

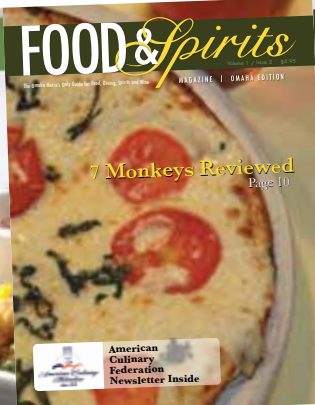
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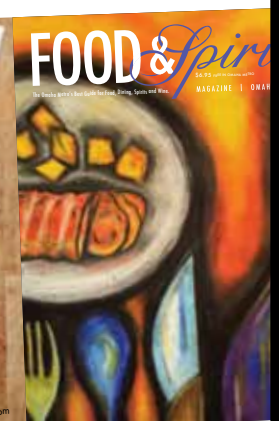
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FOOD & Spirits

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ON THE COVER

All our covers in one place and at one time, for you to peruse and reminisce. Remember the scratch and sniff cover (mmmm, buttered popcorn). Or how about the journal cover? Or maybe the highlights cover along with the punch-out paper doll (Brian O'Malley) tickled your fancy. Our personal favorite was the art cover (by the excellent Wayne Brekke). It's been a fun five years and we've had a ball creating these. We hope you've enjoyed them as well. Look for more crazy concepts and jazzy ideas in the issues to come.

No. 15

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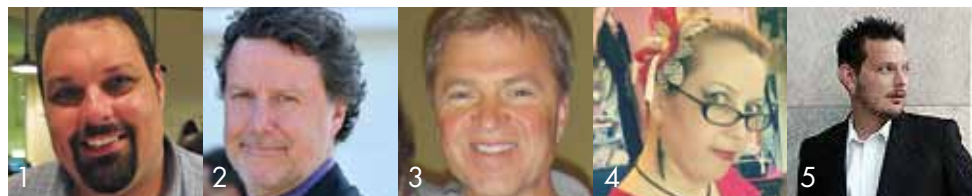
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EXPERTS PANEL

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



1 Matt Biggins

2 Michael Campbell

3 John Finocchiaro

4 Trisha Hunter

5 Marq Manner



6 Jason McLaughlin

7 Brian O'Malley

8 Ron Samuelson

9 Ann Summers

1 Matt Biggins

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

2 Michael Campbell

Michael Campbell is a regular humor columnist for *Food & Spirits Magazine*, where his "Dumpster" essays close every issue. His first book, *Are You Going To Eat That*, is a collection of 60 humor essays released in September 2009 by Prairie Moon Publishing. He has written for nationally-distributed entertainment newsletters *Coffee Break* and *Facts of Life*, and his off-beat observations have appeared in various issues of *Reader's Digest*. His weekly humor blog, MC, (mcwritingessays.blogspot.com) reaches thousands of readers, and he was recently named Humor Writer of The Month by the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop. Campbell is also an avid singer/songwriter with three CDs of original music, and was the founder of Mick's Music & Bar in Omaha.

3 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.

4 Trisha Hunter

"Trisha Trixie" Hunter is a Fashion Designer & Blogger for *Trisha Trixie Designs-Life in a Retro State of Mind* as well as for *Des Moines is Not Boring* & Vintage Inspired Model – *Trisha Trixie The Vintage Fashionista*.

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 is a Certified Cicerone, a ranked '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 spends time traveling

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.

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 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.

10 Ryan Miller

Ryan Miller grew up in South Omaha and is co-founder of Benson Brewery. He developed his passion for craft beer when visiting breweries in Colorado at the ripe old age of 18 which is also when he started planning the Benson Brewery. Ryan began home-brewing while living on a Boat in San Diego. In 2001, when he was studying Economics at the University of Colorado in Boulder, his home-brewing passion turned into an obsession. After years of planning and developing home-brew recipes while living in an old monastery in Washington, DC, he finally took the leap and opened Benson Brewery and Eatery in 2013. When Ryan is not working you can find him spending time with friends and family or enjoying a pint of Adopted Amber from Benson Brewery.

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



This issue of *Food & Spirits Magazine* marks our 5th Anniversary. For me, and for *FSM*, it's been quite a ride. Coincidence or not, the ups and downs in my life have mirrored the roller coaster this magazine has been on.

Five years ago the country was in the worst recession in decades – one from which we're still slowly recovering. In addition,

print publications, to put it mildly, were not seen as an industry on the rise. There was even talk that print was (*gasp!*) dead. In my personal life, significant events (a divorce, the death of my mother, and a move) continued to happen.

"The food and spirits industry is evolving faster than ever and shows no signs of slowing. In five years the standard for quality has risen drastically."

I wouldn't say all that is behind us now, but things *are* different.

Omaha weathered the horrible economy remarkably well. We're seeing a surge in development. The food and spirits industry is evolving faster than ever and shows no signs of slowing. In five years the standard for quality has risen drastically.

Print, while still finding its place in the social media world, is holding up well. The market may be changing, but the important things like stellar content and supportive sponsors still make all the difference.

In 2008 I had been back from San Francisco to my native Nebraska for only a year, and had no plans to start *Food & Spirits Magazine*. Unique factors and the swell of creativity made Omaha seem like the perfect place to create a national-caliber magazine. I felt if I didn't take a chance then and there, I'd regret it.

What did I see that changed the course of my life?

Industry know-how: I was blown away by the bar and restaurant scene in Omaha. Coming from San Francisco, I was impressed by the core group of innovative and passionate chefs, bartenders and owners and their excellent established concepts, while yet still looking to push boundaries. They were putting Omaha on the map. **The Institute for the Culinary Arts** was contributing a groundswell of knowledge. The scene surprised and inspired me.

Creative expertise: I returned to Omaha with a vague notion that something special was happening in the music scene, but I never

expected to find all the other creative arts flourishing so abundantly. I met tremendously talented writers, artists, photographers and designers striving for the same things the food and spirits industry was pushing for: innovation and creative respect.

"Omaha may seem conservative, but I was grateful to find so many people willing to support a new idea that added something to our city – and put their dollars behind it."

Support for risk takers: Omaha may seem conservative, but I was grateful to find so many people willing to support a new idea that added something unique to our city—and put their dollars behind it. Our advertisers supported this magazine for free distribution throughout the entire city. I'll always be colossally grateful for their willingness to take a chance. Likewise, Omahans are impressively willing to try new places and expand their horizons, pulling our community together.

"Thank you, so very much, every single one of you... Together we've created a top-notch local magazine that epitomizes local."

Thank you, so very much, every single one of you. Thanks to our advertisers for making it financially possible. Thanks to our writers, designers, photographers and printers for providing the foundation and content. Together we've created a top-notch local magazine that epitomizes *local*. Thanks to friends, family, and mentors (especially the folks at **Jake's**) for providing insight and listening to me talk, seemingly non-stop, about this magazine. Thanks, of course, to you, for going on this ride with me. Your appreciation for what we do makes it all worthwhile.

On to the next five years!



FROM TRAVELS TO TABLE

by Kent Cisar

Picture this; You've just gotten home from your magnificent vacation or weekend getaway. You may have a t-shirt, dishware, plenty of digital photographs and social media posts to remember the great time you had, but what if you could bring back a souvenir that could immediately take you back to that perfect Sunday brunch spot you found, or that fantastic Friday dinner on the bay? With a little preparation beforehand, and some careful storage after your return, you can bring back the flavors of your vacation to share with friends and family with remarkable ease.

Research - Before your trip commences, research is your best friend. A Google search of your destination, plus a few key words (such as: farmers markets, organic, seafood, and produce), can be your baseline. Customer review sites like YELP or Trip Advisor can point you in directions of good restaurants/retailers with items to take home as well. If traveling by car, leave enough space in your cooler to bring back items. If traveling by plane, a soft cooler can be easily stuffed in your checked luggage to transport perishable items home.

“With a little preparation beforehand, you can bring back the flavors of your vacation to share with remarkable ease.”

Get some goodies - Your bags are packed and you're on your way; it sure feels great to be on vacation. Upon reaching your destination, here's how to embark on your quest to bring the foods of your travels back home. There's no substitute for local knowledge. People are usually proud to showcase the best things about their area. Ask them what it's known for and the best places to get these items. Map these locales on your phone to see if they are within your reach while in your normal vacation activities. For perishable goods, try to visit these places as late in the trip as possible. When visiting the vendors, grab their contact information for potential future shipments.

Getting it home - Now it's almost time to return home and protecting your culinary treasures is of utmost importance. For those flying, it's essential that your meat/seafood is frozen before you fly home. Stop by a local grocery store to pick up a couple pounds of dry ice, then wrap your items in a few plastic grocery bags and place them in your soft cooler. Seal the cooler and tuck it away in your checked luggage. Here's a neat trick I learned from Erick Cook of Big E's BBQ Sauce at the Parker, Colorado Farmer's market this summer: he tells customers to wrap his sauces in a plastic bag and put them into a shoe before packing it into checked bags. I can proudly say the sauce and shoe made it home perfectly intact! Vendors such as Cook are very happy to talk to out-of-town visitors. “Word of mouth is my best form of advertising. Once

people have tried my products, they tell their friends about it and also how to get my sauces.” He added, “Tourists provide valuable exposure to areas outside of my local area and allow my sauces to be sold in stores I otherwise wouldn't have been able to reach.”

Returning home with produce can be a bit trickier for fliers. On two flights this year, I chose to carry on peaches and oranges in my small backpack. My approach resulted in moderate bruising. Next time I'll grab a small cooler and secure them more with small towels or plastic bags. The less movement these items endure, the better condition they'll be in when you get home.

For the road trip adventurers out there, your task is easier. Hopefully you've got ample space in your regular cooler after eating many of the things you brought from home. A good block or bag of regular ice should suffice for perishable items. Pack any potential breakables in safe places on top of your heavy luggage. You can also use the same approach your flying companions do with shoes and towels. For the produce, do your best to minimize movement and keep items out of the sun for any significant amount of time to prevent rotting.

At home - The vacation is now over. You're home and the reality of returning to the daily grind sets in. It's essential to determine when you will be using the well-traveled items. Unpack and store them according to expiration date and expected usage. Seafood can be stored for quite some time, although a shorter turn-around time yields much more flavorful results. If fruits and vegetables are your haul, salsas, jams, or canning can be used to extend the duration of usage (I made a jam with Colorado peaches this summer). For mixes, pastas, and other non-perishable items, save them for a special occasion, holiday dinner, or potluck.

The benefits of your tasty travels can even enhance your everyday cooking. Many places have good websites to order their products online throughout the year. Lauren Berry, a New York native now living in Omaha, travels frequently to different parts of the country. She told me, “When I moved from New York to the Midwest, I knew I would miss many of the foods I had grown up with. I soon realized that with relative ease I could hop onto a website and contact my neighborhood deli and have delicious German sausages delivered to my door within two days. Now, after vacationing in a city and falling in love with the local fare, I can hop online and have a little piece of vacation shipped directly to me weeks or months after being there.”

Incorporating food into your travels enhances your time on vacation by exposing your taste buds to flavors and foods not otherwise found at home. Whether it's a unique spice blend from New Orleans, fresh caught fish from Florida, or a local orchard you found driving through the countryside, the aromas and flavors in your kitchen can transport your mind immediately back to the first time you sunk your teeth into that amazing local food. Your family and friends will surely look forward to hearing about the highlights of your adventures.

The Times In Which We Live

by Ron Samuelson

"May you always live in interesting times." – anonymous fortune cookie saying

Robert Kennedy gave a speech in Cape Town in June of 1966 in which he famously spoke the following: "There is a Chinese curse which says, 'May he live in interesting times'. Like it or not we live in interesting times. They are times of danger and uncertainty; but they are also more open to the creative energy of men than any other in history."

So are interesting times a blessing or a curse? I submit that it depends solely on your outlook. From where I sit, the times in which we live are full of promise and creative opportunity. A cynic would see the current political, economic and social climate in the world with a decidedly less optimistic outlook.

"From where I sit, the times in which we live are full of promise and creative opportunity."

Yes, we face struggles. Virtually everywhere I look I see shortsightedness, greed, populism and self-serving motives. Our government is in turmoil, taxes are out of control, regulation is stifling businesses, and the economy is stuck on... well, just stuck!

In business we feed on energy, creativity and optimism. To see those ideals in today's landscape takes some unabashed hope. But an entrepreneur without hope is doomed to failure, so hopeful we are. I was asked to write about the state of the restaurant industry for the five-year anniversary of our intrepid *Food & Spirits Magazine* and the longer I thought about it, the harder it got. I've been involved in this industry for nearly 40-years and it seems as though I've never had to work both harder and smarter to stay relevant. And being relevant is the key – the goal of every business owner.

"I see the trend of highly skilled, adventurous (even avant-garde) chef-driven restaurants to increase."

I love to read national prognosticators give their opinions about new trends or fads, but the more I read about what could be coming, the more I see a return of what has been, which is kind of cool. New spins on old themes can create an environment where innovation fuels creativity. Imitation is still the highest form of flattery. Necessity will always be the mother of invention. This is how we grow and transform as an industry. True innovation is rare, but infusing old techniques with new energy and applying it differently is no less creative. Growth is fed by innovation, whether it is a re-tooled idea or the pure energy of generational innovation.

So on we trudge, trying to find our unique place in the world of hospitality. The following are my thoughts on what may be on the horizon for our thriving city, as well as what has been driving the creative class in the past decade.

The past ten years has been a blur of corporate restaurant openings and closings. A wave of newly graduated culinary students have flooded the market and infused the landscape with youth and enthusiasm. Sushi restaurants and steak houses have dominated the scene, and high-end retail developments, heavy on bar and restaurant seating, have sprung up in all areas of the city.

Television executives have brought out the inner foodie in millions of Americans and (for better or worse) created what we now call "celebrity chefs" with a numbing array of reality shows.



Chef Clayton Chapman
photo by Jessica Orth



This genre has brought us Iron Chefs, Top Chefs and chefs that appear to be certifiably nuts (Gordon Ramsay, anyone?).

I grew up in the age of Julia Child, Escoffier and James Beard – simple, elegant, classic. Today's aspiring culinary students can look to a long list of mentors that could include Eric Ripert, Thomas Keller or Charlie Trotter for inspiration. The more adventurous will undoubtedly be drawn to the emerging practitioners of modernist cuisine (aka molecular gastronomy), though they loathe that moniker. These luminaries are led by Ferran Adrià, Heston Blumenthal and Grant Achatz, to name a few.

I see the trend of the highly skilled, adventurous (even avant-garde) chef-driven restaurants to increase. There is so much creative energy emerging from this class of chefs today that the proliferation of these smaller and unique venues is eminent. **Grey Plume** owner and Chef, Clayton Chapman is leading the charge, and many others will be answering the call.

“Food trucks find their niche in various locales, days of the week and times of the day.”



The Localmotive food truck's rounders
photo by April Christenson

On the other end of the spectrum would be the increase in food trucks – or mobile kitchens. In major cities around the globe these creative and uniquely branded chef-driven kitchens showcase the up-and-coming chefs and their sometimes whimsical approach to everything from barbecue, street food and haute cuisine, all out of a kitchen the size of a railroad-car kitchen. Cheaper than a small startup restaurant, they find their niche in various locales, days of the week and times of day. You will see this segment expand greatly in Omaha and Lincoln in the next few years due to the sheer number of creatively talented chefs in the area longing for a chance to be their own boss.

In the middle is a continuation of the prolific growth of what industry watchers call ‘fast casual’ – the fastest growing segment in the U.S. by far. And it is an interesting segment that, formerly, has been dominated by national or regional chains, but increasingly has been the focus of trained chefs exploiting a wider audience than their traditional fine dining venues could offer. The draw seems to be an opportunity to focus on a smaller menu with high quality, locally sourced product that can get broad exposure through medium price points. Concepts like Chipotle capitalize on organic and locally sourced food for its limited menu selections, concentrating on quality over mass regarding the size of options made available.

As for the sustainability movement, it may be slow to grow, but it is a force to be reckoned with, for sure. Personally, I would love to see significant growth in this segment, which would lower the price of non-GMO, sustainably raised and organically grown products. Having a wider profile for these foods would help increase the interest in healthier alternatives for those trying to manage their health with diet, or those suffering from food sensitivity or allergies. The growth of allergy sensitive items is growing yearly, with gluten-free products leading the way. Both local and national restaurants are taking heed, offering menus directly geared to those who suffer from some food related malady. Locally, ‘health food’ stores are again on the rise, with the addition of a number of smaller, regional chains to compete with the monolithic Whole Foods, bringing lower prices and better quality to the marketplace.

