wooden or creamy notes can also create interesting distinctions.”

“For general pairings, go with an 858 Natural from Arturo Fuente. It cuts through the bitter of any IPA.”

Todd had one final piece of pairing advice that seemed almost mystical - A CAO Moontrance and Lindeman's Framboise. The bright, acidic raspberry flavors of the Framboise stands in bold contrast to this little cigar. In the smoke you have understated date flavors with sweet Madagascar vanilla and tones of oaky bourbon. This seemingly gawky pairing is kismet. The Moontrance is also a great cigar for beginners and for spouses who love a great room aroma.

Todd had given me some insight, but needing more, I assembled a small team to take on the daunting task of smoking cigars and drinking beer well into the night. With Jake's staff on hand, we decided to take on an Alec Bradley Prensado, a Nub Connecticut, the tiny flavor tornado Acid Gold Sumatra, and a deceptively spicy Double Claro from La Flora Dominicana. The beers were easy enough; Tripel Karmeliet, Hoegaarden (pronounced 'who'), Ska Mexican Logger and the robustly roasted Old Rasputin Russian Imperial Stout. Here are the results:

“A Candela or double claro can often times boast a surprisingly rich filler - try one with a nice Tripel.”

Belgian Wit is an easy beer and often times a gateway to craft drinking. Whether you're drinking Hoegaarden, Wittekerke or Blue Moon, you're always going to find a healthy dose of Coriander and Orange Peel in the brew. An introductory beer such as this deserves a light smoke. We knew the NUB Connecticut with its soft butter, nutmeg and cedar definitely made a nice pairing as well as a splendid introduction to the night.

Pilsners and lagers tend to go well with traditional cigars. However, the crispness of the beer tended to leave little to the imagination with a light bodied cigar, so try one with an Acid cigar. A crisp, lawn-mowing beer like Ska Mexican Logger goes great with the bed of botanicals they tend to offer in their lighter bodied cigar lines. As with their flavors, it's all a potpourri so you tread into daring territory. With Acid Gold Sumatra we found ourselves undaunted in exploring the variety of the flavors a bright lager could pop out of it. Sweet almond, rosewood, clove and licorice were all a joy to find.



fsmomaha.com

A Candela or double claro is a cigar with a vegetal green wrapper that's cured pre-fermentation and can often times boast surprisingly rich filler – try one with a nice Tripel. With their typically fruitful esters and well-rounded spices, this pairs a balanced beer with an oddity of the cigar world that ranges from herbal grass notes to an old world cobbler's shop worth of leather. With the Karmliet we also found the butterscotch sweetness created a common ground in the polarized flavors of the La Flora Dominicana we took on. Look for what the cigar has to spell out with this duo.

Lastly, we took on the bold and crazed Russian Imperial Stout known to many simply as 'Old Ras.' We pulled out an Alec Bradley Prensado Churchill – one of the top cigars of the year – to take on the end of the night. Now this, this was destiny... smoothly roasted coffee flavors, dark cocoa twirled with warming cinnamon and a peppery spice that tasted like when you get the perfect char on a steak. The typical bitterness you'd find in this beer took a sweep to the leg – these two were left dancing.

We'd imbibed heavily and left happy. So, we recommend a few for you to try out. A lighter bodied sweet chocolate stout and a big Maduro, or maybe a racy Cameroon and a peppery Saison, like Goose Island's Pepe Nero. A cognac dipped cigar with amber Ale.

When it comes down to enjoying a night out, don't be afraid of experimenting – trying is half the fun, right? If you have a favorite cigar already, try a flight of different beer styles and see what really makes it stand out. However, if you are stubborn and dead set on India Pale Ale, drink plenty of water and find the cigar that makes it work for you.



YEAST INSPECTION:

Session Beers

by Jason McLaughlin

While swimming through the endless sea of extreme beers available today (the 1000 IBU Double IPA's, the Imperial Stouts aged in 100 year old Bourbon barrels, the 15% ABV coffee/chocolate/peanut butter/pumpkin ales...), no lover of better beer should forget the other end of the spectrum.

For all intents and purposes, the term "Session Beer" means a beer that is low in gravity, well-balanced and something you can drink several glasses of without getting too intoxicated. However, as with many things beer related, there is plenty of debate about what exactly qualifies a "Session Beer". What are the ABV parameters? Where was the term coined? Why would I want to drink a beer with no flavor?

