

FOOD & spirits®

Volume 2 / Issue 7

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FOOD & Spirits

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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



Over the last several months, due to a number of events, I've had the occasion to spend a great deal of time with my family. Much of that time was while I was working on this issue that you see before you and so, correspondingly, this issue was influenced by my family more than any other that we've done.

You see, many people ask me why I started the magazine and assume that the reason must be because I am a 'big-time foodie'. Not true but don't get me wrong. I love food and (especially) spirits as much as the next guy (and maybe a little more). I like to cook and enjoy learning the actual techniques behind producing the food that I love. But, more than those things, I love publications and publishing, and that's why I started Food & Spirits Magazine. You could say that I'm still a firm believer and advocate for print.

But while I was around my family, it all became crystal clear to me it was easy to see why, beyond loving print, I would be in charge of a magazine that dedicates itself to food and spirits. I'm not sure why I never noticed before but my family, from my grandma down to younger cousins, absolutely loves to eat, cook, talk about what they just ate or cooked, and then do it all over again. It made me realize that my entire life I have been surrounded by food brought forth by the people I love. The basis for all that has been the recipe we hoard them, collect them, lose them (only to have them reappear later) and pass them on.

FOOD & Spirits

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EXERPTS FROM THE BLOG...

Taxi Trouble

Concerned Cabbie

Lets get realistic, if you really wanna know why it takes so long to get a cab in Omaha, it is because the company never really knows where we are at when we get an order. The dispatch is only there to assist drivers when they have an issue on a run (and even then they barely do that job well): everything else is controlled by a computer. If you believe what the cab company tells you then you're in for a world of lies, they do not want to change anything cause the way it sits now they do not pay any taxes for all of the drivers that are out here and in the mean time gross about \$70,000 a week. Also, if you look at what an average cab driver makes it is less than \$2.70 an hour. The solution to getting better rates and service in Omaha and Nebraska in general is to destroy the monopoly that is Happy Cab. That way there can be competition which will not only increase service but will force Happy Cab to lower the numbers in its fleet and give the cabbies a chance to

make some money. Once that happens you will see service get better, because then it would be worth driving a cab again.

Omaha Dining: A 50 Year Retrospective

James Schmitz

During the 50s, there were two drive-ins that my parents used to take us to. One was a restaurant that I seem to remember was off of Dodge where they served Pookie-snack-in burgers. Another was Shadas (I might have the spelling a little off) where their specialty was Chili Dogs. They were great! I remember eating 10 of them at one sitting. I was 12 or 13 at the time. Did the recipe for these delicacies survive?

Omaha's Thunderbird Salad

Mike

I worked at Happy Hollow Club during the 80's and I remember the Thunderbird Salad, there is absolutely none better. Sonja the Salad Lady had it down to a perfection. To those who haven't had a Thunderbird, it's like not having a Mai Tai at the Mai Tai Lounge at Mt Fuji Inn.

EXPERTS PANEL

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



1 Jesse Becker

Jesse Becker, M.S., began his wine career at 21 as a clerk with a small wine shop in Lincoln. Jesse lived in California from 2001 to 2004, where he worked in the cellars of Robert Sinskey and Miner Family wineries, poured some of Napa's top wines for Tra Vigne Cantinetta and worked for retailer K&L Wine Merchants. In 2004, he relocated to Chicago, where he worked as a sommelier for Charlie Trotter's and NoMI at the Park Hyatt. Jesse passed the Certified Wine Educator (CWE) exam in 2006, and is one of just 173 people worldwide to achieve the distinction of Master Sommelier. Just recently, Jesse joined chef Paul Kulik at The Boiler Room in Omaha, Nebraska. He contributes to several publications, including *Sommelier Journal*, *Vintrust SOMMselections*, and *Gastronomic Fight Club*.

2 Michael Campbell

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

3 Dan Crowell

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

4 Dr. John Fischer

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

5 Judy Gilliard

Having grown up in the restaurant business in Ventura, CA, Judy pursued her love of the hospitality business and obtained a degree in Hotel Restaurant Management from Santa Barbara Community College, and received her teaching credentials in food and food technology from the University of California. After spending many years in New York City, Judy moved to Omaha, Nebraska to host her own cooking show, the "Judy a la carte" show. In April 2009, Judy a la carte joined the team of Three Eagles Communications. This show launched February 14, 2009, and is to date airing on more than 30 radio stations around the US. Also included in the syndication is a 2-minute feature called, "Courage in the Kitchen", which is airing on more than 80 stations. Judy finds delight in the simple pleasures of the table. Above all Judy enjoys entertaining at home and dining out with friends.

6 Jeremy Hunter

Jeremy Hunter has lived off and on in Nebraska for eighteen years. He has been in the industry for nearly twenty. His experience as a food service warrior spans from starting out as a dishwasher to owning his own pizza restaurant. He has been a part of every aspect of the industry, but loves being a server and bartender above all. When he is not behind the bar or helping customers, he can be found with a nice microbrew and a glass of Grand Marnier.

7 Paul Kavulak

Paul's first professional life was spent working in IT. Most recently as the SVP of Enterprise Technology Integration for West Corporation and while this occupied his daylight hours, most of the others were consumed by an immersion in beer. Not physically – his passion exists in beer and brewing. Prior to starting up Nebraska Brewing Company with his wife, Kim, Paul had been homebrewing for roughly 17 years. This passion formed the basis of a dogged pursuit of perfection in numerous beer styles and beer history. Livin' the dream.