“Dining remains a major form of entertainment here, and I relish in knowing that it is in good hands.”

In closing, I don't know if living in interesting times is a blessing or a curse, but I do know it is more interesting. I feel very blessed to have a front row seat to such a vibrant and creative industry, and hope that the local economy continues to feed off of the enormous talent we have in our area. Dining remains a major form of entertainment here, and I relish in knowing that our future is bright and that it is in good hands. Mr. Kennedy's speech from 1966 could be just as relevant today, maybe even more so. But the truth is the same. Life's struggles don't build character, they reveal it. So as you open your next fortune cookie, try to see the blessing in the message – there are enough people who see the curse already.

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London Calling:

Experiences with Traditional Favorites and “The Nasty Bits” of British Cuisine

story & photos by Matt Biggins

Fish and chips at the Sherlock Holmes pub in London

Arriving in London on a perfectly overcast, rainy day, I had been warned by fellow travelers not to get my hopes up too high for British cooking. For decades, the Brits had been the world leader in boiled meats, puddings made of blood and entrails cooked with offal.

I was expecting more. Over the last decade, I'd been hearing of a new wave of British chefs that were proudly taking the oftentimes bizarre English foodstuffs and creating new and exciting world-class cuisine. Two chefs were squarely placed atop my list; Heston Blumenthal, of the 3-Michelin starred “The Fat Duck”, and Fergus Henderson, the owner of “St. John”, the undisputed world leader in “the nasty bits”. I would visit both chefs and see what else I could pick up along the way.

As stated earlier, my first day in London was precisely what I had expected. This was my one day on my own, so I did what I always do in new cities; I began to wander and let the streetlights guide me where they may. This took me around the Financial District and past one of my favorite pieces of architecture: “The Gherkin”, which is a round, almost egg-shaped building in downtown London. You've probably seen it in movies, but in person, it's a brilliant piece of design.

“I'd been hearing of British chefs that were proudly taking the oftentimes bizarre English foodstuffs and creating new and exciting world-class cuisine.”

After gawking at the rest of the London skyline, I was ready for a pint. This being London, I didn't have to walk more than a block to find a nice pub. Sitting down at the counter, I ordered a pint of Wadworth 6x, a locally brewed English Pale Ale. My curiosity was peaked, as I had been told by a handful of friends that the warm, English ales were terribly overrated. Well damn, were they wrong! I repeated the experience over and over. Everywhere I went, these wonderful, usually Pale Ales, were served at about 45° - 50° and with lower carbonation than a traditional tap pour. I found the style of locally brewed beers to match perfectly with the cask style service – rich, thirst-quenching and just downright lovely. These Brits know how to do beer!

As I was nearing the end of my second pint, I asked the bartender for a recommendation for a quick bite. She was immediate and serious with her answer. “The Meat Mission is just a couple blocks away”. I could tell by the warm smile that ran across her face as she stated the name that this was the place to go.

After a quick consult with my Google box, I realized that this place was just a single block away from my hotel. Sometimes, things just work out. Approaching the restaurant, I saw in red neon, above a quite nondescript door, “Meat Mission”. Entering, I saw a small pub with concrete floors and simple tables. The drink menus on the wall listed a tremendous selection of ales and cocktails. The food menu was seemingly simple bar offerings – fries, wings, burgers and sandwiches. Taking a seat at the bar, I told the bartender that I was in town just for today and what would he recommend. He heartily suggested the “Dead Hippy Burger” with “Hippy Fries”. Again, I could see enthusiasm behind his smile.

So, a pint or two later arrived a double cheeseburger with all the traditional toppings and their “Hippy Sauce”. On a separate plate was a giant portion of thin French fries covered with caramelized onions and “Hippy Sauce”. Both were astonishingly tasty. The beef was ground in-house and all the veggies were fresh cut. The “Hippy Sauce” was an herby aioli that was absolutely wonderful. It was a beautiful mix of fresh, local ingredients presented in a super laid-back environment. I killed the burger and got about halfway through the fries before I had to stop.

Not having room for even a wafer-thin spot of dessert, I turned to the cocktail menu for an aperitif. One drink immediately caught my eye. Under a section titled “Drinx for Drunkx” I saw “Grog – a dangerous mix of light and dark rums, with a splash of overproof rum shaken with our secret grog mix. Limit two per person”. I think it was the *two per person* that caught me, but being just about 100 yards away from my hotel, I figured why not? The grog came in a large tropical, tulip-shaped glass with four or five different fruit garnishes. Wow – it packed a wallop! The rum was the obvious star here, the fruit juice tasted fresh and before I knew it, I was nicely lit. Walking back to my hotel, I was about as happy as a man can be and greatly looking forward to the journey ahead.

The next day, I awoke and made my way to the train station. The rest of my group would be arriving in Bath that morning. Bath is a Unesco World-Heritage site. Built in the Roman era, it is a wealth of history. We spent the next couple days visiting Stonehenge and the medieval villages that remain today as they were 300+ years ago.

Most of the food was fine. Similar to the US, the trend is toward local meats and produce. The “Mojito” white chocolate truffles from Hotel Chocolat were packed with booze and mint. A small restaurant “Sotto Sotto”, built in what looked to be a World War II era bomb shelter served some of the best, authentic Italian that I've had. The linguine with butternut squash and a black truffle cream sauce, and the osso buck over a bed of saffron risotto is a meal I won't soon forget.

I tried the “Full English” breakfast at our hotel. Consisting of a grilled tomato, baked beans, eggs, black pudding and grilled

mushrooms – it was interesting. I'd always assumed that English baked beans would be some wonderful brown sugar breakfast-type dish, but at nearly every restaurant they were proud to serve Heinz brand baked beans. The same stuff we get in cans. I don't get it. The black pudding was quite enjoyable. It was greasy and mineral rich, but paired with the rest of the breakfast, it worked.

After a few days in Bath, we headed toward London. About 40 minutes (by train) outside London is Windsor, home to the Windsor Castle, where the Royal Family still resides (one of three castles used by the Royals, I was told) and about 20 minutes out from Windsor is a small town called Bray, home to the world-famous Fat Duck. In one of the larger let-downs of my life, I was unable to secure a table within our travel dates. Tempering my disappointment was my discovery of the "Hinds Head Pub". Immediately adjacent to "The Fat Duck", the building was purchased by Heston Blumenthal and renovated into a pub with a Michelin Star. We headed in for lunch. It's a cozy space with narrow doorways and the occasional low ceiling that showed off the age of this former hotel, bar and restaurant. Seated by a window with an occasional glance into the kitchen, I was ready.

Being on vacation, why not start out lunch with a cocktail? I ordered a classic English gin martini. It was simple and perfect. Perusing the menu, I was drawn toward a daily special three-course tasting menu. I always like to order specials, as daily dishes afford chefs an opportunity to be more expressive and daring than normal menu items, and damn, I was not disappointed.

"I was unable to secure a table at The Fat Duck. Tempering my dissatisfaction was my discovery of the Hinds Head Pub."

My first course was a terrine of foie gras and ham hock. A terrine is a loaf, similar to pâté but with traditionally, more coarsely chopped ingredients. I was served a single slice – foie gras layered with large tender chunks of meat from the ham hock, layered with wonderfully refreshing whole-leaf herbs. I don't know what they were, but the creamy liver, the flavorful, über tender ham pieces and the herbs combined to make one of the very best dishes I've ever eaten. The terrine, combined with a mustard-pickle relish hit every note, from fresh, to savory, to lightly sweet. Umami-overload!

Course number two was a Shepard's Pie. This is about as traditional an English dish as you'll find. This dish was presented in a small cast-iron pot. Venison, pork and maybe beef (I'm not certain) was blended with peas and a delicately herbed tomato sauce. It was then topped with creamy mashed potatoes and crumbly crunchy bits with a handful of green onions. The simply



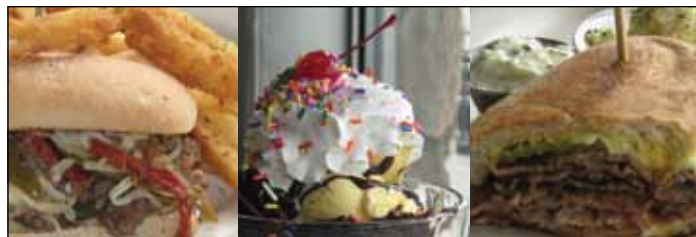
Shepard's pie at Hinds Head Pub

flavored potatoes and the unfathomably tender meat blended together superbly. It really was an exercise in simplicity. Too many chefs would be afraid to serve such a simple dish – they'd complicate it with truffles or blue cheese or smoky bacon. This dish was a stellar example of a supremely talented chef serving simple foods, combined with no more than needed.

My final course at Hinds Head was a lemon crème brûlée with homemade shortbread. It was good, but nothing to get too worked up over. Then came time for the final cocktail course. Knowing I was to spend the next several hours walking through Windsor Castle and being fairly disgusted with the opulence and decadence of the Royals, I needed one more drink to set me on my way. I chose the "Rum Old-Fashioned". Traditionally made with Bourbon, the Old-Fashioned is one of my favorite libations. I'd never heard of one made with rum. Knowing that I was in good hands, I ventured off into uncharted territory.

A few minutes later, our waiter presented me with a large snifter containing a blend of light and dark rums, fresh citrus juices and a hint of sugar over ice. Setting the glass on the table, the server directed my attention to what looked like a clear traveler-type coffee mug. He explained that in the cup was high-end, very dark rum that had been warmed. Atop this cup, which he also explained was custom-made for Hinds Head, contained a sieve-like container of dry ice. The warm rum was to be poured through the dry ice into my glass. I watched as my snifter filled with rum vapor. As I sipped, the vapor traveled beautifully through my nose as the strong, sweet blend of rum washed over my tongue. A truly intriguing drink and a hell of a way to finish off what will most likely be some of the best pub food I'll ever eat.

I arrived in London late that day, terribly excited about my next culinary destination, but before I get to that, I must mention the



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Roasted bone marrow with parsley salad at St. John

fish and chips from the Sherlock Holmes pub in London. Expecting fish sticks, I was heartily surprised to see an entire fish half, no head, with the tail. It was crisp and juicy, not at all oily. I preferred to douse mine in malt vinegar, although the tartar sauce was homemade and wonderfully herbed. It went great with the thick cut chips. Best damn fish n' chips I've ever had.

The next evening, I arrived at St. John. Chef Fergus Henderson is completely self-trained. In 1994 he opened St. John. Raved about by the likes of Anthony Bourdain and Mario Batali, Chef Henderson's cuisine is traditional British foods with a focus on what are often called "The Nasty Bits". He is in a class by himself. Approaching the restaurant my companion asked, "Are you sure this is a world-class spot?" The restaurant is in a working-class neighborhood. It is as unassuming a facade as I could imagine.

Walking in, the bar was crowded. It is apparently a hotspot for the young, fashionable crowd to start the night. Through the chaotic maze of people we found the dining room. Again, it was fantastically unassuming with simple wood floors and about 20 tables with simple white tablecloths. The kitchen is open and surprisingly tiny. Watching the chef glide smoothly around the kitchen kept me occupied for a good five minutes.

I knew going in that I would order the roasted bone marrow with parsley salad, for which Chef Henderson is famous. Other than that, I was unsure. The menu changes daily at St. John, based on whatever fantastically fresh, locally sourced ingredients appealed to the chef that morning. Having eaten a light lunch, I was prepared

to feast, and feast I did. Feeling terribly indecisive, I doubled up on the first two courses. It began with grilled duck hearts with chicory, as well as the aforementioned bone marrow. For the main course, sweetbreads sautéed with peas and bacon and a half-order of grilled ox heart with horseradish and thick cut chips.

On a round white plate, I was served six duck hearts with chicory in the middle, the whole thing covered in a rich, brown pan sauce. The duck hearts were cooked medium, with a bit of pink in the middle. Tender as can be, each mineral-rich heart was juicy and flavorful, the pan sauce giving a little herb flavor. The chicory was bitter, which is not a flavor I enjoy, so it went virtually untouched.

The bone marrow serving was huge, with four large bones. Richly, darkly roasted, they were perfectly prepared and combined with the parsley salad, great. But the real star of this dish was the light grey sea salt. The server told me that this salt was quite rare. I wish I remembered the name of it, because it launched the dish into the stratosphere. It perfectly balanced the oily, rich marrow. Having tried roasted marrow a few times before, I finally understood what all the fuss was about.

The main courses also arrived together. I was agog at the sight of a ton of sweetbreads – sautéed, not fried – mixed with a mound of fresh peas and big chunks of bacon. Each one of those tasty little glands was like a flavor explosion. Creamy and savory and just oozing with flavor, the peas and bacon proved an ideal accompaniment. The grilled ox heart was served in slices, each just ever so pink in the middle. Rich in iron and mineral flavors, the grilled flavors made this dish more reminiscent of an impossibly tender steak. The subtle horseradish sauce added a little zing to the party.

Having gorged myself quite well, I opted for a light dessert – a scoop of raspberry sorbet. It tasted like the raspberries had been picked five minutes earlier. Wonderfully fresh and zippy, the sorbet was topped with a single shot of chilled Russian vodka. The combination of the fresh fruit and the gentle astringency of quality vodka was a truly unique flavor. A perfect palate cleanse to a heavy meal. St. John certainly met, and perhaps exceeded my high expectations. Again, talented chefs and wonderfully fresh ingredients combined in a simple, elegant way.

Between the great cask ales, the increasing importance of locally sourced ingredients and a healthy dose of history, I had a pretty magnificent dining adventure. And someday, I will make it to "The Fat Duck".



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5 Favorite Salads

by Maggie Day

When people think of salads, they often think of a side salad. I chose to challenge this notion – move over side salad! I ventured out and found five salads that could easily make up a main course. These salads included a variety of ingredients such as meats, cheeses, veggies and more. These salads are enough to satisfy any palate – enjoy!

Jams – Fried Coconut Chicken Salad

I made my first stop at **Jams** and went with the fried coconut chicken salad for \$12.50. The salad includes coconut coated chicken, artichoke hearts, avocado, Swiss cheese, tomato, red onions, croutons, almonds, field greens, creamy herb mustard dressing and raspberry sauce.

The combination of ingredients created a delicious melody in my mouth. The creaminess of the dressing and sauces, atop the crispiness of the field greens, was delightful. The chicken was tender and the coconut flavors were an added bonus.

If you are going to spend between \$12 and \$15 for a salad, you definitely want it to be a meal. Jams did not disappoint. It was difficult to decide between the many salads that were offered. Jams' atmosphere includes great art, spirits, atmosphere and efficient wait staff. All of which provide a great dining experience.

Mantra – Thai Vegetable Salad

Mantra is relatively new to the **Benson** neighborhood and offers a wide variety of dishes. I decided to go with the Thai vegetable salad. This salad is made of fresh zucchini, yellow squash, bell pepper, spaghetti noodles, carrots, Napa cabbage and chili lime dressing. The salad is \$9.95 and you can add chicken for an additional \$3 or shrimp or salmon for \$4. I chose to add chicken, which was grilled to perfection and was a nice addition to the dish.

These ingredients combine to give irresistible flavors and textures. The vegetables are perfectly chopped and prepared. The salad is extremely fresh and light, yet bold. I walked away feeling full, yet healthy as well.

Lot 2 - Kale Salad

Lot 2 offers many different dishes, however I opted for the kale salad. This simple yet flavorful salad has multiple flavors. The salad is made of fresh, finely chopped dinosaur kale, roasted cauliflower, capers, walnuts, golden raisins, parmesan and yogurt dressing – all for \$5. The kale gives a crunchy and slightly rough texture while the dressing adds a smooth creaminess. The walnuts add to the crunchiness and the golden raisins leave a sweetness that resonates in your mouth.

McFoster's – Health Nut Salad

McFoster's is known for its many vegetarian dishes and I opted to go with the health nut salad. The many ingredients create quite the concoction of flavors. The ingredients include charred peppers and onions, honey glazed pecans, tamari roasted cashews, blanched brussel sprouts, broccoli and cauliflower. The salad is lavishly garnished with nasturtiums, organic tomatoes, waffled carrots, cucumber, garlic bread and dairy or vegan cheese. All of this lies atop a bed of fresh greens.

There are many vegan salad dressings to choose from and I went with the cucumber garlic ranch. Each ingredient offers its own part in the salad. From the crispness of the lettuce to the crunchiness of the delicious roasted nuts, each bite offers delight to the senses. A whole salad is \$12.95 and a half is \$8.95.