"A 'Session Beer' is a beer that is low in gravity, well-balanced and something you can drink several glasses of without getting too intoxicated."

The Brits will gladly stake a claim to starting this whole session drinking thing, and it is usually not wise to argue with them over things like that. But, looking at the history of mankind from a broader perspective, it seems there's always been the kind of people looking to spend hours upon hours with friends throwing back pints, and having a great time without regret the next day. The best way to pull off this kind of activity is with Session Beer.

Ask almost any professional brewer what their favorite beer to drink is, and their first response will be their favorite beer made from their own brewery that is 5% ABV or less. Try it sometime, and then have a pint (or four) of their answer – you will most likely agree. Session beers are not just low alcohol beers, but ones with a beautiful marriage between sweet malted grains and hop bitterness. They are crisp, never too sweet or cloying, and extremely satisfying.

"Whatever the term means to you, there's plenty of them out there to try."

You might think of your relationship with Session Beer as the type that could last long-term. There's something comforting and intimate and kind about a good Session Beer, and after a while you might find yourself sitting back and saying, "Yep, I can see myself spending the rest of my life with this one".

Whatever the term Session Beer means to you, there's plenty of them out there to try. In fact, most of them have been there all along – through the boom that is the Craft Beer revolution. They're just hanging around, tasting great, and standing the test of time. Here's a few I suggest:

Squatters Pub Brewery (Salt Lake City, UT)

Full Suspension Pale Ale

4.0% ABV



Okay sure, I might be a tad biased about this one (I'm from Salt Lake and have been drinking this beer since I turned 21), but there's a reason it has won two gold medals at the Great American Beer Festival (GABF). Utah state law prohibits grocery stores to sell beer above 4% ABV, so the local breweries have been honing their Session Beer skills for a very long time. This one is my personal nirvana beer. A fantastic American-style Pale Ale with clean, slightly toasty malt character to balance the grapefruit and melon hop flavor and aroma. It finishes crisp and dry, and leaves me begging for another.

"This one is my personal nirvana beer... a fantastic American-style Pale Ale."

St. James' Gate Brewery (Dublin, Ireland)

Guinness Draught

4.2% ABV



If you have read this far, there's a good chance you have had more than one Guinness in your life. They've been brewing one version or another of this infamous stout since 1759. Amateur drinkers may find the color intimidating, thinking that something as black as tar certainly must taste like tar. In reality though, Guinness is hardly menacing. Instead, it's smooth as mulberry silk. The slightest kiss of mocha coffee is about as offensive as this beer gets. Some like to think of Guinness as the quintessential Session Beer, and whether you agree or not, one thing is for sure – you can have more than just one.

Nebraska Brewing Company (Papillion, NE)

Brunette Nut Brown Ale

4.5% ABV



The state of Nebraska is no stranger to great Session Beers. I could have written more than a dozen spotlights from the Cornhusker State alone. Among my favorites is Nebraska Brewing Company's English-style brown, a locally made version of a classic British Session Beer. If you've ever wondered why brewers use the label "Nut Brown," this beer is a textbook

answer. The toasted nuttiness comes through nicely in both aroma and flavor, and pairs perfectly with hints of lightly sweet bready malt and a very subdued earthy/floral hop character. I may not be the record holder for most consecutive pints of Brunette Nut Brown in one session, but I bet I'm close.

"NBC's English-style brown is a locally-made version of a classic British Session Beer."

Victory Brewing Company (Downingtown, PA)

Prima Pils

5.3% ABV



I know it's a hair over 5% ABV, and it's not currently available in our great state, but if you were lucky enough to make it to the Great Nebraska Beer Fest this past August, hopefully you stopped by the Victory booth to enjoy a sample of Prima Pils. A session favorite amongst my beer geek friends across the nation, this classic German-style Pilsner with fantastic cracker-like Pilsner malt character and the spicy/herbal wallop of hops, ranks high in one of the most crisp and refreshing beer styles in the world. In my book, no great Session Beer list is complete without Prima Pils, even though it does sneak a little North of the unofficial regulations.