8 John Larkin

John Larkin, co-owner of Jake's Cigars & Spirits in both Omaha and Lincoln, has been smoking and selling cigars for ten years, having begun his career as a tobacconist right out of high school in Salt Lake

City. John moved to Lincoln in 2002 to run Jake's for longtime friend Alex Roskelley. After returning home from serving a tour in Iraq with the Army Reserve, he bought into the original Jake's in downtown Lincoln. In 2006, John and Alex opened a new shop in downtown Benson where he now resides with his wife. John spends much of his time in business meetings (golfing), smoking cigars, and questing after the best beers, bourbons, and wines he can get his hands on.

9 Jason McLaughlin

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

10 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, Father of two, and Muse Extraordinaire for Sage student bistro O'Malley spreads his passion for local and sustainable cuisine liberally throughout the community.

11 Brian Smith

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

12 Ann Summers

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

COMINGS AND GOINGS

UPCOMING FOOD, WINE AND SPIRITS-RELATED AREA EVENTS...

FSMOmaha.com Store Opens

We've launched our online store at www.store.fsmomaha.com. Right now we're offering subscriptions, which include a free t-shirt, but look for more items in the very near future.

Jim Trebbien Awarded Golden Togue

Jim Trebbien, Dean for the Institute of Culinary Arts at Metropolitan Community College, was recently inducted into the Honorable Order of the Golden Togue. The Honorable Order of the Golden Togue was established in 1961 to give recognition to chefs of at least twenty years service, who have achieved professional attainment of high estate, abiding interest in professional progress and devoted and distinguished service to the culinary profession and arts. Membership is restricted to 100 life-time members. One may not apply for membership, but must be nominated

by three active members. After the nomination a screening process is conducted thru the Acceptance Committee composed of past Grand Commanders, the Board of Directors and final acceptance must be granted by the membership at the Annual Meeting.

Smoke 'em Up Johnny

The Nebraska Legislature recently passed LB 355. LB 355 provides an exemption to the state-wide smoking ban. Under LB 355, cigar bars will be allowed to offer the smoking of cigars in their establishments. Although the legislation went into effect September 1, the rules and guidelines weren't established by then so it won't actually go into effect until those things are done - likely in October sometime.

For information on listing upcoming events or activities, contact eriktotten@fsmomaha.com or call 402-203-6145.

Omaha's Riverfront Wine Festival

(Sat., Sept. 19-20 @ the Lewis & Clark Landing)

Taste, Learn...Enjoy! Omaha's first annual Riverfront Wine Festival provides an opportunity to sample from more than 100 wines from around the world and learn about new and exciting varieties from the experts. Taste different wines, experience a variety of food pairings and discover what you enjoy! Delectable delights from some of Omaha's finest restaurants, continuous live entertainment and the beautiful backdrop of the Lewis & Clark Landing make the first annual Riverfront Wine Festival an event not to miss! Tickets are \$25 and include entry into the festival, 10 tasting coupons, festival program, souvenir wine glass, live entertainment and the opportunity to purchase wine at a discount. Saturday and Sunday, September 19-20, 2009 1 - 6:30PM. Discounted tickets can be purchased in advance through Ticket Omaha beginning April 1, 2009. <http://www.riverfrontwinefestival.com/>

Comfort Food Classic

(Sun., October 4 5:00pm @ the Scott Conference Center)

See Omaha's Top Chefs 'bust their spuds' to prepare the Ultimate Gourmet Potato. This is an event to benefit Ted. E. Bear Hollow - a center for grieving children and teens. For tickets, call (402) 502-2773. For more information go to comfortfoodclassic.com.

Dine-Out Against Hunger (October 13 at participating restaurants)

The Omaha Food Banks annual fund raiser, Dine-Out Against Hunger, will be held October 13th at participating restaurants (last year there were more than 160). Participating restaurants have agreed to donate 10% of the day's proceeds to The Food Bank which will use the money to further the various programs they offer that provide food to many places in need throughout Omaha.

RECIPES

A MISH-MASH OF HOME-GROWN RECIPES
FROM THE OMAHA METRO AREA

ENTREES

Beef & Bean Ragout

Recipe by the Culinary Team Nebraska from the
Institute of the Culinary Arts, MCC

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup white onion, diced small
- 1/4 cup Birdsong Farm's Heirloom Peregrine, Hidatsa & Arikara beans
- 2 ounces fish stock
- 1/4 cup portabella mushroom, small dice
- 3 ounces red bell pepper, brunoise
- 1/4 cup garden peas
- 10 leaves arugula, chiffonade
- 3 T unsalted butter
- 1/4 cup white wine
- 1 t chili flake

salt and black pepper to taste

Directions

1. In a large saute pan over medium high heat, bring to tablespoons of butter to a foam.
2. Saute onions until soft.
3. Add the beans and fish stock and cook until heated through.
4. Add the mushroom, red pepper and peas.
5. Season with salt and pepper.
6. Deglaze with white wine.
7. Mount with remaining butter and cook until glazed.
8. Add sauteed arugula to finish.

Imperial Wagyu Pan Roasted Sirloin

Recipe by the
Culinary Team Nebraska
from the Institute of the

Culinary Arts, MCC

Ingredients

- 1 pound Imperial Wagyu top sirloin
- 1 T rendered beef fat
- 3 T butter
- 2 each garlic cloves
- 2 sprigs thyme
- 2 sprigs rosemary
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions



1. Season top sirloin with salt, pepper and herbs. Reduce heat to medium.
2. Place a ten inch black steel saute pan over medium high heat, add rendered wagyu beef fat and heat until simmering.
3. Sear top sirloin until brown on all sides, reduce heat to medium.
4. Add butter, garlic, thyme and rosemary. Bring butter to a foam and periodically baste top sirloin until cooked to desired level of doneness.
5. Remove top sirloin from pan and let rest for four minutes.
6. Slice to appropriate serving.
7. Season and plate immediately.