Sgt. Pepper's – Grilled Chicken Salad

Sgt. Pepper's is a staple in Omaha, known for their delicious Italian food. The grilled chicken salad is no stranger to being a favorite of many. Thinly sliced pieces of marinated grilled chicken lay atop a bed of fresh spinach and iceberg lettuce. Marinated mushroom, artichoke hearts and black olives compliment the salad with additional bold flavors. The salad is \$7 – an additional 50 cents for homemade vinaigrette. This salad can also be delivered!



Jams' Fried Coconut Chicken Salad

THE SUPPER CLUB

Culinary Students Pay an Inspiring Visit to The Grey Plume

by Jason Volkmer and Natalie Ones, photos by Pat Ratigan

***Publisher's Note:** Omega Omega Omega (Tri Omega), the culinary fraternity at the Institute for the Culinary Arts at Metropolitan Community College, strives to provide students with opportunities to apply and develop their skills through unique experiences. One of these experiences is the Supper Club. The Supper Club selects a restaurant once a quarter and works with the chef of the restaurant to provide a unique dining experience to challenge the palate and minds of the students with the unique ingredients and techniques found in that chef's kitchen.*

During the summer quarter, Tri Omega visited The Grey Plume located in Midtown Crossing. The atmosphere of the Plume is contemporary with hints of traditional décor. The ambiance allows guests to feel relaxed in their fine dining experience, without sacrificing any of the elegance that the Plume has to offer. A window behind the bar provides a peek of the chef's hustling in the kitchen to create the evening's delectable courses. Being able to observe the chef's grace and quick hands in the kitchen adds to the magic of the Plume's cuisine.

On this night, the students of Tri Omega would be enjoying a seven-course menu featuring some items from the menu, and some created specifically for Tri Omega.

"For club members that had yet to experience a fine dining level of food and service, new goals and aspirations were made that night."

The first course was the charcuterie board, which is offered on their regular menu. The charcuterie board consisted of artisan cheeses, housemade whole grain mustard, housemade rabbit prosciutto, and fresh fruit. The board was served on a unique, intriguing piece of china that resembled a wooden board. The rabbit prosciutto and whole grain mustard were the favorites among the students. The next course was a potato soup featuring flavors of leek, truffle, arugula, and navel orange. The soup was served with the flavors delicately placed in the bowl and the potato soup poured into the bowl table side. The flavors were wonderfully fresh and sparked new levels of interest with students. Many of the diners especially loved the presence of supreme citrus, which added a delicacy to the dish that they would not soon forget. Initially, the flavor of truffle disappeared, only later to emerge and complete the effect of the dish on the palate. The students discovered that the most critical part of the dish was the temperature

Sockeye salmon with farro, breakfast radish, kale and snap peas



that it was served at. The soup was served chilled to the surprise of some students. However, the soup wasn't served so cold that it would not numb the palate and hide flavors.

With two exquisite courses now come and gone, the members of Supper Club were anxious to see what else Chapman had in store for them. The chef did not disappoint with a course featuring wagyu beef tartare. The beef is sourced from **Majinola Meats** in Iowa. The presentation of the dish excited as it came with an array of sauces and purées beautifully arranged with colors of yellow, green fuchsia and orange. The wagyu beef was ground to give a smooth texture and was perfectly seasoned. Served with seasonal vegetables to help lighten the heaviness of the beef, the dish was well-balanced and a superb example to show students how to serve tartare on fine dining level.

The students did not have much time to mentally digest the flavors, technique and complexity of the wagyu beef, as the next course arrived and showed how delightful a vegetarian course can be. This course was a vegetarian ragout that showcased fresh and pickled vegetables consisting



Vegetarian ragout with radish, beet, snap peas and baby squash with a carrot purée

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of radish, beet, snap peas and baby squash with a carrot puree. The dish was wonderfully light and satisfying to the palate. The carrot puree was bright and vibrant on the palate and brought together the other flavors of the dish seamlessly.

Following this captivating concoction of vegetarian cuisine was a seafood course. The star of the dish was a Seldovia Point Sockeye Salmon, complemented by farro, breakfast radish, kale and snap peas. The portion of salmon was perfect for the course and was plated in a clean and simple manner that made it almost too beautiful to eat. The seasoning on the salmon was spot on, making the flavors dance across the palate charmingly. With the gentle press of the sleek and striking cutlery, the salmon flaked apart while

resting on a bed of farro. The fresh snap peas were crisp and added a pleasant texture to the mouth feel of the dish.

The last of the savory courses was heritage pork from TD Niche Farm, potato, maitake mushrooms, and heirloom squash. The dish featured pork belly and loin that showcased different textures that complemented one another. The sauce that accompanied the pork elevated the dish to a level that the students had not expected and began to inspire the students' thinking of sauces that they would try to create for their own dishes.

After completing the savory portion of their culinary journey, the members of Tri Omega began to wonder what Chapman still had up his sleeve to show them for dessert. The final course came in the form of Chapman's take on a classic dessert that brought back childhood memories for everyone at the table: a s'more. Ice cream rested in a bed of graham cracker crumbs accompanied with chocolate mousse and a lightly toasted marshmallow. The dessert was very light, delicate and decadent. The mousse had the precise amount of sweetness to compliment the ice cream and marshmallow. The ice cream was silky and the graham cracker crumble gave it a delightful crunch.

As the Supper Club came to a conclusion and members slowly left their stimulating culinary adventure of what can be done with food, they were thanked with a house baked cookie for them to enjoy the next morning. The members of this Supper Club were amazed at the level of flavor that Chef Chapman and his staff were able to achieve alongside the level of comfort and elegance provided by the wait staff. For the members of the club that had yet to experience a fine dining level of food and service, new goals and aspirations were made that night. New possibilities were made evident and perhaps a few career paths had been altered.



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That 70s Dinner: Chicken Elderberry

story by Charles Schlusell
photo by Jacob Herrman

This family recipe came from Germany, along with my great grandma Buss. Grandpa and Grandma Buss started a new life here in Nebraska in the early 1900's. Although I never knew them, I'm told that in the old days in Germany it was originally made with fish instead of chicken.

I still remember times as a young boy helping to gather wild elderberries from along the country roads that were brought back to the kitchen to be cooked down into the prized elderberry paste that was the star ingredient of our beloved family dish. I doubt most of our readers will be able to forage for their own wild elderberries, so I've adapted the recipe to use a locally sourced elderberry syrup or elderberry jelly made from fresh elderberries and locally produced honey. Since great grandma originally used fish, I also experimented with swordfish and found it to be quite delicious.

Feeling confident that I had faithfully recreated the beloved recipe, I recently invited the family over for a chicken elderberry dinner. This final test was rewarded with requests for seconds and thirds as well as a few nonverbal groans of pleasure. My brother, sister, brother-in-law and I remembered long forgotten details as we spoke of all the memories we had of this flavorful dish.

Chicken Elderberry (Serves 4-6)

INGREDIENTS

- 4 - 5 lbs. chicken cut up
- 1 heaping tsp pickling spice
- 1-2 bay leaves
- ½ tsp black peppercorns
- 1 cardamon pod (available at India markets or Whole Foods)
- Zest of half a lemon
- 1 large onion diced
- ½ cup of cider vinegar
- Juice of half a lemon
- 1¼ cups All About Bees Elderberry Honey Syrup
or 1 cup elderberry jelly
- ¾ to 1 cup flour (may need more or less depending
on desired thickness)
- ½ cup heavy cream

DIRECTIONS

Tie the zest and all the spices except the cinnamon in a small section of cheese cloth (available at most grocery stores).

Salt and pepper the chicken. Then brown the chicken in batches, 4-5 minutes per side in 3 Tbs. olive oil heated in a large Dutch oven over medium high heat. Remove the chicken to a platter. Drain all but a few Tbs. of the oil and rendered chicken fat.

Add the onions and sauté over medium heat till translucent.

Add the chicken back to the pot along with the spice bag and cinnamon stick. Cover with water and bring to a boil. Then lower heat to simmer for 20 minutes.

Add the vinegar and lemon juice and elderberry syrup or jelly to the pot and simmer for another 30 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through. Turn the heat to low and remove chicken to a platter.

Put flour in a measuring cup and add a cup or two of the stew broth whisking till smooth to make a slurry. Add the slurry to the pot slowly whisking constantly to avoid lumps. Turn the heat up while continuing to whisk till the sauce thickens. You may also thicken the stew with cornstarch instead of flour for those that are gluten sensitive.

Reduce heat cooking for few more minutes to remove raw flour taste, stir in the cream, add salt and pepper to taste and then add the chicken back to the pot. Be careful to keep at a lower temperature once thickened as it will burn easily at this stage.

Great served over boiled or mashed potatoes.



NOTES FROM THE LUNCHROOM

Publisher's Note: This section is part of an ongoing project with the journalism students at Benson High School. The articles, photos and initial layout were all produced by the students.

More Than Food

by Christopher Johannes



Dietrich Cordes

As a freshman at Benson High School, Dietrich Cordes was not worried about going to college. He was not worried about his grades. He did not put a lot of effort into much and he was always getting kicked out of class. He never ever thought about his future. All he knew was that he did not want to be what everyone expected him to be.

When he entered into his sophomore year, he thought it was just going to be another year of school. Little did he know that one class he signed up for would change his life – Culinary. At first he did not think much about it. It was just another class. However, Mrs. Ronda Bruggeman, the teacher, had other plans.

“He went from an ornery lazy freshman to a self-sufficient senior,” said Bruggeman.

“Culinary is a fun class. When I was angry or upset, culinary would give me time to think and calm down.”

She was not ready to give up on Cordes and she would not let him give up on himself. By the end of the year, he was 100% in love with culinary and he and Mrs. Bruggeman had become good friends.

“Culinary is a fun class. When I was angry or upset, culinary would give me time to think and calm down,” said Cordes.

Now in his senior year, Cordes has transformed from his former self. He is now trying his best in everything he does and is no longer kicked out of classes. The future? It seems pretty bright for him now. Cordes plans on taking culinary art classes at Metro Community College. Eventually, he would like to become a small business owner by opening his own restaurant or bakery.

Lunch at Benson High School

story by Suyapa Tobias, photos by Tre’Vian Johnson

Picking a place to eat is always a hard decision, and lunch at Benson High School is no exception. Benson food connoisseurs have the choice between dining in the commons or eating in the cafeteria. Most of the students at BHS say the cafeteria serves better food than the commons because there are more choices.

“The cafeteria is relaxing and the commons is busy and crowded,” said senior Tranaey Harris.

During lunch, the cafeteria is filled with laughter and strong aromas. The sounds and smells drift down the hallway. Besides eating lunch, it is a time for friends to gather and forget about classes.

“I like to sit with my friends so we can talk about what they did over the week or what movies they went to see,” said sophomore Camille Mallory.

Upon entering the cafeteria, students join one of the three lines. When it is their turn, they have three choices of food. For instance, they can choose from pizza, tacos and chicken nuggets. They also have two options of vegetables, including a salad



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bar. For their drinks, they have bottles of milk or juice cartons. And all of this can be had for \$1.75.

"It is all good and it is a decent place to get food," said sophomore Johnathan Hernandez. "One thing that I think they should not serve is the pizza."

"Regardless of what is being served, the 'lunch ladies' try to do their best and make the cafeteria feel more like home."

Sometimes what you hear at lunch is that they should serve better food such as Mexican, hot wings and Chinese food. The food either tastes great or not so delicious. It depends on what is served.

"I like nachos because they taste good. Also, another food I like is pizza because it has a good taste," sophomore Jasmine Martinez said.

If what is served for lunch does not sound appealing, students have the option to purchase additional food and beverages. They have bottled water, V8 juice and Snapple for sale. If that still does not strike their fancy, they can purchase cookies, chips, and yogurt parfaits filled with granola and fresh fruit.

Regardless of what is served, the "lunch ladies" try to do their best and make the cafeteria feel more like home.

"They always serve it with a smile," said junior Torrey Pino.



Both the cafeteria and commons have a salad bar with an array of fruit or veggies



For an additional cost, students can purchase a strawberry yogurt fruit cup with granola on top



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Protip: Grilled Cheese

by Scott Zrust

As the colder weather sets in, the leaves change colors, we will change our T-shirts in for sweaters, and we will all eat a bowl of homemade chili with a rich, buttery grilled cheese sandwich. Whether you are vegan or a carnivore, there are many different styles and variations of this classic to please your taste buds.

I'm sure we all have a certain meal or food item that brings a smile to your face by just thinking about it. Two of my favorites are Texas style chili and pretty much any grilled cheese. Separately, these are two beautiful culinary creations, but when the two are combined it brings a small tear of joy to my eye. The next time you fire up a big pot of chili, give one of these grilled cheese sandwiches a try!

Grilled cheese #1

Bread of choice - sourdough

Cheese of choice - cheddar and cream cheese

Other ingredients - jalapeño (roasted and seeded) and bacon

Fat of choice - bacon fat

Protip - After bacon is rendered, remove bacon and excess bacon fat and use that pan to cook your sandwich in. Don't wash the pan before cooking or you will lose lots of bacony goodness. Yes, bacony is a word.

Grilled cheese #2

Bread of choice - white

Cheese of choice - Brie (try finding a nice creamy one like St. Andre)

Other ingredients - prosciutto and jalapeño jam

Fat of choice - salted butter

Protip - Any type of jam will go great with this one.

Grilled cheese #3

Bread of choice - baguette

Cheese of choice - Swiss

Other ingredients - sautéed crimini mushrooms, rosemary and roasted garlic mayo

Fat of choice - brush with olive oil, sea salt and cracked pepper

Protip - Feel free to use any type of mushroom. For the mayo spread, roast whole head of garlic in aluminum foil with a rosemary sprig and about a teaspoon of olive oil, a sprinkle of sea salt and cracked pepper. Bake at 400 degrees for approximately 30 minutes or until garlic is soft and spreadable. Combine with 1/2 cup of mayo. Voila!

Grilled cheese #4

Bread of choice - rye

Cheese of choice - Havarti

Other ingredients--pastrami and Dijon

Fat of choice - lard

Protip - Go easy on the Dijon as it can be overpowering, but don't be too easy with it because it really helps tame the fattiness of the lard.

Grilled cheese #5

Bread of choice - whole wheat

Cheese of choice - Fontina

Other ingredients - crispy pancetta and sage

Fat of choice - cracked pepper and Parmesan mayo

Protip - Simply mix 1/2 cup of mayo with 1/4 cup of grated Parmesan and cracked pepper to taste. Make sure your pan is at the appropriate grilled cheese making temperature or the Parmesan will burn quickly. I came about this technique when I lived and worked on Isle of Palms in South Carolina and learned that many Southerners use mayo instead of butter to use for the fat for their grilled cheese sandwiches. Try it... it's delicious!



Gluten Free Baking

story and photo by Linda Lichtenwalter-Evans

Last August, there was some exciting news for the gluten free world. The FDA defined what “gluten free” labeling means for food products, acknowledging that there must be set regulations for food companies to follow in order to label their products as gluten free. With this exciting development, what better time to talk about how to take your grandma’s best cake or cookie recipe and make it gluten free for all to enjoy?

Making baked goods gluten free can seem like a daunting task. There are pre-made gluten free all-purpose flour blends sold at many well-stocked grocery stores. However, where is the fun in using these when you can make your own blend? In mixing your own flour blend, you can add interesting flavors and create unique mixtures ideal for different types of treats. I have been experimenting with many of these flours in attempt to take my tasty baked treats and make them gluten free, while still keeping the integrity of my original recipe. I have definitely had some failed trials, but they were great learning experiences. The following are some excellent ingredients that I have found in doing my baking research.

First up, the lighter density flours, which provide a good base for a flour mixture. With any of these you can substitute 30-40% of a total flour mixture. I usually like to use two of these in my blend, making up a total of 60-80% of my flour mixture.

“Corn flour has a subtle sweetness to it, without adding too much flavor.”

One of my favorites to work with is white rice flour, which has a nice light flavor to it. Don’t confuse this with brown rice flour, as this one behaves quite differently. Brown rice flour is higher in nutrients, but it gives a much grittier texture, so this doesn’t work for just any baked treat. I recommend using this one in your denser baked goods, such as breads or maybe breakfast cookies.

Quinoa flour is another versatile, light flour to work with. This guy is high in fiber, protein and vitamins, but still gives a great, light texture. However, using too much can add a slightly bitter flavor. An alternative to quinoa is millet flour, which is cheaper. This one is high in fiber and protein too, but not quite as bitter as quinoa flour.

Next up, the higher density flours, which help add structure to your baked goods. You wouldn’t want to use too much of these or your treats will come out very dense and dry. It is important that there is at least an equal amount of liquid to help balance out these flours. With these flours, I recommend substituting no more than 20% of your total flour mixture.