Libation Conversation

A Beer Cocktails Creation Session

at Dario's Brasserie story and photos by Dan Crowell

I've been intrigued (and maybe a little intimidated) for some time by the possibilities that are represented in the term 'beer cocktails'. So in the spirit of creativity, I decided to explore some of those possibilities recently with the help of the great folks at Dario's Brasserie in Dundee. Those of you who are familiar with Dario's know that these people are very knowledgeable and passionate about beer. With a profound respect for the category, we set out to utilize four of the many amazing beers available at Dario's as the bases for some unique beer cocktails.

"With a profound respect for the category, we set out to utilize four of the many beers available at Dario's as the bases for some unique beer cocktails."

Our goals were these: one, to respect the integrity and inherent flavor profiles of the beers themselves; and two, to construct cocktails that would effectively incorporate these flavor profiles into balanced cocktails with layers, depth, character, subtlety and a pleasing complexity on the palate, highlighting and complementing the flavors of each of the beers used. Dario himself suggested that we pursue one cocktail that can be described as 'light', one that is 'summery', one that is 'sweet', and one that is 'strong'.

Selected by Dario's manager David Heck, the four beers utilized in these cocktail experiments included the following: Scaldis Peche

Mel (a Belgian fruit beer), Petrus Oud Bruin (a Flemish-style Belgian sour brown ale), St Bernardus Abt 12 (a potent Belgian abbey ale), and Saison Dupont (an unfiltered Belgian farmhouse-style ale).

Our first step was to conduct a sensory evaluation of the beers to determine how best to work with each in a cocktail format. Here are my notes for each:

Scaldis Peche Mel

Appearance: Amber with a slight copper hue, golden and glowing in the glass, lightly opaque with a head that dissipates quickly.

Nose: Fruity (especially peach & orange marmalade), fall spices (cinnamon in particular), floral hop notes.

Palate: Medium-sweet, orange muscat tones, hint of rose water, grapefruit tartness develops later on, and a distinct 'tea & toast' vibe.

Petrus Oud Bruin

Appearance: Copper, brickly amber, and pinot noir tones, good clarity.

Nose: Cider vinegar, caramel, toffee, and orange peel.

Palate: Ruby grapefruit notes with a slightly drying spiciness and a mild hoppy bitterness. Finish brings out more focused citrus tones.

St Bernardus Abt 12

Appearance: Colors of mahogany and leather, slightly opaque, thin head dissipates quickly.

Nose: Oak and cedar overtones, malty, hops and pipe tobacco smoke, tart citrus and cherry notes, very light waft of sulfur.

Palate: Unsweetened cocoa, rich caramel and toffee, and a pleasing hop presence.

Saison Dupont

Appearance: Golden to orange peel, opaque, head is dense and lingering.

Nose: Yeasty and nutty, with citrus, malt, hops, coriander and cardamom notes.

Palate: Pleasingly bitter with a drying hop presence, tart, hint of lemon, round, mouth-filling texture, light effervescence on back palate, citrus, malt and spice linger on finish, NOT sweet.

Given these complex properties to work with, our next step was to identify liquors, liqueurs, and other components that would complement and pair favorably with each beer without robbing the beer of its unique identity. Working off of Dario's classification directive, we decided to begin by tackling the 'summery' drink first. We felt Saison Dupont was the ideal candidate for this cocktail as its tart, dry flavor profile would serve as a great backdrop for a gin cocktail.

“Saison Dupont was the ideal candidate for this cocktail... it lent itself well to a cool summer sipper.”

In order to bring out its inherently spicy citrus flavors, we chose fresh-squeezed orange juice and nutmeg as our modifying ingredients. We dialed in a little simple syrup to help balance the tartness of the beer and the orange juice, and chose a flamed orange peel garnish to unify and focus the aromatics of the drink. The resulting cocktail fit the 'summery' bill very well. We felt it lent itself well to a 'long drink' presentation as a cool summer sipper in a Collins glass, but it could easily be adapted to be served up.

Beer Cocktail #1 – *Summery*

4 oz Saison Dupont
1 oz Tanqueray TEN
1 oz fresh-squeezed orange juice
1 oz simple syrup

Stir with ice and strain into ice-filled Collins glass
Dust with freshly grated nutmeg and garnish with a flamed orange peel.