Sole Paupiettes with Shellfish Mousse

Recipe by the Culinary Team Nebraska from the
Institute of the Culinary Arts, MCC

Ingredients

- 4 each sole filets, well cleaned
- 3 ounces lobster mousse (recipe to follow)
- 3 cups brown butter
- salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste

Directions

1. Using the spine of a heavy knife, gently tap the skin side of the filets to break the membrane and prevent excessive curling.
2. Coat the skin side of the sole filets with lobster farce.
3. Roll the filets tail to head, wrap paupiettes with parchment and tie with twine.
4. Heat the brown butter in a 1 quart sauce pot over medium low until butter reaches 165F.
5. Place paupiettes in brown butter and poach until they reach an internal temperature of 140 F, about 7 minutes.
6. Remove and let rest.
7. Remove twine and parchment paper being careful not to damage the paupiettes.

For the Shellfish Mousse

- 2 ounces lobster tail
- 2 ounces scallop
- 1 each egg white
- 3 ounces heavy cream
- Sole trimmings as needed
- Cayenne, nutmeg and salt to taste

Directions

1. In a mini robot coupe, combine lobster, scallop and fish trimmings.
2. Blend together until homogenous.
3. Add egg white and once ounce of heavy cream.
4. Season with cayenne, nutmeg and more cream if necessary.
5. Remove from blender and run through a tamis into a piping bag for use.

Ted G's Summer Stir Fry (Makes 4-5 Servings)

Recipe by Chris Taylor

Ingredients

5 or 6 red potatoes
2 ears corn on the cob
8 ounces French beans
1 basket cherry or pear tomatoes
Parsley

Directions

Put the potatoes in a roasting pan with olive oil, garlic and rosemary. Roast at 450 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes or until brown. Remove from the oven and cut into quarters. Set aside and let cool.

Trim ends from beans. Boil for five minutes and then blanch in cold water. Set aside.

Cut kernels off corn.

Chop parsley.

In a large sauté pan, heat olive oil or butter. Add all the vegetables and stir them until hot, about five to seven minutes. You should be able to taste caramelization on the corn. Add the parsley at the end.

Options: add shrimp, scallops or lobster, or substitute cilantro for parsley.

Mustard Spaetzle

Ingredients

2 1/4 cups all purpose flour
2 T semolina flour
2 eggs
4 egg yolks
2/3 cup buttermilk
1/4 cup whole grain mustard
1 t dry mustard (Coleman's preferably)
1/2 t ginger powder
1 t onion powder
1 t garlic powder

Olive oil as needed

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Directions

1. In a large bowl, combine the all purpose flour, semolina flour, dry mustard, ginger powder, onion powder, and garlic powder, make a well in the center.

2. In another bowl combine the eggs, egg yolks, buttermilk, and whole grain mustard.

3. Pour the wet mixture into the well of the dry mixture, using clean hands, combine the mixture until just moistened throughout. Over-mixing here will create a very tough spaetzle. Season with salt and pepper.

4. Meanwhile bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat.

5. Hold a small perforated pan over the boiling water and press the batter with a rubber spatula to force the spaetzle through the holes into the boiling water.

6. Cook the spaetzle for 1-2 minutes or until the spaetzle bobs to the surface. Drain and immediately submerge in ice cold water. Drain again. Spread the spaetzle out on a baking sheet and allow to cool and dry.

7. Toss with olive oil to prevent the individual spaetzle from sticking. Hold until service.



Grilled Corn on the Cob with Pepper Seasoning

Recipe by Joanne Garvey

Ingredients

1 red bell pepper, roasted, peeled, seeded and diced (optional)
1 T margarine
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro (optional)
2 T chopped green onions (scallions) or chives, snipped
1/4 t salt
1/8 t freshly ground black pepper
1/8 t Tabasco (optional)
4 ears fresh sweet corn

Directions

1. Roast bell pepper by placing on baking sheet. Broil in oven until blistered and charred. Put in heavy plastic or paper bag. Seal and let rest for 20 minutes, then peel skin. Don't worry if all the charred parts don't come off. If you don't have time to roast the pepper, purchase roasted peppers or omit peppers entirely.

2. Preheat outdoor grill.

3. In a blender or food processor, combine the red pepper, margarine, green onions and cilantro. Add salt, pepper and Tabasco.

4. Husk and clean the corn. Place each ear individually in the center of a piece of aluminum foil, shiny side up. Coat each ear with a quarter of the pepper seasoning. Wrap the foil around the corn, making sure the ear is well sealed by the foil. Refrigerate until ready to grill.

5. Place corn on grill near the edges or cooler areas. Grill until tender, turning frequently, about 10 to 15 minutes.

6. Carefully unwrap the corn and serve.

SALADS AND SALSA

Swiss Chard Salad

Recipe by the Culinary Team Nebraska from the Institute of the Culinary Arts, MCC

Ingredients

1 1/2 leaves swiss chard
2 each small radishes
2 oz extra virgin olive oil
1 1/4 T champagne vinegar
1/4 t sugar
10 leaves fresh thyme
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. Combine champagne vinegar with sugar and then pour into a small bowl.
2. Gradually add oil.
3. Chopped thyme add to vinaigrette
4. Season with salt and pepper, let rest for at least 20 minutes to allow flavors to marry.
5. Chiffonade Swiss chard.
6. Toss with vinaigrette and let sit for 5-7 minutes.
7. Slice radish and portion into four stacks of seven, dip in vinaigrette.