Coconut flour is a delicious, high fiber flour and a favorite of mine. It has a wonderful sweet flavor. However, that flavor will come across in your final product, so be mindful of the flavors you are using and make sure they will pair well with coconut. If coconut doesn’t work for you, corn flour is a good alternative. Corn flour has a more subtle sweetness to it, without adding too much flavor. Oat flour is another dense flour that can be used in baking. This one doesn’t add too

much flavor to your baked goods as it doesn’t have as much sweetness to it.

Finally, we have the binders. Gluten serves as a binder in baking. So in gluten free baking it is important to have one or two of these added to your baked treats if you don’t want them to crumble apart on you. Especially if you are baking vegan treats, and therefore not using eggs. These ingredients all vary in amounts to use in your recipes. With these ingredients, you should add them in the creaming stage of your recipe, before adding flours.

Xanthan gum is a thickener and stabilizer, serving as a great gluten replacement. It is quite pricey, but you don’t have to use too much in your baked goods, only ¼-1 teaspoon per cup of flour, depending on what you are making. Bob’s Red Mill brand provides a handy little chart right on the bag telling you how much to use for each type of treat.

“Xanthan gum serves as a great gluten replacement.”

Tapioca flour is another great binder you can use and has a slightly sweet flavor to it. This one requires a little bit more to be added to your recipe, about 2-4 tablespoons per cup of flour. Ground flax seed is a high fiber ingredient that works well in gluten free baking. This serves as more of an egg substitute. Keep in mind you will see the little flecks of flax seed in your final product.

One final note I want to leave you is to always be sure to mix these very well. You want to make sure all the different flours are well incorporated throughout your batter or dough. You don’t have to worry about over mixing since there is no gluten.

Though these are not the only flours out there, I have found that these work best for me, and hopefully for you too. I absolutely encourage trying new things, and if you find a unique flour at the grocery store, pick it up and try it out.

That’s how we learn more about the baking world.

Happy baking!



SNACK ISLAND!

Local Eats on The Road with Snake Island!

by Allan Schleich



Editor's Note: Omaha has developed a reputation as a 'music town' around the nation, so we figured a good way to visit some of the food our community encounters was to talk to one of the finer bands in Omaha as they hit the road. Allan Schleich, guitarist for Snake Island!, takes us on a culinary tour of the band's fare on a recent trip.

I'm definitely not a chef, not even that decent of a cook at home, but I am an avid traveler and touring musician who loves eating food. I play in the band Snake Island! who just recently logged a 10,000+ mile tour of the western U.S. this past summer. Last year, we made a 5,000+ mile run across the Midwest and South. One of the obvious perks of being in a touring band is being able to see and perform in all sorts of places across the country.

Naturally, while out and about, my bandmates and I get to sample the local fare, which is always a highlight when I get to try something new and delicious.

I'm like those couple of guys on the Travel and Food channels who always hunt down the diners and dive restaurants and jump in on the eating competitions. In fact, I even held the \$.25 taco record at Knickerbockers by eating 54 beef tacos one week (beating the

previous holder's 52) and returning the next week to tie the bean taco record at 69.

My accomplishments aside, I was asked to write a few things about what type of things Snake Island! ate on the road, so here's a look at some of the cities and restaurants we've been through. To begin with, being on the road is tough, sometimes no one can afford to eat at all because any spare band fund was just spent changing the oil in the van, or we simply don't have time when facing a 15-hour overnight drive across the desert, or we're grabbing what gas station food we can before jumping back in the van. Sometimes we get to grill out when camping, or if someone is hosting us on their couch we'll make macaroni or spaghetti.

"The Brick has many standard breakfast and lunch staples but they shine through with their weird fried stuff – fried twinkie desserts, for one."

When we can afford it – and if time allows – Snake Island! makes it a very strong point to find cool and unique local restaurants. Usually we just survey the locals and bartenders at every gig we play to find the best eats, but in towns where we're just driving through, the smartphone plays a huge role in finding the best food. With the help of sites like Yelp and Urbanspoon we've come across some fantastic restaurants. Hopefully you can use this article as somewhat of a cheat sheet and know where to eat right away in many of these cities I'll mention.

I'll start us in the Midwest. Kansas City is home to **The Brick**, a venue with a bar and restaurant attached. The Brick has many standard breakfast and lunch staples as well as flavorful hamburgers, but they shine through with their weird fried stuff – fried twinkie desserts, for one. I personally attempted to eat The Oklahoma; a beer battered, bacon wrapped, and deep fat fried hotdog. It was glorious.

A haven for food in the Midwest is of course, Chicago, where I frequent **Kuma's Corner**, the Heavy Metal Hamburger Bar. They seriously have burgers named after bands like Slayer, Pantera, Neurosis, Black Sabbath and The Sword and Clutch. There's even a pork sandwich called Pig Destroyer! Some are more like a standard





bacon cheeseburger with an egg. Others have exotic items like fried cactus on them.

In my opinion, one of the greatest breakfast cafés is near Wicker Park in Chicago. **Café Con Leche**, which as the name suggests, has some specialty coffee and drool-inducing Mexican dishes. Go there and get a chorizo burrito with Café Con Leche – you'll thank me.

Of course the Windy City is known for its deep dish pizza. Most folks will rightly tell you that Uno's and Giordano's are the jam for deep dish, but my secret spot is Nancy's because I've never seen it busy and the pizza there is completely comparable to the big names.

This past August, the morning before Snake Island! was set to play the Psychedelic Light & Sound festival in Denver, we were craving waffles, so Urbanspoon guided us to **Waffle Brothers**, a delicious and cheap breakfast place with some amazing breakfast sandwiches using waffles as the buns. I had the Breakfast Sandwich with Cajun spices and Jalapeño. I can't recommend enough that anyone reading this go to Denver and eat that, or at least get their Original Waffle and cover it in toppings. There is a restaurant in Denver called Illegal Pete's who offers free food to touring bands in exchange for the bands mentioning them on-stage and on Facebook/Twitter, but we did not have time to actually go there.

"The highlight of southern cooking would have to be Payne's Barbecue in Memphis."

Sometime last year, Snake Island! landed in New Orleans. We scheduled ourselves to be in the Big Easy for two days to allow for extra exploration and engorgement. After our show the first night, inebriated, we stumbled through the French Quarter and found ourselves at some unnamed bar and grill where we had real deal po' boys.



They went down the hatch quickly, but definitely left us full and satisfied afterwards.

The next day for lunch, somebody's smartphone took us to **Mother's Restaurant**, a long-lived staple in New Orleans who was apparently one of the first businesses to reopen after Katrina. We loaded up on red beans and rice, gumbo, jambalaya and crawfish étouffée and shared our plates enthusiastically; these were flavors Midwesterners can only dream about.

The next night, we played at a venue called **The Siberian** which served what they called "eastern European soul food" like pierogi, kielbasa and beef stroganoff, which was something new and unexpected.

"In San Diego we enjoyed Rubio's, home of the original beer-battered fish taco."

Besides New Orleans, the South in general was still excruciatingly delicious. We ate at the **Majestic Diner** in Atlanta where I had the gyro omelet. Birmingham, Alabama had the **Magic City Grill** where we feasted on chicken and waffles. The bar we played in Birmingham, called **The Bottletree**, also fed us some delectable food from their grill. The highlight of southern cooking would have to be in Memphis with **Payne's Barbecue**.

While going up and down the West Coast this last summer, we discovered a fantastic meal for a touring musician called pho. It does not make you too full leaving you groggy, it is mostly healthy, and it's CHEAP. There's dozens of restaurants in every town that serve it too.

The coast of course had so much more to offer than pho; in San Diego we enjoyed **Rubio's**, home of the fish taco. The original beer-battered fish taco was mouth-watering while the corn avocado fish taco was glorious. I had two of each.

Up in Los Angeles we ate at **Pann's Diner** – where the famous Pulp Fiction robbery scene was filmed. They served enormous portions for their omelets and we happened to arrive during bottomless Bloody Mary and Mimosa brunch. San Francisco had an abundance of nameless pho, hole-in-the-wall taco, and pizza-by-the-slice restaurants, but one thing we definitely noticed was no



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Custom, not costume



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Rice-a-Roni anywhere – I am skeptical of their claim of being the San Francisco treat.

When we got to the Pacific Northwest, Portland proved to be a unique spot for food. It is, after all, the mecca for finding free-range, organic, vegan, gluten-free, local, fair-trade menus. Being a meat eater, I tended to shy away from those places. On the other hand, Portland did have a great, heavy metal-themed pizza restaurant called **Sizzle Pie** (I feel they should somehow team up with Kuma's in Chicago). There was also a spot called **Voodoo Doughnut** that unfortunately had a line going around the block, so we went to their other, less touristy location, walked straight up to the counter and ordered the donut with bacon on it and the one next to it covered in Cap'n Crunch.

"Dick's, the legendary greasy drive-in burger joint, is the pride of Seattle."

Further north, we found that Seattle was home to **Dick's**, the legendary greasy drive-in burger joint. We spent a total of three days in Seattle and we ordered bags of Dick's each one of those days and ate everything. Dick's is the pride of Seattle.

In fact, Macklemore had just recently shot a music video on top of Dick's days

before we arrived. In the Capital Hill area of Seattle, we found **Tacos Chukis**, a Mexican restaurant that featured some dishes I hadn't seen before like banana peel enchiladas, apparently one of the co-founders was a vaquero, or "taco artisan" in Mexico City.

"Taco Chukis featured some dishes I hadn't seen before. One of the co-founders was a taco artisan in Mexico City."

I left a few cities out, and a lot more restaurants in respect for the space this article was allotted. There is just too much food out there to write about. I could have delved into helpful tour snacks, but they're no different than snacks for camping. I could have talked about what we drank, but we were broke so it was mostly PBR and well whiskey.

Hopefully I'll see you at a Snake Island! show, don't hesitate to say hello and give some food recommendations from cities you've been to. Safe Travels!





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FINDING THE FOOD

by Marq Manner

This was the first year in a while that I have been able to do some traveling. We headed out to Riot Fest in Byers, Colorado and the ACL Festival in Austin, Texas this fall. With festival food and amenities being so expensive, these trips were going to be on the cheap. I did want to find a couple of unique local eateries in each area, though.

Byers, Colorado is in one of the most desolate areas I have ever travelled through. After traveling about 60 miles off the interstate with barely a house or farm in site (there was a large Porsche racetrack), we hit the small town of Byers. There was only one place to stop and eat that we saw, and that was **Country Burger**.

The old sign was promising, as was the lived-in dining area upon walking in. Every table but one booth was filled with young and old punk rockers, all of whom looked very out of place. I thought this would be very simple 'Country Kitchen' type food, but was pleasantly surprised when opening the menu. The burgers were of the gourmet type and not shying away from suggesting an egg, ham or peanut butter on your burger. Multiple patty burgers up to at least five seemed to be normal fare on the menu and not an eating challenge, though they did have one of those also.



Burger and fries at Country Burger

"Byers, Colorado is one of the most desolate areas I have ever traveled through. There was only one place to stop and eat... Country Burger."

Rocky mountain oysters, fried okra and fried pickles were all on the menu as was a wide selection of sandwiches, comfort food and all-day breakfast. I ordered a bacon cheeseburger and fries while my friend ordered an omelet. We didn't expect fast service as this is probably the most busy they have ever been, but they were smartly staffed for the event and our order was taken quickly.

The food took longer than average to arrive, but that was expected. I received a large hand patted burger with thick,



"The Scarecrow" at Torchy's Taco

"Torchy's has creative tacos, breakfast burritos and monthly specials, such as 'The Scarecrow'."

farm-fresh bacon on a hearty, quality bun. Crinkle cut fries were served on the side and the portion was generous. The quality and quantity of bacon really made the burger for me, but the entire sandwich was well prepared. My friend's breakfast was very large and he had to scarf that down quickly as the line of cars to get to the festival was starting to get long. On the way out I took a glance at one of the few townsfolk's massive pancakes, which hung over the sides of his dinner plate. Even though we didn't try anything too daring, Country Burger is kind of an oasis in that part of the country.

The dining options in Austin are many, but during our time there we were sticking close to the Zilker Park area, where the ACL Festival was happening. The bus stop by the place that myself and three friends were staying at was right in front of a **Torchy's Taco**. Torchy's is actually a spot that was recommended to me and so breakfast that first morning was a no-brainer for us. Torchy's has creative tacos such as this month's special, 'The Scarecrow', which is pumpkin seed breaded chicken tenders, roasted poblano peppers, escabeche carrots, queso fresco, cilantro and a creamy chipotle ranch on a flour tortilla.

We went for the breakfast burritos which were large, tightly wrapped and filled with quality ingredients. I did a sausage and a bacon burrito, and found that I could not eat both. My more adventurous young friends played with the hot green sauce and raved over it while also making bathroom jokes. Everything was made to order, so we sat and drank some of the many organic sodas available and took in the décor. From looking around, the décor seemed to tell a story as if this was once a taco truck that became a local chain. You never felt like you were not in a strip mall, but they did their best to make it hip. We went back Saturday morning for more of the same, and found a very long line leading out the door,



Pizza topped with mushrooms, onions and fresh herbs at Umami Mia Pizzeria

but we endured the line as we found this to be a very satisfying breakfast option.

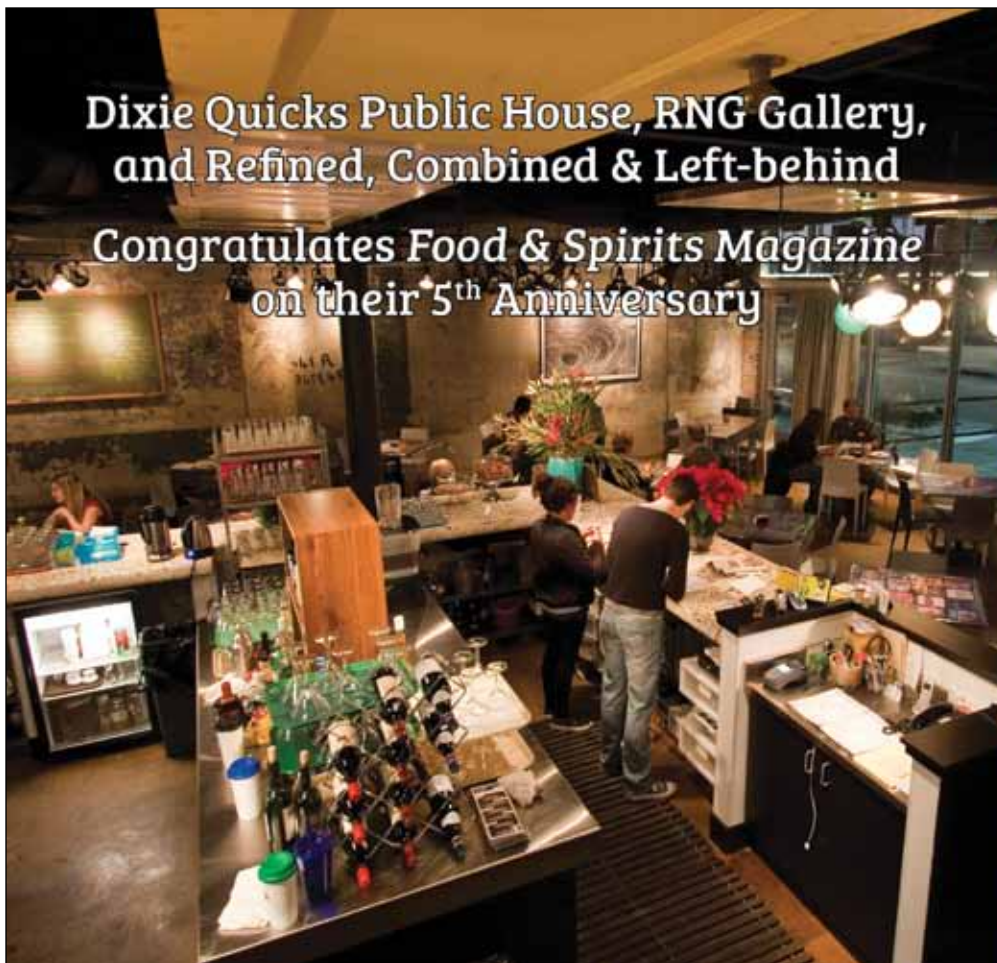
The third day of ACL Fest was rained out, so we decided to try a local pizza joint that we had walked past many times leading up to

“Umami Mia Pizzeria is a farm-to-table pizza joint and they even had herb gardens on the patio where they grew ingredients.”

the festival gates. We got to Umami Mia Pizzeria around noon and the place wasn't very busy because of all the rain and flooding that happened in the previous 24 hours. The porch was a very pleasant spot to eat, especially since it was covered and the air smelled fresh post rain.