Next up, we decided to take on the 'strong' cocktail. For this one, we agreed that the Petrus Oud Briun would be our choice to anchor the cocktail. The word 'strong' could be interpreted two ways in this context – alcoholic potency or flavor intensity. The St Bernardus would have been our choice had we been going for potency – given that its ABV is over 10% – but we chose the latter definition. Our feeling was that the Petrus' flavor profile gave us room to dial in more intense spirits and modifiers without burying the integrity of the beer in the process.

“Petrus' flavor profile gave us room to dial in more intense spirits and modifiers without burying the integrity of the beer in the process.”

I am a giant fan of Rye whiskey (along with several others in the creation panel), and I happened to have a bottle of Velvet Falernum (an almond liqueur infused with flavors of lime and clove), some Fee Brothers Whiskey Barrel Aged Bitters, and a really

nice Crème de Cassis with me at the time. We first attempted a take on a Sazerac by very lightly rinsing the service glass with Pernod before pouring the cocktail in, but it didn't serve the drink well and compromised the aromatics. I love Sazeracs, so I was a bit disappointed that our initial experiment didn't work, but my disappointment was very short-lived because the cocktail we ended up going with was very tasty.

Beer Cocktail 2 – *Strong*

4 oz Petrus Oud Bruin
1 oz Bulleit Rye
½ oz Velvet Falernum
¼ oz Clear Creek Cassis
1 dash Fee Brothers Whiskey Barrel Aged Bitters

Stir with ice and serve in a chilled coupe glass.

Stay tuned for details on the development of the 'light' and the 'sweet' cocktail candidates. Here's a little preview: My initial attempt to pair the St Bernardus up with Ardbeg 10 Year Islay Single-Malt (my favorite liquid on earth) for the 'sweet' cocktail ended badly, but the Scaldis Peche Mel got along great with Benedictine and Armagnac, yet still produced a pleasantly 'light' cocktail. For a more interactive experience, keep an eye on the cocktail offerings at Dario's – you're bound to see the fruits of our effort soon. My thanks to Dario Schicke, Dave Heck, Phil Hejl, Jason Jones, and James Marcuzzo from Dario's for their ideas, insights, enthusiasm, and feedback.





Bar Chat

by Dan Crowell

An Interview with Sam Bloomer of The Side Door

Patrons enjoy the relaxing atmosphere The Side Door has to offer.

Bar Chat represents my ongoing efforts to shed some well-deserved light on the creative, innovative work being done by some of the area's top bartenders & mixologists. The following is taken from an interview I conducted recently with The Side Door's Sam Bloomer.

FSM: How do you go about engaging new customers who may not be familiar with what the Side Door is all about?

SB: We definitely try to challenge peoples' perceptions, and it's great to see that sometimes we do. Sometimes it's through shared knowledge or letting people try things. We let them know that sometimes what they've asked for isn't necessarily the best thing out there and they can have something better. That comes from having better product availability and a really good bar staff that can tell you about those things. When someone orders say, a Bud Light for example, we have Weihenstephan in bottles, which is a great beer from the oldest brewery in the world (established in 1040), so we try to change their minds and get them to like better things – sort of changing the culture one person at a time.

“We do classic mixology highlights – old school drinks, old school methods, but we also do different things.”

FSM: And what's your success rate been in terms of getting new customers won over to your way of doing things?

SB: I'd say we're successful more often than not. Probably 85 to 90%, because people see that we really put heart and soul into it. People appreciate the small things we do that they wouldn't necessarily think about otherwise. We try to accommodate people and let them know why we don't have certain things and that what we have is comparable and possibly even better, but some people are really stubborn about what they want to drink. They drink what

they drink, and they will not accept anything else. People who are willing to try though, are definitely happy they did.

FSM: What are some of your other goals regarding the customer experience at The Side Door?

SB: We try to do things that are 'great' – things that are done really, really well. We try to create a relaxing, cozy, and inviting environment for everyone to come and enjoy something nice. We like to be not necessarily on the cutting edge of bartending, but doing things that are a little different. We describe ourselves as the Willy Wonkas of bartending. We see things that are weird and we want to do something with them. We try very hard to do things that no one else is doing, which sometimes is really hard.

I go to other bars and restaurants, and look online to get an idea of what other people are doing so that we don't do those things. We do classic mixology highlights – old school drinks, old school methods – and as close to the old school liquors as we can possibly get to make them, but we also do different things. Like taking some of those old school preparations and revamping them for the modern era by using things that are available to us now that weren't necessarily available back then. One of the great things about living in Nebraska is that there's always something fresh and local to use, which we want to be on the cutting edge of.