Chicken Salad

Recipe by the Culinary Team Nebraska from the Institute of the Culinary Arts, MCC

Ingredients

2 each chicken thighs
5 sprigs thyme
3 ounces unsalted butter
2 each shallots, minced
2 T parsley, chopped
1 T chicken fat
2 ounces chevre
salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Directions

1. Season chicken thighs with salt, freshly ground pepper, thyme and butter.
2. Place seasoned chicken in a 1/3 pan.
3. Bake at 350F oven until an internal temperature of 160F is reached.
4. Remove chicken from the oven and let cool, reserve 1/4 cup of the chicken fat.
5. In a small saute pan over medium low heat, sweat the shallots until translucent in the reserved chicken fat.
6. When the chicken has cooled, remove the meat from the bones being sure to remove the femoral artery and roughly chop. Discard the skin.
7. In a small stainless steel bowl, mix the chicken, shallots, chicken fat, chevre and parsley, season to taste.
8. Mold the chicken salad into crescent ring molds on a plastic wrapped half sheet pan. Refrigerate.

Salad with Blood Orange Vinaigrette

Recipe by the Culinary Team Nebraska from the Institute of the Culinary Arts, MCC

Ingredients

1 each blood orange, supreme and juiced
1 each navel orange, supreme and juiced
1/2 T orange zest
1/2 T mustard seed, toasted and ground
3/4 cup olive oil
1 t red wine vinegar
salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. In a two quart stainless steel bowl, combine blood orange juice, zest, mustard and red wine vinegar.
2. Vigorously whisk in olive oil in a small steady stream to form an emulsion. Season with salt and pepper, then transfer to a squeeze bottle. Reserve 1/3 cup.
3. Macerate the orange supreme's in the reserved vinaigrette until service.
4. Toss vinaigrette with washed and dried mixed greens and herbs, then serve immediately.



Fresh Salsa

Recipe by Christin Goetz

Ingredients

3 vine-ripe tomatoes, diced
1 beefsteak tomato, diced
1/2-bunch green onions, diced
2 jalapeños, diced
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 T chopped fresh cilantro
1 T white vinegar
2 t lime juice
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

Mix all ingredients together and refrigerate overnight.

Tomato Salad

Recipe by the Culinary Team Nebraska from the
Institute of the Culinary Arts, MCC

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup tomato concasse
- 1 1/2 ounces extra virgin olive oil
- 1 t fresh thyme leaves
- 1 t shallot, finely minced
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. In a small metal bowl, combine all the ingredients and mix until well incorporated.
2. Adjust seasoning if necessary.



SAUCES, PUREES AND STUFFING

Sauce Supreme

Recipe by the Culinary Team Nebraska from the
Institute of the Culinary Arts, MCC

Ingredients

- 2 ounces all purpose flour
- 2 ounces butter
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 2 ounces mushroom essence
- 2 ounces cream
- 2 ounces creme fraiche
- salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Directions

1. In a small saucepan over medium high heat, melt butter till it foams.
2. Stir in flour and cook until a blonde roux is achieved.
3. Whisk in cold chicken stock and bring to a simmer, add mushroom essence and continue simmering for twenty minutes, skimming as needed.
4. Whisk in creme fraiche and creme, season and bring back to a simmer.
5. After simmer is achieved, strain through a chinois, season again and keep in an insulated container until service.

Truffled White Bean Purée

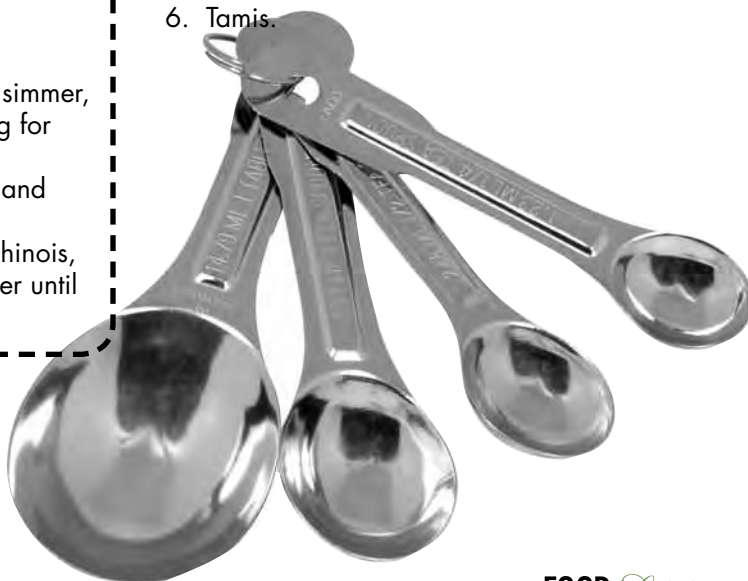
Recipe by the Culinary Team Nebraska from the
Institute of the Culinary Arts, MCC

Ingredients

- 1/2 C cannellini beans
- 3 oz chicken glaze
- 2 oz cream
- 1 T white truffle oil

Directions

1. Combine beans and chicken glaze in a small pot.
2. Place in 450F oven for 30 minutes.
3. Remove from oven and place beans in saute pan.
4. Add cream and simmer over medium-high heat until reduced by half.
5. Puree in narrow container and add truffle oil.
6. Tapis.