This is a farm-to-table pizza joint and they even had herb gardens on the patio where they grew ingredients for their specialty pies. They do in-house curing of the meats and in-house pickling. Their motto was “fifth taste” in that it would be savory. I ordered a “personal” pizza that had four large slices of thin crust that wasn't super crispy (just as I like it) with pepperoni and mushrooms. My friends were more adventurous, getting a prosciutto and fig pizza that looked like it had a lush green tree laid across the pie. For me it was one of the best slices of pizza I have had in a long time, and I found out why their mushroom pizza was considered one of the best in Austin. There was nothing unusual about the pizza, but the ingredients were so fresh and their in-house methods seeped through in the taste. Savory was definitely the word for it.

Austin has a lot of food options, but the next time I am there I will be going back to Umami Mia at least once.



OMAHA'S LARGEST PIZZA REVIEW #5

by Erik Totten

Food & Spirits Magazine recently held the 5th Annual 'Omaha's Largest Pizza Review' at **The Waiting Room Lounge**. Nearly 300 people turned out to vote for their favorites while **Matt Cox** and **Rock, Paper, Dynamite** performed.

Participating pizza restaurants were **Prairie Fire Pizza**, **Ragazzi's**, **Salt 88**, **Villagio**, **Vivace**, **La Casa**, **Baxter's**, **Clancy's**, **Dante**, **Mangia**, **Mama's**, **Orsi's**, **Pizza Shoppe** and **Pizza West**. Students from the **Institute for the Culinary Arts** at Metropolitan Community College served the pizza.

There were a few shake-ups this year but everybody received at least one first place vote and there were favorable comments about every participant, as well. It's noteworthy that for the first time our judge's and people's votes matched up for first place.

Salt 88 took the top spot from both the judge's and people's vote. Their pizza was the 'Sweet & Spicy' which was spicy sausage, roasted red peppers, mozzarella, and sweet and spicy sauce. Rounding out the top five for the people's choice was **Dante**, **Mangia**, **Ragazzi's**

and **Baxter's**. For the Judge's choice, **La Casa**, **Ragazzi's**, **Dante**, **Baxter's** (tied for fifth) and **Pizza West** (tied for fifth) finish out the top five.

People's Choice

1. Salt 88
2. Dante
3. Mangia
4. Ragazzi's
5. Baxter's

Judge's Choice

1. Salt 88
2. La Casa
3. Ragazzi's
4. Dante
- 5-t. Baxter's
- 5-t. Pizza West



Making Connections

Cutchall Management is Bringing Tasty Innovations to Nebraska Crossing by Ann Summers



Greg Cutchall

The *gestalt* theory of history says that one cannot consider the development of any particular piece of the modern world in isolation. Rather, the modern world is the result of a web of interconnected events, and stands in opposition to the common (and boring) linear version of history, where all actions have a designated end and march along in tidy lines. I saw this concept illustrated in the late 70's by science historian James Burke in a BBC series called *Connections*. Its alternative view of

history was that the interplay of the results of events was what drives history and innovation. In his narratives, Burke traced the linkage of events as seemingly dissimilar as the invention of the Pike Square formation in warfare, canned foods and refrigeration.

I wondered what really happens when people like those in *Connections* actually make these connections. And why do they

make them, when so many others don't? When Dupont's Stephanie Kwolek was searching for cheaper sources of gasoline at the start of the energy crisis she discovered the polymer, Kevlar, one of the most durable substances in the world. But how did she know she had something worth keeping, when most of her results were typically

"In the Omaha area, Cutchall's new restaurants include First Watch, Burger Star and Big Cheese."

thrown out? The business luminary, Steve Jobs, said "Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That's because they were able to connect experiences they've had and synthesize new things."



A rendering of Cutchall's dual concept restaurant at the Nebraska Crossing

I sat down with one local creative mini-Steve Jobs, by the name of **Greg Cutchall** who is the founder and CEO of **Cutchall Management Company**. By placing Steve and Greg in the same sentence, you can tell that Greg as a national franchisee and restaurant management consultant is a business innovator.

“Big Cheese is a dual concept restaurant which will share space with Cutchall’s gourmet burger shop, Burger Star.”

From Greg’s start as a wanna-be photography artist to food business maven, it may seem like an abandonment of creativity. The assumption that to be corporate is to abandon creativity in this case is so wrong.

Cutchall has come a long way: “From picking up trash in the neighborhood at my father’s South Omaha A&W at the age of 8 to

developing or acquiring over 80 restaurants in 7 states ... under a dozen brand names, I’ve seen it all.”

His animated, positive energy must have radiated outward to the some 1400 colleagues and employees that he calls his team because his company is now the 43rd largest employer in the metro area and someone who has seen Omaha dining go through huge changes.

“The biggest change I’ve seen in the restaurant and catering business is that, since the year 2000, the number of restaurants in the Omaha area has increased by 1,000 %, while the population has only slightly increased. The good news is that those people are eating out more often,” Greg said.

Cutchall Management has succeeded when so many others in the restaurant business have clearly not. Presently he is launching three new ventures in Phoenix, AZ: Salty Señorita, Union Barrelhouse and Lola’s Coffee House. In the Omaha Area, his new restaurants include **First Watch**, **Burger Star**, **Big Cheese**, and he’ll offer consulting expertise for **PIEOCRACY**. The latter three will be



A burger and fries at Burger Star

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6 Years In A Row

featured at the new Gretna outlet and factory stores known as **Nebraska Crossing**.

Perhaps Cutchall's aptitude for business is innate, but the way his eyes sparkled as he mentioned what some of his early sales ventures, and what great products they involved pointed to the fact that he has passion for what he does. Whether it is the connection between cell phone interfaces and their users or his early food ventures, passion and creativity and connections mix like a fried egg on a burger. Well, for me it is like a fried egg on a burger, for Cutchall it is business basics and innovation. A mix of what we know works and expanding it to where it should go. As he put it, "We're driven to expand into new concepts; when one niche of the market is full, we develop a new one."

"We're driven to expand into new concepts; when one niche of the market is full, we develop a new one."

Like Big Cheese, for example.

The moment I mentioned Big Cheese, Cutchall sprang from his chair and darted around his office (which is bright, comfortable and looks like something out of Architectural Digest Japan.) He returned from his foray with layouts, menus, and renderings, and couldn't stop smiling while I feasted my eyes on some really exciting stuff. Big Cheese, a new restaurant concept, is coming soon to Nebraska Crossing, a brand-spanking new mega-slick outlet and factory store with awesome names from Coach, Michael Kohrs and Kate Spade to Nike, Under Armour and Columbia. Think: same site as the old outlet stores on I80 just outside of Gretna, (website

at <http://www.nexoutlets.com/>) but don't think: dilapidated strip mall that used to be there. The old buildings were dozed, the site completely leveled, and a new gorgeous center built in its place. (Forget hauling your kids and husband to KC or Iowa for the weekend just to shop, you can nip over during lunch, on a weekend or evening, even on the way to the Husker games.)

Big Cheese is a dual concept restaurant which will share space with Cutchall's gourmet burger shop, Burger Star, and will have plenty of big screen TV's, comfortable but beautiful dining areas (the place looks very contemporary and chic) and a list of 12 to 14 craft and local small batch beers. His chef, **John Dye**, is working on some delicious combos for a grilled cheese and burger-centric menu with soups and salads. I saw something called a Hangover Burger with a fried egg that I would order any time, any day of the week, with or without a hangover. And even though I haven't had one of those in a long time (a hangover, not a burger) in my opinion, where you have burgers, you need beer, and where you have cheese, you must have wine. Big Cheese wine list is going to be something very special that will allow diners to enjoy quality wines by the glass, through the use of the WineEmotion systems used by many wine-tasting shops and vineyards, which preserve each bottle to the last glass and make serving easier and faster.

What really attracted Cutchall to Big Cheese and its placement was the kind of synergies that were happening there. "I've always, even while I managed franchises, tried to have some of my own brands and concepts," says Cutchall. And this new restaurant venture is a dual concept restaurant with a very modern feel, a comfortable environment, and some very cool conveniences hard-wired into the design. So Cutchall was naturally drawn to the fact that NE Crossing embodies new concepts in retail. For example: A real app will send out notices and specials to shoppers and help them keep track of goings on in real time. (I mean real apps as



A rendering of Cutchall's dual concept restaurant at the Nebraska Crossing

opposed to fake apps that are not only useless, they have absolutely nothing of interest in them—big retailers, you know who you are...)

Keeping shoppers and staffers from fainting away from hunger and thirst, will be Big Cheese, Cutchall's answer to what couture-handbag-crazed and tech-backpack-dazed people really crave: lattes, teas and x-shots, scrumptious gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches, home-made soups and salads, gourmet burgers (did I mention the Hangover Burger?) and a selection of small-batch ales and beers such as Rock Bottom and Lucky Bucket, and a carefully selected wine list. Oh, and local gourmet ice cream. I mean, how can you shop without ice cream?

"The basics, the connections between great service, casual ambiance and awesome food have not changed."

One thing is certain, as dining habits have changed in Omaha, restaurants have changed with them. But the basics, the connections between great service, casual ambiance, and awesome food have not changed, and it seems, they are just getting better. And I mean, you gotta get the basics right, it's the Midwest for goodness sake, and we like our comfort food. Clearly, Cutchall hasn't forgotten the diner while he's looking for those connections to make. Too many folks in the restaurant biz forget that novelty isn't the same thing as innovation. Nifty isn't always tasty and creativity is much more than just whipping up some fish foam or freezing fruit with liquid nitrogen. By my account, I think Cutchall's restaurants will keep dishing up comforting, tasty innovation in the years to come. And that's a pretty nifty connection to make.

Cutchall resides in Omaha with his wife Molly and their son Chase.



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History of the Apron

by Trisha Hunter



In the past, aprons were not meant to be flashy, cute, sexy or stylish. They were functional, related pieces of fabric and most generally, a square piece of old cloth with a string wrapping around it to hold it on the body. At some point the string became a tie and the tie became a bit wider.

When Europeans began immigrating to the new world, aprons were simple and functional as a reaction to the excesses of fashion. The Pilgrim women wore plain, long white aprons. Later, the Quaker women wore long aprons made of colored silk.

Back in England, politics dictated fashion during the reign of Oliver Cromwell. Simple aprons were the rule until Charles II reclaimed his throne.

At that time, the fashion pendulum moved again to the other extreme and embroidery and lace again decorated aprons. The Duchess of Queensbury once wore an apron that was rumored to have cost 200 guineas. At today's exchange rate of 0.643030 pounds to the dollar, this would convert to \$163.290.

Up until the American Colonial era, aprons were mostly waist or half aprons. Then, full aprons began to find favor and pinafores or "pinnies" began to be worn. I actually had to look up pinnies a few months ago because one of my British pin-up model pals wanted an apron. She kept calling it a pinny and I had no clue what she was talking about or why she was calling it that. Here is what I found:

A pinafore (colloquially a pinny in British English) is a sleeveless garment worn as an apron.

"Up until the American Colonial era, aprons were mostly waist or half aprons."

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Pinafores may be worn by girls as a decorative garment and by both girls and women as a protective apron. A related term is *pinafore dress*, which is British English for what in American English is known as a *jumper dress*, i.e. a sleeveless dress intended to be worn over a top or blouse. A key difference between a pinafore and a jumper dress is that the pinafore is open in the back. In informal British usage however, a pinafore dress is sometimes referred to as simply a pinafore, which can lead to confusion.

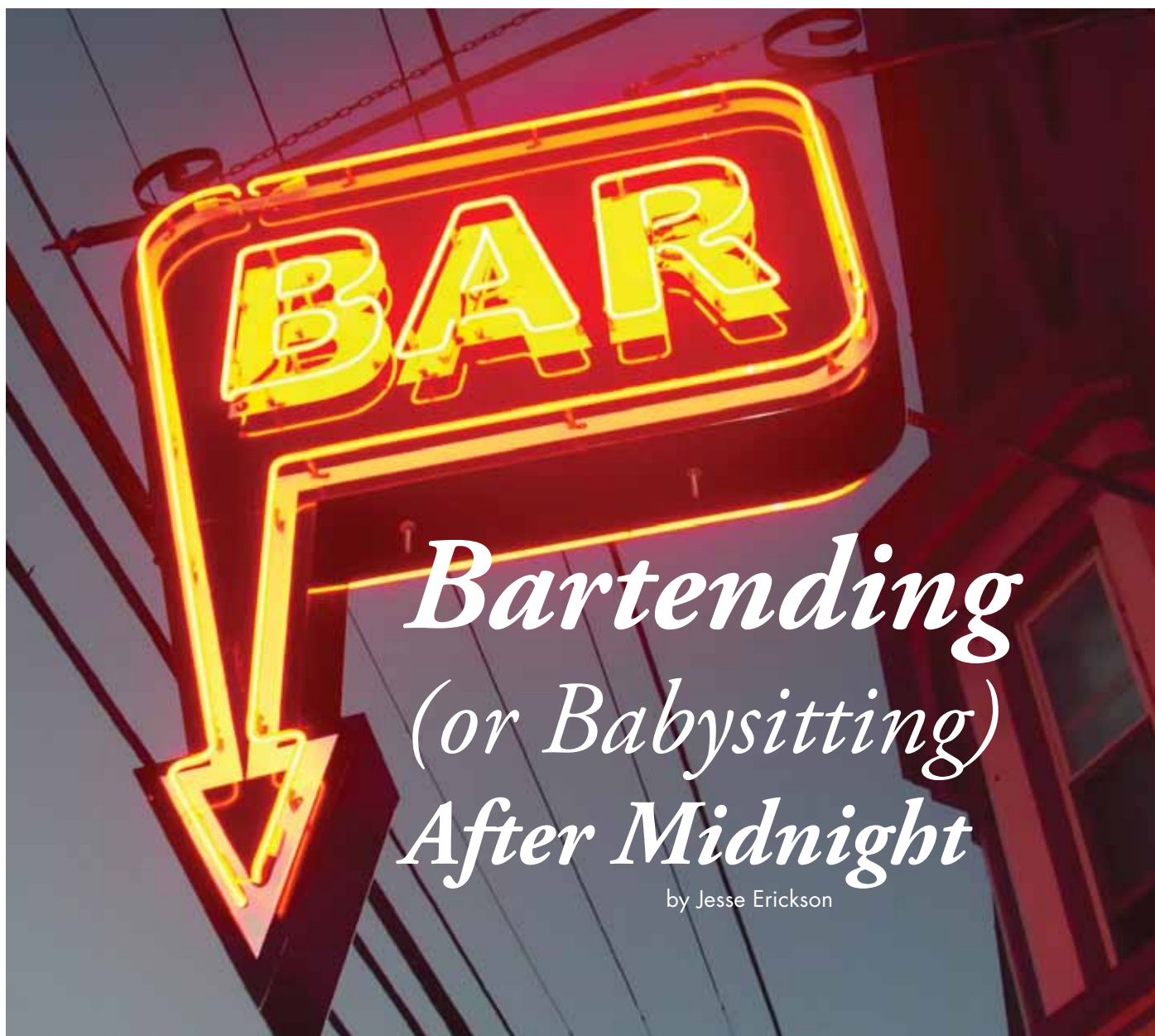
The name reflects that the pinafore was formerly pinned (pin) to the front (afore) of a dress. The pinafore had no buttons, was simply "pinned on the front" which led to the term "pinafore."

The pinafore was a type of apron that was pinned over the dress and easily removed for washing. Buttons were frequently damaged with lye cleaning products, which was one reason why dresses were not laundered very often. As fabric became more available, more cutting and fitting of the garment was done. Aprons began to mimic dress styles.

For me, an apron designer, when someone says to me "Wow, I couldn't even tell that that's an apron, it looks like a dress," I find it to be the highest of compliments. I think aprons have a bad rap. I constantly hear "I don't bake, so why would I wear an apron?"

There are a wide variety of aprons for a variety of people and aprons can be customized to fit your style. There are styles ranging from a baking apron to a tradeshow apron to a sexy style for boys to buy their ladies and many more.

An Apron is now more of a decorative garment. Though there are still many businesses of all types who utilize aprons in their business, simply put, an apron can now be more of a decorative garment and not just for baking anymore.



Bartending (or Babysitting) After Midnight

by Jesse Erickson

fsmomaha.com

It's Friday night; you and your friends have already had your delicious dinner. Your server was fantastic and you tipped them appropriately – 20% or better. Now what to do? Go home? Yeah, right – it's Friday and you're finally free of the cubicle that traps you during the week. It's time to put your party pants (or dress) on and drink!

“Play it straight and your chances of getting excellent service and being a ‘smart’ customer go way up.”