I like eating fresh, local things, so I want to drink fresh, local things. I don't want mint that's been on a truck for four days and sitting in a warehouse cooler somewhere for a week and a half before it gets to me; I want mint that I buy from a farmer's market that was picked yesterday. I want to make people happy, make them healthy, make them comfortable, and do things that nobody else is doing – and to blow peoples' minds by doing it.

FSM: By defying convention, you run the risk of alienating some cocktail purists. Is it a conscious decision on your part to go with your instincts and not be hemmed in by conventional classic cocktail wisdom?

SB: Yeah, we do have a lot of people who come in that know cocktails really well, so they'll come in and they're like, “That's not

Professor Jerry Thomas's whiskey smash", and I'm like, "No, I know. I realize that. I read Imbibe too". But we're trying to do things that are a little different and maybe even a little better.

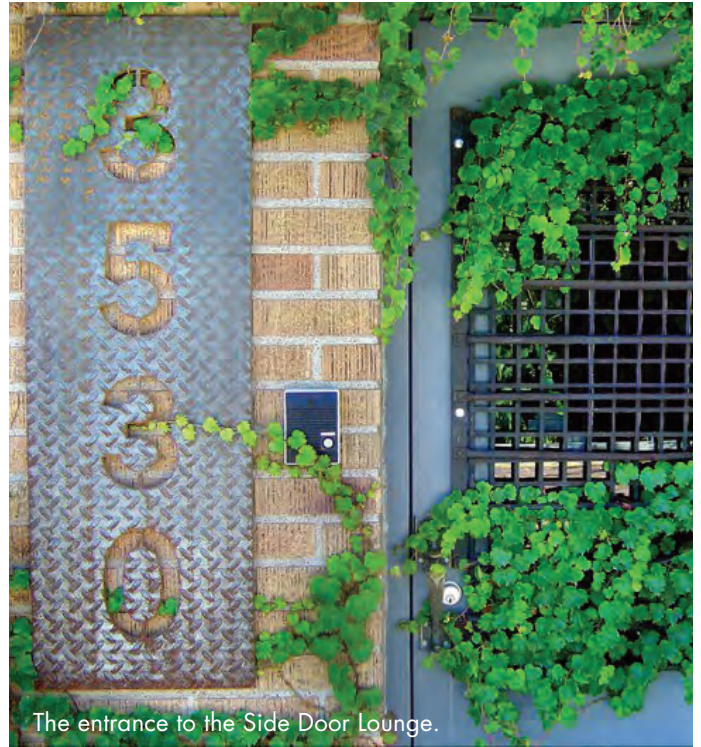
We try things a lot before we put them on the menu. We play around with them a lot too, and sometimes we find that the recipes that are out there aren't always the 'best' ones. There are more things available now that you can use and what they had then depended on where they were, but now we can get things from around the world in just a couple days, or things we can get in Nebraska that they couldn't get in say, New Orleans when they were inventing some of these drinks. There's a lot of room to play around with it. There are some cocktails where I like to stick as close to the original recipe as possible because they are amazing, but there aren't a lot of cocktails we do that with.

"There are some cocktails where I like to stick as close to the original recipe as possible, but there aren't a lot of cocktails we do that with."

FSM: Steve Jamrozy, the owner of The Side Door, has a bit of a reputation for not necessarily letting what other people think dictate, or unduly influence his actions. It sounds like this mindset carries over to the bar.

SB: Definitely. We're still very nice, but we don't take crap from anyone and we really don't care what people think. If you come in and we don't have what you want and you leave, well then it probably wasn't the place for you. We're not going to let it bother us. It's really nice to work in that environment. If we're not given

respect, we don't have to give respect back to people just because they're the customer. There aren't a lot of rules – hardly any, actually. We like that kind of fluidity. Steve is the kind of person who knows that creativity flourishes when it's not stomped out.



The entrance to the Side Door Lounge.

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A Mustache on the Mona Lisa

by John Finocchiaro

The wine industry is steeped in tradition. Old world wines of western Europe (think Italy, France, Spain, and Germany) have perfected and preserved the practices of generations of winemakers that preceded them. An attitude of reverence is upheld for those past masters of winemaking.