DESSERTS



Chestnut & Herb Stuffing

Recipe by the Culinary Team Nebraska from the Institute of the Culinary Arts, MCC

Ingredients

- 3 ounces mirepoix, brunoise
- 1 t rosemary, chopped
- 1 t thyme, picked
- 3 leaves sage, chiffonade
- 2 each garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 2 ounces white wine
- 1 each chicken thigh, boneless and skinless
- 1 each chicken heart and gizzard
- 3 ounces chestnuts, roasted
- 2 ounce croissant, day old
- 2 T butter, softened
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. In a small saute pan over medium high heat, sweat the mirepoix and garlic in the butter until translucent.
2. Deglaze with the white wine and toss in herbs. Chill.
3. Using a medium die on a table top grinder, grind thigh, gizzard, heart, chestnuts and croissant.
4. Mix in sauteed mixture by hand, season. Chill.
5. Reserve until needed.



Chocolate Soufflé

Recipe by the Culinary Team Nebraska from the Institute of the Culinary Arts, MCC

Ingredients

- 2 each egg yolks
- 1/2 oz Frangelico
- 2 oz dark chocolate
- 4 each egg whites
- 1 1/2 oz sugar
- 1/4 oz lemon, juiced
- salt to taste

Directions

1. Melt chocolate to a temperature of 116F over double boiler.
2. Meanwhile, whip egg whites to soft peaks.
3. Whisk yolks, then add to the chocolate, stir in the Frangelico.
4. To the egg whites add sugar, salt and lemon juice. Continue whisking until medium-stiff peaks.
5. Lighten the chocolate base with 1/4 of egg whites, fold in remaining whites in three incorporations.
6. Pour mixture into prepared souffle dishes, smooth tops, clean edges and bake and 375F for 12 minutes or until souffles full raise.
7. Dust with powdered sugar and coco powder, serve immediately.



Shortbread

Recipe by the Culinary Team Nebraska from the Institute of the Culinary Arts, MCC

Ingredients

- 4 oz butter
- 1/4 C brown sugar
- 1 C AP flour (plus 2 T for dusting)

Directions

1. Cream butter and sugar
2. Add flour
3. Roll out to 1/4 inch thick and cut into small circles
4. Bake at 450F until golden brown
5. Remove from baking sheet and set aside



(with a view)
Dinner **^** is served.



Find out what Press Club members enjoy, try our **ONE NIGHT STAND** dining privilege, call **345-8008** and make your lunch or dinner reservation today. To learn more about the Press Club and our Reception or event capabilities, call us today or visit our Web site at: www.omahapressclub.org



OMAHA PRESS CLUB



Fresh/Local

by Christin Goetz

photo by J. Michael McBride

“You’d think that growing up in the middle of farmland my family would have unlimited access to fresh fruits and vegetables, but it’s not so.”

I went to a documentary recently called “Food Fight.” It’s a film about the U.S. food market and how we Americans have moved away from eating fresh and local produce. The film appealed to me because my dad is a farmer in Kansas. He works from dawn until dusk to farm 1,200 acres of land in addition to running a feedlot and side business. It amazes me that he’s such a large producer of food, yet my family is unable to eat what he produces. The corn, wheat and soybeans are not for immediate consumption but rather for feeding the cattle he raises and for the production of potato chips, cereal and ethanol gas. And in my family’s rural community, in the heart of the agriculture belt, my mom buys almost all of her produce from Wal-Mart. You’d think that growing up in the middle of farmland my family would have unlimited access to fresh fruits and vegetables, but it’s not so. In fact, I have better access to fresh produce through the farmers’ markets in Omaha than my parents do in Western Kansas.

“Food Fight” examines how government regulations have led to an agricultural system that’s controlled more by politics than by public health and sustainability. It’s a system that’s built on crops that can be processed into hundreds and hundreds of food products rather than be eaten fresh from the field.

While at the documentary, I was surprised to see every seat filled in one of the theaters at Film Streams. I was even more surprised during the Q & A session afterward (thanks to Film Streams and Alegent Health who sponsored the screening, and for allowing us to interact with the producer) when a dozen or so people stood up to talk about what they’re contributing to Omaha’s local food movement, people like Libby Broekemeier from the Nebraska Food Cooperative and Elle Lien, proprietor of Clean Plate, a farm-to-table whole food restaurant that opens in the Empty Room this August. I had no idea that we had so many options for buying fresh, local and even organic food right here in Omaha.

What also surprised me was the fact that I didn’t know that this counterculture existed and I like to consider myself a healthy eater.

I had never thought about the fact that I am more tempted to buy packaged goods like cookies and chips when I go to the store than I am to buy tomatoes and spinach. Where did I get this idea that it’s okay for me to fill my body with food that is processed full of sodium, sugar and preservatives? Well, the big food marketers have become really good at selling their products. Read articles like MSN’s “The Worst Packaged Food Lies” and you’ll be disgusted to see how tricky marketers can be with their promises on food packaging.

In his book “In Defense of Food,” author Michael Pollen explains that we have also been tricked into boiling our diets down to nutrients—carbohydrates, protein, etc.—rather than enjoying the taste and communal experience that humans were meant to enjoy while consuming food. Our diets are built around convenience and nutrient-packed convenient foods rather than simple, fresh meals that can be created on our own. We have become so confused and think that we’re too busy to think for ourselves anymore when it comes to planning for and preparing a meal.