You might choose one for your favorite haunts where the bartenders know your name, or perhaps you've decided to mix it up and take on the challenge of a new libations room. It's busy, but you've lucked out, there's a place to sit. You belly up to the bar and wait patiently for the bartender to serve you. As can happen, it's taking a bit longer than you'd like for the bartender to get to you. It might be the 26 Vegas Bombs that were just ordered, or the five crazy cocktails that have multiple ingredients and – what's

that? A flaming orange peel? Weird. Too bad bartenders don't have eight arms like the goddess Durga. Everyone would be served much faster. Is there plastic surgery for that?

Finally, there before you, is the bartender asking “what can I get you?”

Well, damn. After all the time you've been waiting, taking note of the bartenders with only two arms like normal mortals, the last thing you thought about was what you wanted. You ask yourself quickly “do I just order my usual or do I gaze at the menu for a minute whilst the bartender gazes at me in wonder?” Knowing there are others waiting for drinks also, you do the obvious thing; you order your trite gin and tonic.

Knowing you're going to be staying around for a few, you decide to open a tab. With card in hand, you make the trade. Your drink is put before you, and your card is taken. Now, while sipping your libation and talking to your friends, you begin looking through the cocktail menu. After all, you can only drink so many gin and tonics before you want to wet your taste buds with something more adventurous.

You notice a boisterous group wander up to the bar. Are they really waving dollar bills at the bartenders? Snapping? Yelling? Knowing how profoundly rude this is you wince in apology for the group you don't know. The righteously irked bartender gets to them after serving the people that were in line before them. Smiling, she asks the group to see their ID's. Without batting an eye they all hand over their shiny, new horizontal plastic pictures.

You hear the Boniface exclaim "Happy Birthday!" To which one of the youngsters quickly asks "Do you have, like, birthday shots?"

Shaking her head no with a raised eyebrow, she asks what they'd like. The order starts with six Vegas Bombs – no, wait – make it three Vegas Bombs, three shots of whiskey and four whiskey sours. The nimble bartender whips up the order, dodging co-workers in an intricate dance of body dodges and twirls. Placing the ten glasses in front of the group, she asks "all together?"

The group looks at each other dumbfounded and questioning until they finally figure out who's paying. "I'm going to pay for two of the V-Bombs, and one of the whiskey sours. He's going to pay for the whiskeys, and she's going to pay for the rest." A fistful of cash and a debit card is given to the, at this point, very patient bartender. She rings everyone up, and gives the receipt and change back to the customers with a smile, obviously trying to hide her annoyance.

"The minimum wage for serving in Nebraska is \$2.13. So yes, we do depend on tips to survive."

The group takes their shots, picks up their drinks and walks away, leaving nothing for her hard work.

At this point you've savored your gin and tonic to nothingness, and it's your turn again. The flaming orange peel from earlier has quipped your interest, so you ask the bartender about it. She explains that it uses a house infused coffee tequila, and some other things you've never heard of. You like tequila, so you decide to try it. As she's pouring all the ingredients into a glass, she's telling a few

of the others waiting that she'll be with them in a second. Shaking your drink she laughs at a joke she over heard about a duck smoking quack... get it!?

She strains the shaken concoction into a glass in front of you, taking a lighter to a thinly sliced orange peel and sending sparks of orange zest into your drink, you get excited about tasting this treat. Asking for your name again, you tell her so she can add the drink to your tab. Bringing the glass to your lips, you continue the merriment with your friends.

"Bartenders don't set prices... if you have a complaint, talk to a manager."

This story is an excellent of what NOT to do when you go into a bar and it's as busy as all get-out. Play it straight and your chances of getting excellent service and being a 'smart' customer go way up. Impress your friends, your date, and your bartender. Here are some tips;

Things your Bartender wants you to know:

- When in doubt, have your ID ready when you get to the door/bar
- Know what you're going to order when you get to the bar. This will make things a lot quicker for everybody.
- Have your payment (Cash, Credit, etc.) ready when your drinks are served.
- If you have questions about a product, please ask! We like to be informative, we like to share our knowledge, and we like to talk about alcohol!
- If it's busy, it's going to take a little while to get a drink. We're working as quickly as we can. We're not Sonic the Hedgehog. We are only human, and as discussed, we don't have eight arms, sadly.
- The minimum wage for serving in Nebraska is \$2.13. So yes, we do depend on tips to survive. Take that into consideration when you pay, please! I don't want to live in a cardboard box



down by the river. I like my bed and a non-leaking roof over by head.

- Right now I know you're saying, get a better paying job. Guess what? I LOVE my job and without me and my co-industry people, there would be no bars and restaurants. That would make your weekends kind of boring.
- I've never heard of a bar that gives away birthday shots, just so you know.
- If you're waiting for a drink, it's because we're making one for someone that got to the bar first. We'll be with you as soon as we can!
- Waving money, yelling "Hey, Bartender" or any other obvious show of need is annoying and makes us not want to serve you. You might be put towards the end of the "line." You can call us a soup Nazi, we're okay with it.
- If you're ordering with someone else or a group of people, please, please, please order from the same bartender! This makes everything more efficient. It might not seem that way to you, but trust me.


"I like my job way more than the tip you might give me. So if I cut you off, deal with it."

- Don't ask a bartender to "make it strong." We're going to give you the appropriate amount of alcohol. If you want it strong, order a double!
- If you're going to order five different concoctions, NOTE: it's going to take a bit longer. Be patient.
- Craft cocktails have the word *craft* in them for a reason. They take a minute or two to make, so again, please be patient.
- Bartenders don't set the prices. We are minions that do what we're told. If you have a complaint, talk to a manager.
- If we cut you off, it's for a reason – you're probably drunk. Thank us instead of getting pissed. Your liver will love us the next day. Plus, serving your drunken ass can cause us to get an over-serving ticket. These tickets are both extremely expensive and can cause the bar to be shut down for days. I like my job. I like my job way more than the tip you might give me. So, if I cut you off, deal with it. Drink some water, call a cab and go to sleep. We'd love to see you again.
- Four things you can't do in a bar. 1) steal 2) break something (at least not on purpose) 3) vomit (at least try not to. If you really need to, make it to the toilet. NOT A URINAL!) 4) fall asleep. You have a bed, or so I'm assuming. Go home if you're feeling tired. There's no shame in tapping out early.
- If there's money on the bar and it's not yours... IT'S STILL NOT YOURS! It's mine. Leave it where it lies.
- Know the environment you're in. Cocktail lounges aren't going to have UV Cake while a club probably isn't going to have Talisker. It's kind of like going to an Indian restaurant and ordering grilled cheese.
- In case you didn't know, we're not in Las Vegas. We don't have open container laws here. Your drink stays inside. If you want someone to chase after you, have fun being tackled with a drink in your hand on the sidewalk.
- If you see someone exclusively picking up dishes and washing said dishes, it's NOT a bartender. Don't get mad that he/she isn't serving you, that's not their job.
- Just don't fight. We don't like fights. If you decide to fight, have fun being barred for a very long time.

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Cold Weather Drinkin'

by Dylan Thaemert

It's that time of year again when the cold weather adds extra incentive to warm the bones with some tasty spirits. I'm a whiskey guy, but we all need some variety to break up the monotony of the fall and winter months. This issue marks this publication's fifth year. In honor of that milestone and in keeping with its numerical significance, here is a lineup of five delicious cold weather drinks sure to brighten the long dark hours ahead.

Since it's still early we'll get started with a **True Irish Coffee**. I'm not sure who all in town does it this way but when our (Jake's) owners came back from a trip with the recipe for a "real" Irish coffee, it was love at first sip and instantly replaced the staid Coffee-Jameson-Bailey's combo on our menu.

In a warm glass mug, add Irish whiskey (we use Jameson) and coffee (we use locally roasted **Beansmith**) to a packet of raw sugar and stir until it's dissolved. Then in a shaker "vigorously" shake (is there any other way?) heavy whipping cream and drizzle over the underside of a spoon to float about a half inch of cream on top of the coffee.

On first sip, the taste and sensation of the sweet hot coffee-whiskey coming through the thick cold cream is one to be savored and offers something that the pleasant and comforting other version just doesn't have. As you sip, the cream starts to get mixed in and the drink becomes cooler and creamier. Whether you've got to go grocery shopping, watching sports on TV or studying, this drink is a great way to start your day. Pair with bacon and eggs, birthday cake or a cigar.

Next on the menu is **stout**. Whether it's Guinness, the old dry Irish standby, or one of the many varieties of delicious stout being made by America's mighty microbrews, the dark, toasty flavors of stout are a great companion on a cold day.

In addition to the warming sensation the alcohol in stout provides, many are brewed with familiar, comforting ingredients like cocoa, coffee, milk and oatmeal. Some are aged in oak barrels, which provide additional woody, vanilla flavors. Though some consider Guinness a heavy beer because of its malty flavors, it's actually low in alcohol by volume compared to most American stouts on the market.



“In addition to the warming sensation the alcohol in stout provides, many are brewed with comforting ingredients like cocoa, coffee, milk and oatmeal.”

I prefer quite a bit of heft in a stout, and if it's really chilly, bring on those high ABV's. Old Rasputin Russian Imperial Stout is my first choice for this style. At 9% ABV, it is nearly pitch dark in color. The feel is thick and rich with a slight coffee bitterness. This is a top ten beer for me whether poured out of a bottle or from a silky smooth nitrogen tap. Other worthy brews for me include Great Divide's Yeti series, Tallgrass Buffalo Sweat oatmeal cream stout, and Brau Brothers' Moo Joos milk stout.

For me, stout is not really a dessert beer, but takes up too much room to go with a full meal. It goes well with sweet, simple, bread-based foods. Dip a hunk of pretzel bread in Nutella or whip up a peanut butter and banana sandwich.

Now we'll continue our journey into big, warming flavors with some single malt **Scotch**. While this is definitely the time for the smokiest of the smoke bombs (Ardbeg, Laphroaig), I tend towards something a bit more balanced. The Talisker 10 and the Bunnahabhain 12 are two reasonably priced single malts that tick all the boxes necessary for a great Scotch experience.

Talisker is one of the six “Classic Malts,” from the Isle of Skye. It is abundantly smoky on the nose, but less assaulting on the palate. There's lots of pepper, rock, and a big, salty sea breeze. Sipped neat, a dram of this really situates the senses in a whole new place. Bunnahabhain 12-year is not a typical Islay malt. In other words, it doesn't smell like a hospital/medicine cabinet. This one is actually less smoky than the Talisker. It also tastes like the sea, but is lighter bodied with flavors of sherry, dark fruits, and some light peat smoke.

Both of these should be served neat. A drop or two of water may open a few flavors up in the Talisker especially, but any more

will ruin the subtle balance of flavors you probably just paid good money for. I'll also pass on food pairings for this round. If you choose the right Scotch, its range of flavors will keep your palette occupied for as long as there's liquid in your glass.

Next we'll try an **infusion** or two. An infusion is simply any kind of liquor combined with some sort of organic matter, so the booze takes on some of the flavors of whatever material is chosen. Many bars are using infusions to put their own spin on familiar cocktails. It's also easy to do at home. Get a jar, some booze, and get creative.

Infusing is an easy way to make cocktails taste even more seasonal. Try adding your favorite variety of tea to a jar of easy breezy Old Overholt rye whiskey, or cinnamon sticks and apples in a nice, sticky bourbon like a Knob Creek or Maker's Mark. How about a movie night with buttered popcorn-infused dark rum? Whatever you choose, you don't need to use the whole bottle right away. Make several smaller test batches in mason jars to find out what works before you go dumping a whole bottle on a whim.

Some materials will impart their flavors quicker than others. Tea and coffee, like their non-boozy counterparts only take a few minutes to adequately impart their flavors on liquor, while tougher, less porous material like ginger, cinnamon, or spices may take a couple days. Consult your handy guide, the Internet for specific guidance and other wacky ideas. Food pairings here will obviously depend on what combination of flavors you've chosen.

As much as I love to bunker down with a blanket and a book on a cold day, we can't sit around brooding the whole time. As delicious and seasonally appropriate as this all has been, let's brighten things up with a lively, tart and boozy classic cocktail. One of my favorites is the **Corpse Reviver #2**.

If you are feeling low, this lively combination of flavors is sure to lift your spirits. It is equal parts gin, Lillet Blanc (fortified white wine), Cointreau (orange liqueur), and lemon juice shaken with ice and strained into an absinthe-rinsed glass. The absinthe in the glass imparts a nice, warm aroma almost like suntan lotion and the color is a cool smoky yellow. This boozy combination of citrus and gin botanicals is tart and enlivening. Actual corpse reviving properties are pending FDA-approval, but I guarantee this little drink to create a healthy, restorative buzz and break the monotony of the cold weather classics.

As with all adult beverages, the corpse reviver will have the opposite of its intended effect if too many are ingested. Be smart when you drink. Be nice to each other. Tip your bartenders and make sure you have a safe ride home.

“A digestif like an amaro is just the thing to end a cold day on a warm, natural note.”

With that said, we've passed doing just five cold weather drinks, but numbers now seem less relevant. Before I go, I'm going to have one more to settle the tummy. A digestif like an **amaro** is just the thing to end this cold day on a warm, natural note. An amaro is an Italian liqueur traditionally drunk straight as an after dinner drink. Unlike most spirits on the shelf, it is based in bitter herbs and roots, giving it an earthy sweet taste that is also said to aid in digestion. It is also lower in alcohol content than most base spirits, usually from 15-40%. Averna, Fernet-Branca, and Bitter Truth EXR are all delicious varieties.

So cheers! To Erik, for five years of putting Omaha's food and drink evolution in print, and to you, reader, hoping these drink suggestions help bring you some small warmth this winter.

Ice, Ice Baby

by Binoy Fernandez

Lately, if you've been to a craft bar, you've had a drink with a giant cube or a large sphere of ice in it. Some places have even started using spears of ice for the tall Collins glass. What's the deal with these large cubes, gigantic spheres, and tall cylinders? Why do we care whether it's crushed into a fine powder, cracked into the familiar small cubes, or just one cube big enough to fill up the glass? Does the shape even matter? Just what the heck is going on with our ice in cocktails?

"Four years ago we saw the craft of bartending starting to catch on in our fair city. Now there's a lot of talk going around about ice."

Given this issue of *Food & Spirits Magazine* celebrates five years of *FSM*, let's first get a little perspective. The Omaha of five years ago was certainly no stranger to the cocktail, but we didn't have any bartenders who had places to practice the *craft* of bartending professionally. Sure, we had our places to go drink, and we wouldn't hesitate to order a Manhattan, or a Negroni, or an Old Fashioned; we were content with what we had. New York, Seattle, San Francisco and Chicago were the places where bartenders were becoming as chefs behind the stick, but it hadn't yet reached Omaha.

Four years ago we saw the craft of bartending starting to catch on in our fair city, started hearing about this word mixology. It's about a balanced cocktail, about serving a quality drink, and about bartending becoming a craft once again. Now there's a lot of talk going around about *ice*. We're seeing ice presses which make spheres, tall spears for our Collins' glasses, and words such as Kold-Draft are starting to be whispered and talked about. This is an

exciting time for Omaha. It's a time to go out and get a real mixed drink.

Water in cocktails is about bringing balance to the drink. When you think that just about every mixed drink, other than the shot or *pousse café*, has about 40-60% of its volume as water, you can begin to appreciate that it plays as vital a role as the spirits and other ingredients that go into the concoction. Water will bring flavors out, push flavors back, and do fun stuff to a drink. Add too much and the drink falls flat, add too little and it's going to have harsh notes and burn a little. What does this have to do with ice? In the cocktail universe, ice is how we deliver water into a cocktail.

There are three reasons why we shake and stir drinks. (1) Mix the ingredients together, (2) chill the drink to palatable levels, and (3) introduce water to dilute the drink. Ice plays a key role in each of these processes, and plays a critical role once the drink gets served.

"Water in cocktails is about bringing balance to the drink and ice is how we deliver water into a cocktail."

When we use ice to make drinks, the type of ice we use is important. For drinks like frappes, blended drinks, and juleps, we want to use crushed ice or powder. This ice melts very quickly, distributing water into the drink at a rapid rate and thus cooling the drink quickly. Usually these drinks get swizzled (the most violent form of stirring) to integrate everything. These will be the coldest beverages you get, the ones that can be the most desirable on a hot day.

For other drinks we use cracked ice. Here, think of the ice we're used to, the standard ice from the bar and the ice in our home freezer. It comes in varying sizes, but generally speaking we get several cubes into the glass. The type of glass best suited to using these cubes is your highball, tumbler or Collins glass. It's ideal for drinks like the Tom Collins, the Americano Highball, the Moscow Mule, or the Dark and Stormy. This ice, in my opinion, is also the best ice to use in your shaking tin or mixing glass when making a drink. You can work pretty quickly with it and still have good control over your dilution and temperature.