Such respect for tradition is warranted, and most new world wines (think Australia and the good old USA among others) adhered strictly to old world tradition as the template for shaping their own wine industries. Wine was art, and no one dared paint a mustache on the Mona Lisa. Then something happened.

Rebel children came to life and decided to... well, mess with perfection. Of course, if this new generation of winemakers thought that the previous few hundred years of winemaking was so perfect, they certainly would not have messed with it. Unabashed new styles, blends and flavor profiles were born.

Whether or not any of us oenophiles had even a sliver of respect for such groundbreaking and revolutionary creations as White Zinfandel is irrelevant – it sold. Like hotcakes; like Dilly Bars at a Berkshire Hathaway annual shareholders' meeting – times a million.

Soon after, the slightly sweet and fruity (always described as

“semi-dry”) ice cold style of chardonnay was born. I had visions of the ballpark vendors at Rosenblatt climbing the aisles, yelling “get your chardonnay...ice-cold chardonnay...”

Once again, it sold big. As the floodgates of creativity – and I use that term quite loosely here – opened, wine purists all over the world cringed. There can be a fine line between garbage and art. Many of our world's greatest creations came from thinking outside the box, but was greatness ever achieved by actually putting it IN a box? Now, that's a tough sell.

“Many of our world's greatest creations came from thinking outside the box, but was greatness ever achieved by actually putting it IN a box?”

Where did we go wrong? Perhaps we didn't consider the potential fallout from our little fun and games time with the Boone's Farm and Annie Green Springs era. We were just fooling around, right? No one was supposed to take that stuff seriously. It certainly wasn't supposed to bloom and blossom into a river of cavity-creating pop wines. Who knew that our Big Bang in the new world wine business would turn into a big bust in quality – or would it?

Quietly, as our passion for Bieber wines boomed, a multitude of serious, albeit sometimes a little off-center, artisanal winemakers were reinventing the classics. Stylistically, super-ripe grapes achieved through long hang time on the vine were producing intensely flavored and sometimes powerful “in-your-face” wines. Perhaps some subtle nuances were lost in translation, and many purists scoffed at this style of winemaking.

“Ironically, the genesis of new world wine styles and blends may have originated in an old world country.”

These opulent American Cabernets, Chardonnays, Pinot Noirs and Zinfandels were turning heads, winning medals and receiving high accolades. These nontraditional wines packed a punch; you weren't listening to opera music while sipping on these. Think Led Zeppelin in a glass.

Along with this fruit-forward style came the blends. Magical blends that made perfect sense. Meritage (rhymes with “heritage”) was the proprietary term given to wines consisting of two or more of the original classic Bordeaux varietals of cabernet, merlot,



cabernet franc, malbec, carmenere' and petite verdot. Unconstrained by the rule stating that 75% of a varietal wine must come from one grape type, winemakers were free to experiment and create.

Similarly, other wine blends not restricted to Bordeaux varietals emerged. A personal favorite of mine are G-S-M wines (grenache, syrah, mourvedre) patterned after the wines of the southern Rhone in France. A multitude of white blends came into being as well. If you have not yet checked out some of these red and white blends, I recommend you do so – you'll thank me later.

“Our plates need not get bored... creativity abounds in the areas of different winemaking styles and blends.”

Ironically, the genesis of these new world wine styles and blends may have originated in an old world country. In a quest to “build a better Chianti” as an Italian winemaker once told me, some producers from Tuscany desired to blend their Sangiovese (the primary grape variety in Chianti) with other nontraditional varieties. Chianti regulations were quite restrictive, and parting from tradition would prohibit these wines from calling themselves by that name.

In 1978 acclaimed winemaker Piero Antinori released – to resounding acclaim – his 1971 Sangiovese-Cabernet Sauvignon blend, called Tignanello. By the late 1980's many other wineries followed suit with their own high-quality Sangiovese wine blends.

Today many Super Tuscan wines, as they unofficially referred to, are among the finest red wines in the world.

For all who love good wine, it is nice to know that our palates need not get bored. New varieties such as Malbec and Tempranillo, which were once foreign to many of us years ago, are constantly being brought to market. Creativity abounds in the areas of different winemaking styles and blends. All of this makes for a better wine world, while maintaining the utmost respect for the traditions of those winemakers from past generations. After all, no one is trying to paint a mustache on the Mona Lisa.