“We have so many food options that come in fast, easy and attractive packaging that our food culture has centered around processed foods with little to no nutritional value.”

If you need proof that we don’t know how to eat, take a look around. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Colorado had the lowest obesity prevalence rate in the country in 2008. It was the only state with an obesity rate less than 20%. The obesity rate in Nebraska was 26.6%. That’s more than a quarter of our state’s population.

We have so many food options that come in fast, easy and attractive packaging that our food culture has centered around processed foods with little to no nutritional value: fast food patties, potato chips, fried chicken tenders, crackers, cookies, and breakfast sandwiches. Our other options? Processed foods with nutrients added to make them “healthier,” and then lastly real food that’s not processed or fortified. It’s hard to believe how easy it is to go a day or two or more without eating one piece of fresh fruit. We

spend more time in the packaged goods section of the store (located conveniently right in the center of most grocery stores) than the fresh produce area.

According to the director of "Food Fight," Chris Taylor, two generations ago our grandparents had access to produce that was grown locally for the whole community and meals were a time to sit and relax, to enjoy what you were eating. Now our communities are large enough that a complicated agricultural system has been created to provide enough produce for everyone, and we demand quick options. That's where the government has helped: to provide large quantities of food for its citizens. The problem with this is that food gets shipped across states, countries and oceans and therefore is rarely eaten fresh. The production methods are more about quantity and preservation for the long journey than quality, which leads to crops that are doused in herbicides and pesticides in order to produce higher yields, while production methods guarantee less spoilage. But never does anyone consider the taste, the real taste sans sugars, salts and preservatives.

"I buy produce that's available and then craft meals around those items."

Oh, the taste of a freshly picked fruit, a tomato that's lusciously red and juicy. It's soft, not hard. And the inner flesh is watery and sweet rather than bland and porous. The insides drip out profusely when you cut into it. Do you know what that tastes like? Or how about those fresh strawberries that you can find in June? They are teeny little things but they pack more sweetness than five oversized, picked-before-ripe strawberries you can buy all year at the grocery store.

During the Q & A session I learned that although it seems to be an overwhelming task to incorporate fresh and local produce into my diet, I have many options here in Omaha. With a small amount of effort I am now able to purchase and eat fresh and local fruits and vegetables. In fact, I rarely visit the processed foods aisle of the grocery store anymore. And I've found that using fresh and local produce makes my meal planning much easier because there are fewer options. I mean, I can't get peaches in June, but I can get lettuce. So I buy the produce that's available and then craft meals around those items.

If you're interested in supporting the local food movement here in Omaha, you have a number of options. Here are some of them:

Nebraska Food Cooperative

Join the Nebraska Food Co-op to learn about the local food community and shop online for produce from local farms.

Buy Fresh, Buy Local

Visit BuyLocalNebraska.org for a comprehensive list of farmers' markets, local farmers, recipes and tips for supporting the local food movement in Omaha and the surrounding communities.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Visit LocalHarvest.org for a list of small farm CSAs. Purchase shares in a CSA to receive two to four servings of fresh produce delivered to your family every week. Enjoy fresh produce while you help finance the farmer's operation.

Farmers' Markets

Visit a farmers' market to meet local farmers and purchase fresh produce right after it's picked. Most run mornings from May to October.

Bancroft Street Farmers' Market: 2702 S. 10th St. (Sundays)

Blair Farmers' Market: 103 S. 12th St. (Wednesday and Saturdays)

Omaha Farmers' Market: 11th and Jackson (Saturdays)

Tomato Tomato Indoor Farmers' Market: 156th and Center (daily, year-round)

Village Pointe Farmers' Market: 168th and West Dodge Road (Saturdays)

Restaurants

Support the chefs who stimulate our local economy and support local food producers by visiting these restaurants who strive to serve fresh and local produce.

Clean Plate

The Boiler Room

Institute for the Culinary Arts Sage Bistro—Metro Community College Fort Omaha Campus

Community Gardens

Help teach your children how to grow their own food by participating in a community garden. You can also enjoy the fruits of your labor as the produce you grow begins to ripen.

Gifford Park Community Garden

Eastern Nebraska's Big Garden

School Programs

Teaching our children how to grow their own food is vital. And showing them the health benefits and taste of fresh and local produce will be imperative to their future. Support these programs in some of our Omaha schools.

Duschenne local food club

Farm to School program



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The Worth of a Recipe

by Brian O'Malley

A recipe is defined as a set of directions accompanied by a list of ingredients that describe how to prepare something.

Great cooks consider themselves great because they have a deep repertoire of recipes they have either created or mastered. Many professional chefs and accomplished home cooks define what they know by the tome of recipes they have executed. I am not among them. I consider my ability in reference to the skills I have mastered and the ingredients I understand. The difference between the two may be subtle or simply semantic, but from a confidence perspective it is huge. If you can identify the different skills required to accomplish any given recipe and you understand the ingredients in that recipe, then you can grow immensely as a cook from executing that recipe.

“Hidden inside every recipe is a doorway that leads to a vast wealth of culinary knowledge. Identifying, opening and walking through that doorway are the keys.”

To learn how to make mayonnaise and then consider that you have simply put the recipe for mayonnaise into your repertoire would be shameful. It may be that the recipe did not go far enough to share insight into ingredients or techniques, or that you, the recipe executor, did not look deeper into the recipe's assertions.