Then we have the lump ice. These are the big blocks, the ones that we use in our old fashioned glasses. These melt slowly, have a more constant temperature, and we use them to maintain a drink.

Then there are the spears, which are a relatively new ice shape in the glasses. These are used in the Collins and the Highball glasses, and they serve the exact same purpose as the lump ice.

For those of us who practice the craft, we don't just use these different types of ice because it looks cooler, although, let's be honest, it does. While we still look to their notes for guidance, I would argue that with our understanding we've surpassed the likes of Jerry Thomas, Kappeler, McElhone, and Craddock, who probably used these different types of ice because it was easier than to try to create all these uniform pieces of cracked or lump ice. We use these different types of ice because it makes a better, more balanced drink for our customers.





Get Your Nog On

by Lucas Korth

fsmomaha.com

Christmas time is here. Joyful every year; wrap up all your gifts and press booze to your lips till you disappear. Now you can't be late, for those in-laws that you hate, you've led your wife astray with your jugs of cabernet, what, no church today?

Ah, Christmas. It really is a miserable time, isn't it? The magic got sucked out of it at least a decade ago and now all that's left is a sad, shoddily decorated shell of obligation. Oof. Nonetheless, the holidays are not all despair. As long as we, as a human race, keep inventing new and exciting ways to get drunk, there is cause for celebration. And what better way to tolerate your bizarre relatives and their wiener kids than by getting absolutely befuddled on some homemade eggnog? Sounds gross, huh? Allow me to explain utilizing some questionable "science" I found on the internet.

"What better way to tolerate your bizarre relatives than by getting absolutely befuddled on some homemade eggnog?"

To begin, you will need to acquire the appropriate provisions: a dozen eggs, one cup heavy cream, a quart of whole milk, sugar, a liter of bourbon, and a healthy glug each of dark rum and cognac or brandy. Before you start it's very important that all of your utensils and containers are ultra clean. Normally I'm in the "long hair, don't

care" camp, but we're dealing with raw eggs, dairy and time, so maybe don't use that Tupperware with all the crusty spaghetti in it.

Scrubbed and sanitized, we are now prepared to go to nog. First, the annoying part: separate the yolks into your mixing bowl, discarding the whites. You may save them, of course, and make egg white omelets with them, you John Cusack loving jellyfish. Whisk two cups of sugar into the yolks until well-combined, then add everything else, mixing as you go. Dump the contents into sealable



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containers (I've found that large mason jars or nice whiskey bottles with the cork tops work well) and toss it in the fridge. You could drink it now, but it will taste like Jim Beam kicked you in the face with his rugged, old leather boot.

It will behoove you to take a James Ganderpeek every couple of days and to give your nog a hearty shake to ensure that it hasn't become a sentient being. If it is bubbling, smells like the devil's butt, or asks you for a ride to the airport, dump it down the drain. Otherwise let it chill back there for as long as you like. After three weeks or so, the nog will begin to change. It will have taken on a pleasant golden color, and will have thickened markedly. It will notice hair growing in funny places. Most important of all, it will taste incredible. It's ready to serve now, or if you're the patient type you can continue to age your nog for as long as you cannot drink it. I've heard of people aging theirs for over a year.

But what of the salmonella? The E. coli? Think of the children! Sam Beattie, a food science professor at Iowa State University, would like you to cram it with walnuts. He says that the alcohol concentration required to kill problematic bacteria in a liquid state is actually quite low. While there haven't been any studies done on alcohol in eggs or milk (I told you the science was questionable), the alcohol content of this recipe is more than double the concentration that Mr. Beattie spoke of. And furthermore, my digestive tract is more rickety than a timberwolf at a splintering wood convention, yet I still live and breathe, so quit worrying and love the nog.

Publisher's Note: The author would like to acknowledge a Mr. Thomas Flaberty, as some of his dingy lyrics were the inspiration for the opening limerick. Tom is a good dude.

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YEAST INSPECTION:

Craft-Beer-Go-Boom! by Jason McLaughlin

It's long been official that craft beer is a really big deal. There are more breweries in operation now than at any other time in our nation's history and the number of breweries currently in the planning stage are staggering. Too many you ask? Will the market become oversaturated?

"As the craze for beer with flavor rips across the country, Nebraska has found itself right in the thick of it."

Beer is not simply a fad. The proof is in its cultural history over the many centuries. We here in America are at the beginning of our own beer revolution. As the craze for beer with flavor rips across the country, Nebraska has found itself right in the thick of it. Several breweries have opened across the state in the past year and their beers have been nothing short of fantastic. The future of craft brewed beer is looking bright in "The Good Life" state. Let's take a walk through some of the Nebraska breweries everyone should be looking forward to soon.



"Several of the beers in their lineup are old school styles that resonate well with Nebraska's heritage."

Ploughshare Brewing Company – Lincoln

With plans to officially open in the spring of 2014, Ploughshare Brewing Company has a very interesting business model. Founder and head brewer Matt Stinchfield is creating, as he explains, "a microbrewery that produces beer for sale to wholesalers."

Matt's brewery will be located near downtown and the University of Nebraska. It's going to sport a beautiful tasting area offering a limited menu of "locally-sourced wholesome choices created in a compact kitchen." The main idea of the taproom is to offer a place for beer lovers to come and "get to know" the Ploughshare line-up while not competing head-to-head with other local restaurants

where he plans to have his brews offered. Matt further explained, "Our drink list will have Ploughshare beers, a few wine choices and a couple of gluten-free items. That's it. We're a brewery with a taproom, not a restaurant that happens to sell its own beer."

What can you expect to find on tap at Ploughshare? Matt said that several of the beers in their lineup are old school styles that resonate well with Nebraska's heritage. They include a pre-Prohibition pilsner and a cream ale, along with various traditional German, Belgian and Irish styles. In order to brew those to taste like the real McCoy, they must use traditional ingredients like six-row barley and local grains.

"We are having a special brew house engineered that allows us to brew authentic beers with body and substance," Matt explained. "The goal is for our beers to exude the character of the best traditional beers from Europe as well as those from America's golden years before Prohibition."

Matt is not exactly wet behind the ears in the craft beer industry. He has brewed professionally on and off over the past twelve years on top of his twenty years as an amateur homebrewer. He is also a Certified Cicerone (beer sommelier) as well as a professional beer judge that has helped choose the medal winners in the Great American Beer Festival and the World Beer Cup over the last eight years.

When asked what drives his passion as a brewer, Matt explained, "A lot of people can brew a decent beer, which is great, but few people achieve what I call 'the last five percent'. That five percent is where the mystery and the mastery lay. As a brewer, it is that last part that I'm always pursuing."



"Ales, lagers and barrel-aged beers will be brewed with their system bought from Thunderhead Brewing."

Goldenrod Brewing Company - Omaha

Named after the official state flower of Nebraska, Goldenrod plans to open its Midtown brewpub in early 2014. Living the brewers dream, Phil and Bernie Doerr, along with Tony and

Christina Thomas, plan to create a fun and casual environment at their brewpub.

"We want a place where people feel welcome and appreciated, and where you can always have a lively conversation about beer," Phil said. "The décor will be based on a concept we call 'farm punk'. It's a cross between rustic farmhouse and steam punk. We plan to evolve that concept over time and to involve local artists we know to assist in creating some crazy stuff."

The main focus, beer-wise, will be farmhouse ales, lagers and barrel-aged beers, which will be brewed with their system bought from **Thunderhead Brewing** in Kearney, Nebraska. They take pride in keeping the brewhouse in the Nebraska craft brewing community. Phil explains his new system as "a precision stainless 12-barrel direct fire brewhouse that, with existing capacity, has the ability to produce more than 1,300 barrels of beer each year."

The four owners came from diverse backgrounds. Phil and Bernie were engineers working for the Department of Defense. Bernie was a software engineer and program manager and Phil was a physicist and mathematician. They began home brewing in the late 80's and over the years, toured breweries all over the world with good friend **Bill Baburek**, the owner of the **Crescent Moon and Infusion Brewery**. With Brett beers and Saisons being Phil's specialty, he has a lot of appreciation for all the help and knowledge he has received from breweries such as Crooked Stave, Funkwerks and Nebraska Brewing Company.

Over the course of about 15 years, homebrewing became a passion for Phil's new partner, Tony, and he decided to turn professional. Tony got his start at a brewery in Sacramento in 2005 and then migrated to work at breweries in Denver before moving back to Omaha to work at **Upstream** in 2009. Christina makes her career as a CPA and has traveled along with Tony to hundreds of breweries throughout the U.S. and Europe, learning about and sampling the many styles of beers over the years.



"Located in two adjacent Blackstone Place buildings, the brewery and taproom interior will feature 100+ year-old exposed brick walls."

Scriptown Brewing Company - Omaha

Located in two adjacent **Blackstone Place** buildings on the corner of 40th & Farnam, Scriptown's owners John Fahrer and Scott Stephens plan to open their doors around the first quarter of 2014. The brewery gets its name from the first housing development in Omaha dating back to the 1850's. The brewery and taproom interior will feature 100+ year old exposed brick walls which they plan to keep as the theme.

"Scott and I want to keep as much of the existing building in play as possible... an urban, cool look is what we're after," John explained. "Scott lived in Portland, Oregon for seven years and has a remarkable eye for the type of aesthetic we're looking for."

Their brewery will consist of a two-vessel, 14-barrel direct fire brewhouse with the boiling kettle being used as their hot liquor tank. The initial plan is to offer four to six beers in their first year, which will likely include German, English – and John's favorite – Belgian style ales.

"We will distribute draft kegs to a few select bars and restaurants the first year while building our brand and we also plan to do some limited hand bottling of the occasional specialty beer," John said.

John has been a making beer since 1986 and is one of the most accomplished homebrewers in the area. In 1996 he became the first and only Nebraskan to win the AHA (American Homebrewers Association) Homebrewer of the Year award. He holds the rank of 'National' as a BJCP (Beer Judge Certification Program) judge.

"I attribute a lot of my brewing success to knowing, and brewing to style. Once you can master this, you can create anything," John said. "Over the years I've had the chance to brew with some great people, including Dean Dobmeier at **The Jones Street Brewery**, Trevor Schaben at the original **Thunderhead** in Kearney, the **Modern Monks** at both the Grand Island and Misty's location, as well as with Mike Cunningham at **Lucky Bucket**."



"Creating more than just beer, the tasting room area will offer a wide selection of beers and spirits they produce."

Borgata Brewery and Distillery - Omaha

With plans to be open late in 2013, Borgata, which is an old Italian word for family, will be located in the trendy **Old Market** area in the building previously known as Second Chance Antiques.

Owners Zac Triemert and Holly Mulkins are planning on creating more than just beer. They will also be producing distilled spirits, with the main focus being whiskey. The 9,000 square foot production brewery will show off its original brick interior and include a packaging and canning line, custom-made copper stills and room for whiskey barrel storage. The tasting room area will hold up to around 100 guests where they will offer a wide selection of beers and spirits that they produce. They also plan to offer a few quick bites supplied by selected local restaurants in the area.

The couple has purchased a new two-vessel, 15-barrel brewhouse with 45-barrel hot and cold liquor tanks.

"What I'm most excited about is that the mash tun has been rigged up with rakes," Zac explained. "This will increase quality, consistency and be easier on the backs of Holly and I in the brewhouse." As for the shiny copper stills, they will be placed in the tasting area for all to admire.

Zac's undergraduate degree was in microbiology and chemistry and he went on to earn his master's degree in Brewing and Distilling from Heriot-Watt University in Scotland.

On his brewing background Zac says, "I have been brewing commercially in Omaha for the last 12 years. Borgata Brewery and Distillery is the third brewery and second distillery that I have built from the ground up, but this time I'm lucky enough to do it with family."

With the ever-growing craft beer sector, there is also a renaissance taking place with craft spirits, and what perfect timing for Omaha to be a part of it all.



No Pinot, Please Pour Me a Pint

by Ryan Miller

When most people think of pairing beer with a meal, the first thought (and only thought in many cases) is pairing a Bud with a hotdog at a baseball game. This is a fine pairing and a great American tradition, but a new American tradition has been brewing over the past 30 years. This new tradition is American craft beer. Craft beer is difficult to categorize, but speaking in general terms, it's made in small batches, using the highest quality ingredients available. The result is an authentic, complex beverage, made with pride and passion.

“Dinner pairings tend to be focused on wine, but craft beer offers countless options to pair with food.”

Customs evolve slowly, and dinner pairings tend to be focused on wine, but craft beer offers countless options to pair with food. Both wine and beer's acidity tends to calm salts and fats, allowing the food's flavors to come through. While beer and wine have some similar qualities, craft beer takes it to another level due to the varying acidity attributes and the hop bitterness levels provided by different beer styles. The acidity and bitterness calm a food's richness and residual sugars. Additionally, carbonation helps cleanse the pallet, while the unique characteristics of malt, hop and yeast in each variety add to the dining experience.

At **Benson Brewery** we strongly believe in eating and drinking better, and this experience is enhanced by pairing the meal with the proper beer. For your next dinner party or company event a nice twist may be to hold a pairing dinner with the ultimate beverage: craft beer. The following bullet points from the Brewers Association describe the basic taste elements to focus on while considering what beers to pair with a meal. The dominant craft beer taste elements

will contrast against the food's taste elements, so that the beer and food flavors shine.

- Sweet calms sweet – allowing other flavors rise to the surface. Examples: peas and carrots; milk and cookies; stout and vanilla ice cream floats.
- Acidic calms salt – acid cuts the salt and balances flavor to create a “cleanness”. Examples: ceviche and tortilla chips; tomatoes and mozzarella cheese; pickles and a corned beef sandwich.
- Bitter calms sweet – allowing other flavors rise to the surface. Example: the sweet of malted barley is calmed and balanced by the bitterness of hop alpha acids. Think: An India pale ale's bitterness calms the sweetness of the icing on a carrot cake. Perhaps something like a bitter arugula salad with sweet dried cranberries, or perhaps more commonly, your morning coffee with cream and sugar.
- Umami complements umami. Examples: mushrooms on fettuccine alfredo; parmesan cheese on spaghetti and meatballs; an aged old ale and holiday fruitcake.

Now that we have the basic taste elements under our belts, we need to develop a high-level understanding of the beer categories and their general flavor profiles. We classify our beers by the seven flavor categories created by Greg Engert of the neighborhood restaurant group in Washington, DC. These categories are crisp, hop, malt, roast, smoke, fruit and spice, and tart and funky. The details of these categories go well beyond the scope of this article, but the following brief descriptions of the more common of these categories will act as a guide and help you narrow your beer choices down for your meal pairing.

- Crisp beers such as English blonde ales, pilsners and Vienna lagers tend to be lighter body, lower alcohol and cleaner flavor.

Crisp beers tend to pair well with spicier dishes, seafood and salads.

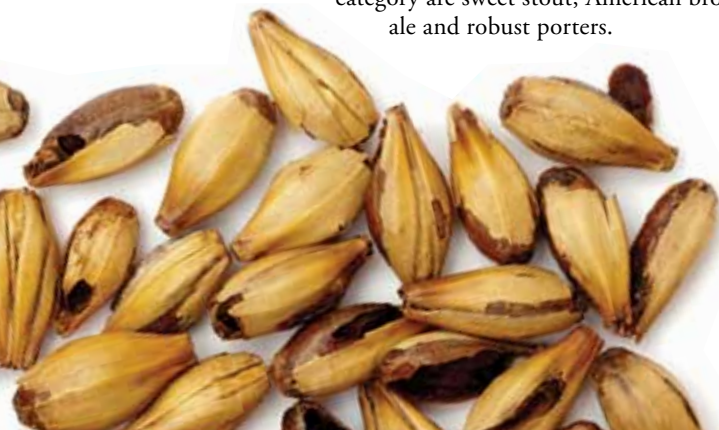
- Hop beers are all about the aroma and bitterness provided from the substantial addition of hops throughout the brewing process. Hop beers span the color spectrum and have varying degrees of alcohol. India pale ales, American amber, and ordinary bitters are all examples from the hop category. Hoppy beers (not to be confused with happy beer – even though hoppiness is happiness for hop heads) are great beers to pair with pub food and food typically present at BBQs. Beers with an elevated hop profile complement fried foods, burgers, hard cheeses and rich foods.



“Beers with an elevated hop profile complement fried foods, burgers, hard cheeses and rich foods.”