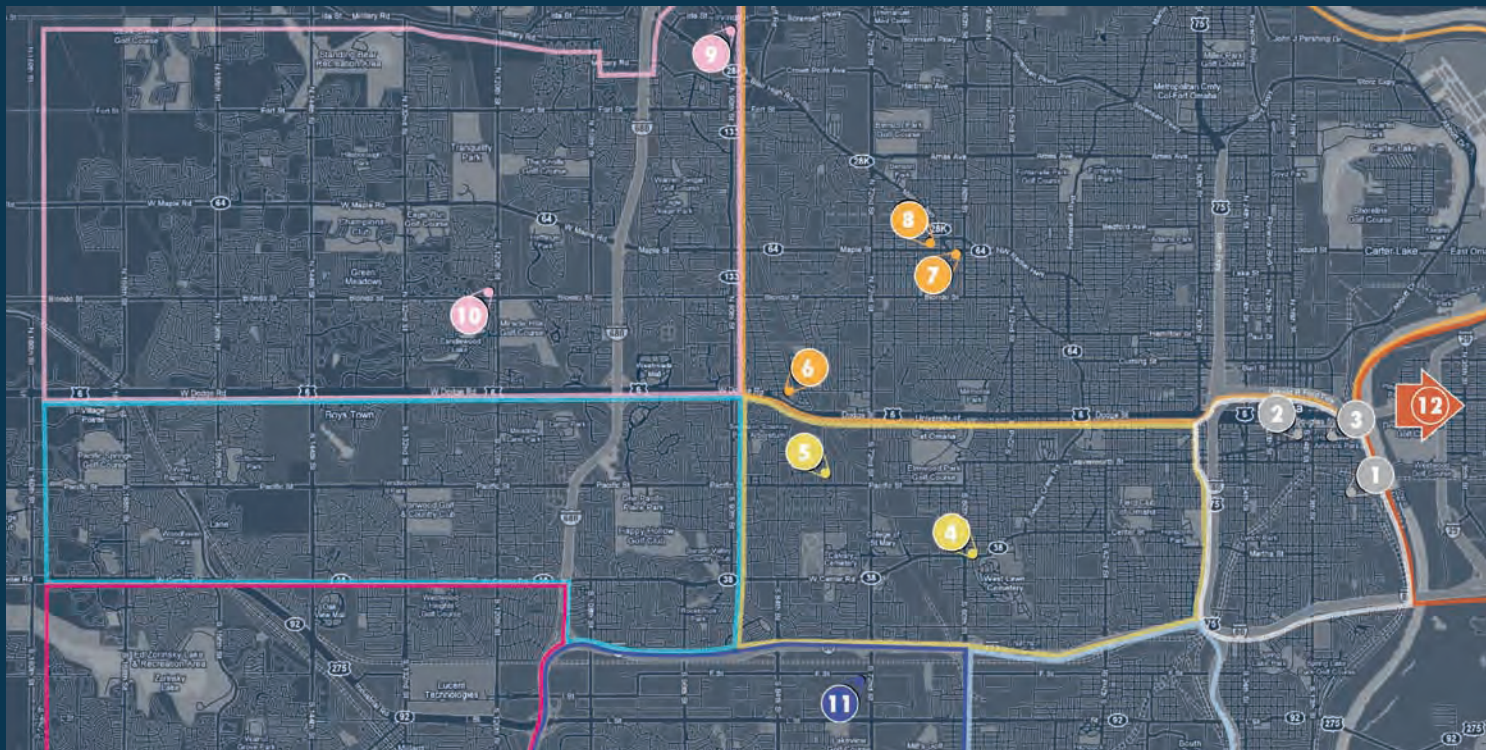


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8 Jane's Health Market

402-558-8911
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9 Mangia Italiana

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11 Anthony's Steakhouse

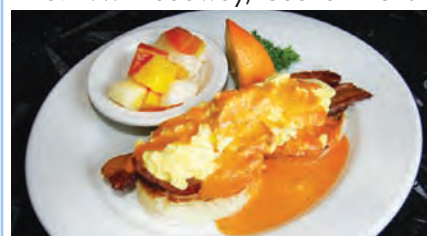
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For over 40 years, Anthony's Steakhouse has been known for quality steaks and an impeccable guest experience. Our premium beef is aged on premise. Our ballroom and banquet facilities are the perfect location for business meetings or wedding receptions.