I believe in recipes as a way to learn how to cook. I believe that hidden inside every recipe is a doorway that leads to a vast wealth of culinary knowledge. Identifying, opening and walking through that doorway are the keys. With a bit of guidance and bravado, every endeavor in the kitchen led by a recipe can convert itself into a lesson of cookery. If we learn each time we cook, then we will soon close our recipe books and begin to play our own beautiful music on the stove. In culinary school, we teach technique first, then ingredients, and then recipes. If we first learn the methods, then we will soon be able to apply them to a variety of scenarios.

“With mastery of a few techniques, the number of dishes that you are able to deliver to the dinner table is exponentially larger than if you execute a recipe without finding its deeper significance.”

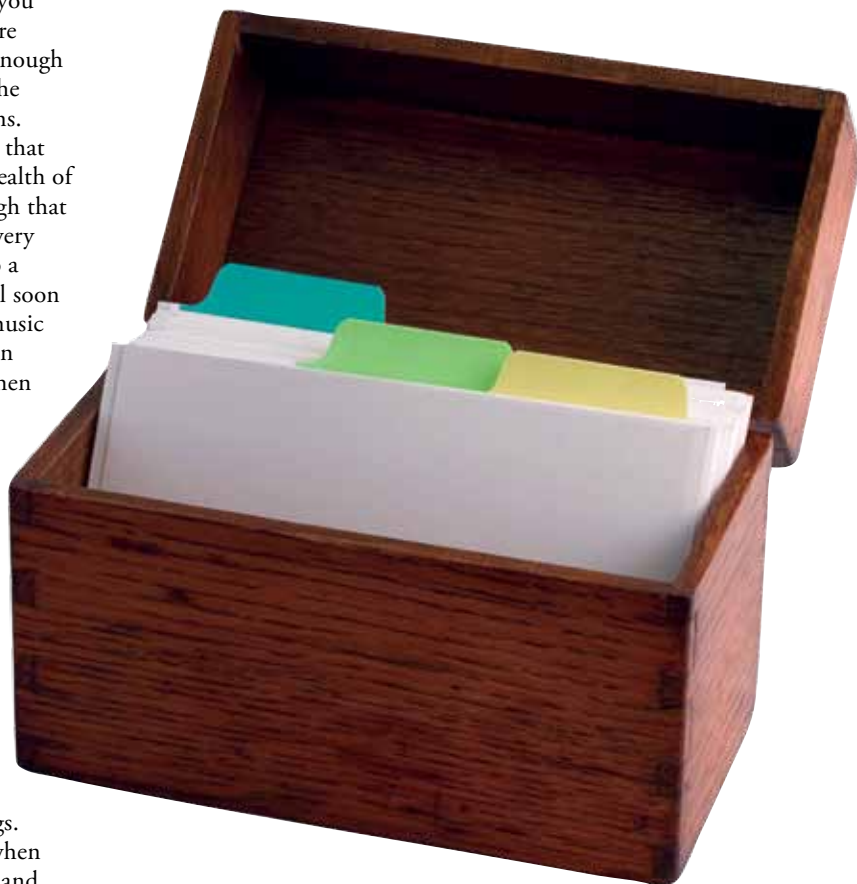
It's like learning to play an instrument. You first learn the techniques of hand positioning, reading music and keeping time. Then, and only then, do you learn to play songs. Occasionally, if you badger your instructor enough as I did when I was learning piano, you get to go ahead before you should, and

play something cool—like Styx. In the food world this is necessary. Most often when we are cooking we are not in it for the art of the endeavor. We are in it for the calories. We are hungry, our family is hungry, and we want to eat. If we spend time cooking, we need to make sure that we are learning; even if we are simply following a recipe.

Finding a great recipe is hard.

Often the recipes available to us online or in popular cookbooks are either too simple, too vague or both. When starting out on a culinary journey, it is important to get great advice. I highly recommend Alton Brown's book “I'm Just Here for the Food.” He is a marvelous teacher focused on technique and ingredients rather than on the final dish. This focus may make for a few boring meals, but once you have mastered the standard breading procedure or how to blanch and shock vegetables, you will be trained to tackle many more culinary challenges.

This idea of the worth of technique and ingredients as opposed to trying to build a repertoire of recipes may seem more daunting, but the opposite is true. With mastery of a few techniques, the number of dishes that you are able to deliver to the dinner table is exponentially larger than if you execute a recipe without finding its deeper significance.





"I believe it is a great skill to carefully and thoroughly construct a recipe so that others may execute the craft of cookery more effectively."

Great recipes:

- Are complete—all ingredients and all steps are listed
- Are accurate—oven temperatures are appropriate, as are pan sizes, ingredient quantities, order of execution, etc.
- Are effective—they give appropriate indicators of doneness, share inside information from the expert that is writing them, etc.

Important Considerations for the Recipe Writer:

Indicators of Doneness

An "indicator of doneness" is the description used in an instruction that notifies the recipe executor when the given step is completed. Many recipes use related but inaccurate measures for identifying this moment. Take a recipe for making meringue. Sometime during the execution of that recipe must whip egg whites. The instructions simply tell you to beat them for five-to-seven minutes. There would be no way of telling if you had reached the appropriate volume for your foam.

A better instruction for whipping egg whites would include some visual or measurable description of the texture, such as "until doubled by volume" or "until the small dollop remaining on your whisk when removed from the foam barely falls over when held upright." The best way to supply an indicator of doneness may be an actual visual representation—a picture or diagram perhaps.