- Malt beers tend to have high levels of sweetness, often yielding flavors such as deep toffee, nut and caramel. As you may have deduced from the description, these beers tend to have a golden copper to deep brown color and can range from light to full-bodied. We would recommend pairing malty beers such as Dunkel Lager, Wee Heavy Scotch Ale, and Irish Red Ale with root vegetables, a nice winter stew, blue cheese, wild game and pork dishes.

- Roast beers usually have coffee, chocolate, plum and cherry flavors associated with them and tend to have a creamy mouth feel, complemented by a deep copper to black color. Many people see a dark beer and assume it's harsh, but that is generally not the case. If you are a coffee or chocolate fanatic, there is a good chance you will really enjoy darker beers and we encourage you to try one. Roast beers pair well with desserts, game, blackened dishes and some types of seafood. Common roast beers for this category are sweet stout, American brown ale and robust porters.



- The last flavor profile we will cover is the fruit and spice category, which includes such beers as tripel, Belgian strong dark ale, kristalweizen and saisons. These beers have a vast range of alcohol, colors and an infinite range of flavors. Fruit and spicy beers rarely have hop character and tend to be defined by the bold fruit and spice flavors they encompass. The sweetness of these beers balances out spicy dishes, but also complement shellfish, cured meats and poultry. At Benson Brewery we have a spiced mild English ale called Karha-T. Karha is the miracle blend of spices that give chai tea its unique flavor and aroma. In our Karha-T, Head Brewer Andy Elliott infuses a mild English ale with fresh ginger, green and black cardamom pods, cinnamon sticks, star anise, fennel, black and pink whole peppercorn, clove, almonds, rose petals, saffron, whole nutmeg and coriander. This session beer has a very unique flavor and we found Karha-T pairs very well with spicy sausages as well as cashew ice cream and other desserts.



“Roast beers tend to have a creamy mouth feel and pair well with desserts.”

Now that you are beginning to discover craft beer is a worthy(ier) food pairing partner and are armed with a basic understanding of the flavor profiles, you can start to explore the options for hosting a beer pairing dinner at your home or restaurant. While planning your pairing dinner, have fun with it and pick a theme, like a vegan beer dinner or a dinner that focuses on foods of a particular region. This will help you narrow down beer and food options to a more manageable list of choices. Pairing dinners should be four or five courses with a dessert option – and remember moderation is a good thing. Test the pairings out in advance to ensure your choices are successful, include plenty of vegetables and don't focus excessively on pairing with proteins.

The beers don't need to be full 16oz pints. Instead, go with 4oz pours for each course since the overall goal is to have the guest remember the enjoyable dining experience and not drink in excess. It can be daunting to host a pairing dinner so focus on the original intent of hosting; it's to have fun and enjoy the quality time you are spending with your friends and family. Relax, have a pre-dinner “sample” and think about how craft beer is about to be elevated to its proper place at the dinner table as the ultimate pairing beverage. Cheers!



Hunters & Collectors: A Case for The Cellar

by John Finocchiaro

Admit it. Running off to a wine shop or the grocery store every time you need a bottle or two for the weekend is not all that thrilling. It would be so much easier to have your own supply on hand and readily available without having to pre-plan your every sip. And wouldn't it be nice to accumulate a small arsenal of more expensive, special wines – ones that can lay down for a few years?

As your enjoyment and appreciation of good wine grows, so does your desire to have your own private stash. Once you were a mere consumer. Now you are a hunter and collector.

The ultimate indulgence for the wine aficionado may well be the wine cellar. Designing your own personal wine cave and filling it over time with hand-picked selections can be a thrill. And best of all, it is all yours.

“The ultimate indulgence for the wine aficionado may well be the wine cellar.”

For some, a cellar is simply a place to store a few bottles for whatever occasion may arise within the next few weeks. It is easy access, convenient, and sometimes it is fun to discover a few bottles of something that we forgot we owned. A cellar may be a simple rack or a box in a basement closet. For many, a cellar is just a pantry stocked with vino instead of mac and cheese while for others, the home wine cellar is a trophy room. It is an opportunity to display one's sophistication, success and prized purchases. Your bottles are show ponies for the golf-clapping invitees who may on occasion grace the premises. A cellar may have more controls on air quality, temperature, lighting and security than any other space in your home. And based on square footage, it may quite possibly be the most expensive room in the house. It can be idolatry at its finest.

So, exactly which type of hunter and collector are you? Are you simply one step beyond the buy-on-the-fly consumer you once were, in need of a simple place to stockpile a few bottles to get you through the winter months, or do you thirst for a true showpiece? Most wine lovers lie somewhere in between.

“Great wine can improve with age, but wait too long and you will have the most expensive salad dressing imaginable.”

Whichever one you are, there are a few considerations to keep in mind when planning your cellar. While most people would agree that a large, well-stocked cellar is truly impressive, herein lies the most costly of mistakes. A few hundred bottles of racked wine may look great, but do the math – the dollars add up quick. If money is no object and you are content to store unlimited quantities of the best juice money can buy, then your problems are over. As for the rest of us mere mortals, the number of wines we choose to cellar should depend directly on how much we consume. A cozy closet space tastefully done is often times more impressive and practical than a large – and largely empty – wine room. Bigger is not always better.

Your 'everyday' wines are meant to be consumed within a year – maybe two. Buy those wines liberally, knowing that those corks will be popped freely and often. As for the collectibles, unless you can consume the vast majority of these within roughly five years you will eventually buy yourself into a corner, whereby you may have to quit purchasing wine until you have gone through your stockpile.

Trust me when I say that there are few wine experiences more disheartening than popping a bottle of aged wine only to discover that you have sat on it too long. The quantity of wines you purchase

for laying down long-term should not be a function of the amount needed to fill the cellar. Empty racks can always be filled with the everyday stuff. Buy according to your usage, not simply to fill the empty slots.

Know that a cellar is meant to store wine for future consumption. If your wine in storage never leaves the cellar and becomes a permanent showpiece, you do not have a wine cellar, you have a museum. You don't want that. Great wine can improve with age, but wait too long and you will have the most expensive collection of salad dressing imaginable. Rule of thumb: If you won't pour 'em, don't store 'em.

“Find your cellar. Hunt down those precious wines. Collect them. But above all, be sure to consume and enjoy them.”

One aesthetically appealing nuance for a cellar is to adorn the space with a few photos, wine books, and even empty bottles of special wines as mementos of past occasions. If your space is large enough, you may even place a wine barrel or small bistro table in the room. All of this can enhance and personalize your cellar.

Another practical enhancement is one that happens to be incredibly inexpensive. Plastic bottle tags that hang from the necks of your lay down bottles which identify the vintage, brand, and variety of each bottle make shopping your cellar easy. Sliding a dozen or more bottles out and back into their respective slots each time you are looking for a particular bottle can be quite frustrating. Once your wines have been bought and collected in the cellar you should not have to hunt them down again. Know your cellar inventory at a glance. Buy some wine tags, fill them out and hang 'em up. Heck, you can even flip them over to reuse them, and they look much nicer than staring at a bunch of unidentifiable foil capsules.

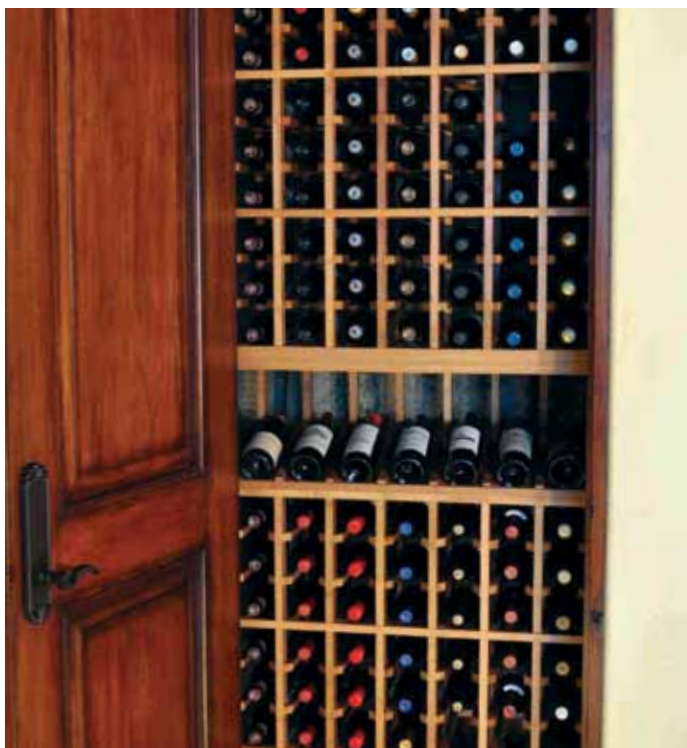
As for temperature control, you do not have to run out and buy a perfect temperature controlled storage unit. The optimal temp is between 50 and 64 degrees Farenheight, but anything that is

constant and around 70 degrees or below is more than adequate. Wine quality may be somewhat susceptible to big swings in temperature, but it's not nitroglycerine for chrissake. Find a dark basement space with a constant room temp – or slightly cooler – and don't turn your thermostat up to 80 whilst you are in Florida for the winter and your wine will be just fine.

Regarding the necessity for humidity control, my personal school of thought is that this is largely bunk. Unless your cellar is located on a driveway in Phoenix in July, your wine humidity control need not be a concern. The purpose of humidity with regards to wine is that it keeps the cork hydrated, which causes it to expand and retain a tight seal on the bottle, thus eliminating excessive air exposure. Now, the last time I checked, wine is wet. Laying a bottle down on its side keeps the cork in contact with the wine, and as such keeps the cork hydrated. Duh. So skip the humidifier – save your money for your wine purchases.

Lastly, I highly recommend stocking a variety of wines in your cellar. Force yourself to branch out beyond the world of cabernet and pinot noir, or whatever your most common favorites may be. Nothing increases wine knowledge more than discovering and tasting new wines, of all varieties and styles. Having some out of the ordinary selections in your cellar from all corners of the world will force you to eventually try them. And that is exactly what you need to broaden your wine horizons.

The apex or your journey through the world of wine should not be the creation of the greatest cellar imaginable. Rather, your wine cellar should enhance your journey through the world of wines. Find your cellar. Hunt down those precious wines. Collect them. But above all, be sure to consume and enjoy them. After all, that's why they are there.







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6059 Maple Street



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157 W. Broadway, Council Bluffs



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402-505-9917
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402-690-9252
Honey Creek, IA



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402-342-4856
1010 Howard Street



The restaurant that adds spice to Omaha! We prepare signature, traditional Indian dishes, slow-cooked and made-from-scratch. Each of our wines or made-from-scratch cocktails pairs naturally with our food menu. Open Mon - Sat, 11:30am - 2:00pm, 5:00 - close.

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



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402-342-2050
1110 Howard St



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

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402-345-3438
621 Pacific Street



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402-551-0552
5914 Center Street



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

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402-253-2479
1711 South 138th St, Springfield



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Taxi's

402-898-1882
1822 North 120th Street



Taxi's large menu features soups, salads, sandwiches, comfort foods, seafood & steaks. Prix Fixe items are available nightly, & wine bottles are half-price on Tuesdays & Wednesdays. Our popular brunch features Egg Benedict, omelettes, quiches & more. Call ahead to get your name in.

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The Dumpster: Coming Uncorked

by Michael Campbell

Wine experts admit that screw-top bottles are easier and faster to open. They lament that the low-rent caps protect wine better than cork does. They don't mind that the cheapest wines use screw caps, but they hate it when the most expensive wines do too.

Wine isn't about convenience. Wine is about tradition. Fussiness. It's like NFL football: you can have endless fights with strangers about what's more unimportant.

As long as there are wine snobs, there will be corks. Half the fun of wine is the Uncorking Ceremony. You have to do it *right*. I don't see how there will ever be a "right way" to open a screw-top bottle, as long as you avoid using your molars.

If there are corks, there will always be corkscrews, which we wine snobs cherish like our family crest. They come in a plethora of shapes, colors, and styles that don't work.

Here are my five favorites:

You can fly!

For everyday wine-opening, I trust my tried-and-true **Swing-A-Way**. By pushing the screw part up and down I can make the Swing-A-Way's little arms flap for joy, as happy as I am that we have a bottle of wine to open. You'll often see clever Italian-designed knock-offs that have heads like aliens or robots or bunnies. These look adorable on your countertop, where they should stay.

"I don't see how there will ever be a 'right way' to open a screw-top bottle, as long as you avoid using your molars."

My go-to for on-the-go: the sleek **Pulltap Double-Hinge**. The Teflon screw slides easily into a cork, and the two-step pull adds leverage and confuses beginners, which is always nice. Best of all, it is svelte enough that you can slip it into your pocket and forget about it, which is why my Pulltaps are all in the hands of airport security screeners.

Lend me a hand

For geek value I enjoy fancy mechanical wine openers like the **Rabbit**, which was coolest until it was out-cooled by the **Legacy**. The Legacy is a giant, fake-antique-bronze contraption that clamps over the edge of your counter. Grab your bottle in one hand, then clamp the neck into the Legacy's jaws with your second hand. Using your third hand, pull down the huge handle. If nothing else, it keeps you from drinking alone.

On the button

The most underrated wine opener is attached to box wine: the **spigot**. Wine on tap. Until they come out with a faucet that pours wine next to my hot and cold water, boxed wine will always have a place in my kitchen.

"What really helped boost box wine sales was putting drinkable wine in it."

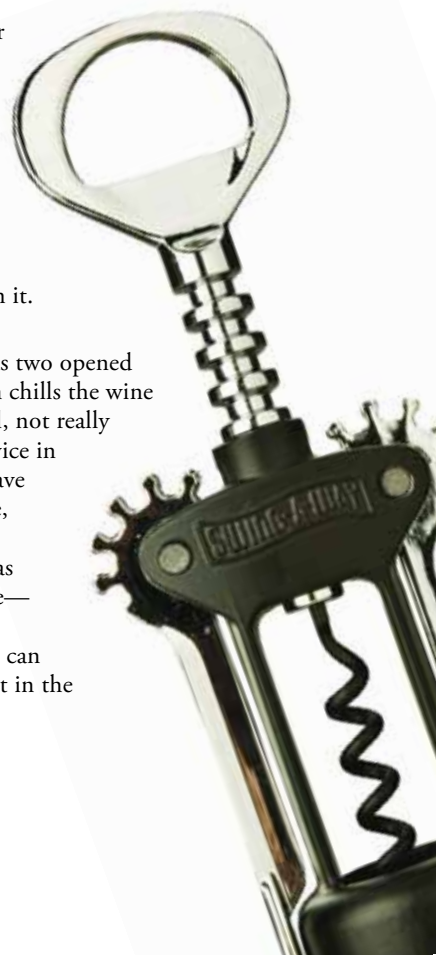
The wine box has an internal plastic bladder that shrinks as you dispense the liquid, keeping out the oxidizing air that spoils wine. The contraption works, but it ignores the obvious question: "Who has leftover wine?" Worrying about how to protect your leftover wine is like devising a special storage container for half-eaten bon-bons.

People didn't take notice of box wine at first, because the wine in the box was Franzia, a favorite choice for cleaning paint brushes. While boxes are more Earth-friendly than glass, what really helped boost box wine sales was putting drinkable wine in it.

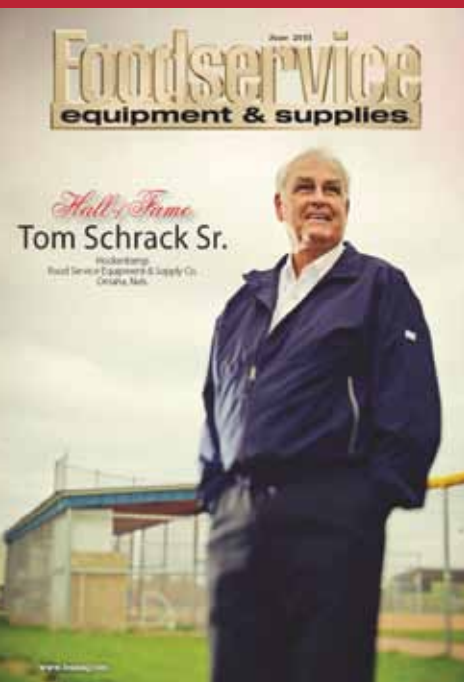
While it's open...

The **Vinotemp** wine chiller holds two opened bottles of wine, upside down, then chills the wine "instantly" as you dispense it. Well, not really instantly: you have to plug the device in and wait for it to get cold, then leave it on all the time. On the plus side, the Vinotemp wine-cooling-and-dispensing device is the same size as my college dorm room mini-fridge—for only twice the money.

Of course with a screw-top, you can just put the lid back on and stick it in the fridge. Or do what I do: finish it.



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