12 Dixie Quicks

712-256-4140
157 W. Broadway, Council Bluffs



Dixie Quicks features an ever-changing menu of Southern Cooking with Cajun, Tex-Mex and Southwest elements. We shop for ingredients every day so the food we serve is fresh. Comfort food, darn good flavors and plenty of personality help describe what you will find at Dixie Quicks.

The Dumpster: Blow Me Away

by Michael Campbell

The first time I witnessed a real breakthrough in the culinary arts was when a fistful of Pop Rocks exploded in my mouth. Not as in, “exploding with flavor!”; as in, blew up.

“Taste the Explosion!” the packaging exclaimed. I knew what an explosion tasted like. A firecracker once went off in my mouth. If this were a magazine about dumb children, I’d be telling that story.

Because I did not learn a thing from that episode, I opened my mouth and tossed in a handful of the ruby-red Pop Rocks. Like every other kid trying Pop Rocks for the first time, I screamed and spit out the crackling carnage, choking at the sight of my blood-red foaming spit. Then like every other kid I exclaimed, “Cool!”

Cereal makers lead the creative food charge for kids, turning honeycombs, s’mores and doughnuts into corn-based, primary-colored breakfast that goes down like a spoonful of sugar. But finding more ways to eat sugar isn’t exactly breakthrough creativity.

“Frito-Lay has perfected an exploding potato chips bag, which opens everywhere except along the top seam, labeled ‘Open here’.”

For grown-ups, behold the booze asmooch... the amused douche... [pause while I look it up]... the amuse-bouche, a one-bite treat brought to your table by the chef in frillier restaurants. This delicacy is his calling card, meant to sum up his entire culinary philosophy in a single wad of raw salmon or blob of mint foam. The amuse-bouche is technically not an appetizer because it comes before the appetizers and you didn’t order it – see how creative that is? It’s more a thing to admire than a thing to eat, but you eat it anyway. If the chef is watching, you roll your eyes around thoughtfully as you ponder its slimy, slippery texture. How bold! Bravo! If nobody’s watching you, you slide it off your tongue into your napkin.

Creativity has invaded coffee, starting with cheap, powdered styrofoam that looks quite like you actually paid \$5 for a cappuccino. No more plain, powdered non-dairy creamer. [Another pause... if it’s not dairy and not liquid, why do we still call it cream? Creative!] Now you can now enjoy additives like Coffee-mate Belgian Chocolate Toffee, Parisian Almond Crème (you know it’s really French because it has the accent), or Crème Brûlée (three accents! And no, I’m not making these up). How about Tiramisu Cheesecake? (Okay, I made that one up. Pretty good, huh? Hire me, Coffee-mate!) These powdered miracles are for people who don’t like coffee, but drink it anyway.

The real food breakthroughs of the last decade are in food packaging. To make a no-drip ketchup bottle, Heinz developed a

tiny, sphincter-like spout that doesn’t leak at all until you squeeze the bottle hard enough that it blows like a zit across your hot dog, over the table and up the mink coat of the woman at the next booth – which is what she deserves if she’s wearing a mink coat in a place that serves ketchup. If that seems like an odd example, it’s only because it really happened to me. Heinz needs to solve the squeeze bottle’s tendency to sound like a fart, which inevitably happens within earshot of 8-year-old boys who giggle and repeat that sound for the rest of the day – until you send them to bed early.

Frito-Lay has perfected an exploding potato chip bag, which opens everywhere except along the top seam, labeled “Open here”. Nature’s Harvest reduces waste by putting only three ounces of granola in their 16-ounce box, held in a little biodegradable plastic bag surrounded by – I presume – fresh organic country air.

The age-old milk carton now has a plastic spout on top – convenient! Just unscrew the lid, dig out the “freshness seal” underneath by pulling the attached ring which breaks off, and then dig out the damn thing by stabbing it with a butter knife. This innovation takes three times longer and drips twice as much as the original fold-open spout, which is still there on the carton.

Food trend-setters: if you are short of inspiration, here are three suggestions:

- Create cling wrap that does cling
- Biscotti-flavored coffee cups
- Make tomatoes out of tomato

Meanwhile, there’s always room for more exploding food.



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