Parallel Structure

Each ingredient in the list and each instruction should be written so that it mimics the others. This allows the reader to make connections between what the writer intended in one place of the recipe to another. In addition, if you are compiling a collection of recipes, maintaining a parallel structure and style amongst each recipe will further aid comprehension.

Pocket Recipes

A pocket recipe is a recipe that needs to be accomplished in order to accomplish another recipe—a roasted garlic salad dressing for example. The ingredient list for the dressing should call for roasted garlic and then include a separate recipe defining how to prepare the roasted garlic. In general, I try to keep the recipe for any ingredient's preparation which requires more than one simple step of cookery or knife work included as a separate recipe. I am happy to call for cooked rice and julienne carrots in an ingredient list, but I would avoid listing the ingredients and recipe for mayonnaise within the recipe for buttermilk ranch dressing.

Simplicity

Stories about techniques and ingredients are wonderful, but they may cloud the effectiveness of the recipe. Keeping them out of the ingredient list or instruction section is a good idea. If you have an essential story to tell about the recipe, do so in a separate section.

Also, our minds only process so much new information at once. Many recipes give one instruction that could easily be, and probably should be, broken into two or three different steps. Another common pitfall is spending too much space, or the wrong space, extolling ancillary issues within the framework of a recipe, such as explaining myriad substitution possibilities in the ingredient list, describing how to scale the recipe effectively in the yield section, or waxing on about the health benefits of a cooking method in the instructions section. Keep those notes in the story section of the recipe.

I DO LOVE RECIPES.

I love food and cooking, and recipes are technical descriptions of just that. I can spend hours poring through recipes from historical cookbooks. There is a special relationship all cooks have with the secrets explained in the great works of Julia Child, Thomas Keller, Auguste Escoffier and their peers. I am no exception. I believe it is a great skill to carefully and thoroughly construct a recipe so that others may execute the craft of cookery more effectively. It is a skill worthy of the time and money we spend devouring countless new cookbooks published each year. (Amazon.com reports that in the last 90 days, there have been almost 5,000 books released with food and cooking as the subject matter.)

If we read cookbooks and carry them into the kitchen with us, that would be a revolution, a move into the kitchen sparked by our intellectual selves. A move back to the stove. A move so needed in this time of over-consumption and hyper-convenience. A move celebrated by the great Anthelme Brillat-Savarin when he penned, "The discovery of a new dish does more for human happiness than the discovery of a new star."

Write a recipe. Share it with someone you love. Help them discover a new star.

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photo by J. Michael McBride

Vivace Review:

Putting a New Menu to the Test by Erik Totten

For Food & Spirits Magazine's quarterly round-table review we hit Vivace located in the Old Market (1108 Howard St.). Having been around for nearly 15 years, Vivace recently went through a revamping of their menu. Still doing contemporary Italian cuisine, Vivace wants to focus more on fresh and local ingredients while emphasizing the contemporary aspect of their food. After much development, Neapolitan, hand-tossed pizza is also on the new menu and has been rumored to be some of the best in town. Paninis, homemade pastas and small plates, or tapas, also appear on the new menu.

We followed the same general format for the review as in previous issues; Rather than just one reviewer, we sent five different people,

representing different levels of the culinary food chain (and just downright interesting people), to give us their take in a round-table sort of discussion. We did this because, while we also wanted the high-end and very-knowledgeable food consumer to be represented, we wanted the more average or general eater to have a place at the table and in an atmosphere that was close to the same way we all go out to eat with friends and family. Our hope is that the different perspectives provide a more-rounded review of the experience while also giving you, the reader, a chance to see what someone who might be similar in their tastes said about their meal.

We notified the restaurant what night would be coming and allowed the restaurant to order our meal. Scores were given in

presentation, flavor and an overall score on a scale of one to ten (with ten being the highest). The diners were also asked to tell us a little about themselves and where they are coming from with food. With that, here are your reviewers...

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, Father of two, and Muse Extraordinaire for Sage student bistro O'Malley spreads his passion for local and sustainable cuisine liberally throughout the community.

Derek (aka Sneks@GastronomicFightClub.com): Derek was a picky eater as a kid. Oddly, he always liked to cook and fancied himself a chef, but his list of acceptable ingredients was fairly short. Meeting the woman he would marry, and moving to California changed all of that. His wife was a budding foodie when he met her and they explored the nooks and crannies of the food world together. Doing so forced him to learn to appreciate all tastes and textures regardless of his initial impression. He's gone from a person who dislikes fish so much he wouldn't even eat a fish stick to a person who thinks there is no better way to eat fish than a gleaming plate of sashimi. Because food for Derek is about experiencing new things, he's been drawn primarily to fine dining and regional cuisines. Both have great potential for challenging him with dishes he never would have conceived on his own. As for that kid who aspired to be a chef, he's contentedly abandoned that dream. He still cooks occasionally, though not nearly as often as he'd like - but when he does cook, he cooks with reckless abandon.

Sarah Benck: Born and raised in Omaha, Neb., Sarah is a songwriter/musician, and currently plays in Sarah Benck and the Robbers. Growing up, her annual birthday dinner was her mom's Swedish meatballs. One of her best dishes to prepare is a spicy spaghetti sauce, with veggies and spicy turkey sausage, stuffed with red peppers, and homemade wheat bread. Like sounds in music, there are limitless combinations of flavors to cook with, and she enjoys the creative process. When her music takes her to other cities, her budget is usually minimal, and the diet consists mainly of gas station snacks or fast food (two of her least favorite things). Her recent favorite is in Sheboygan, WI, at Jalisco's. She had the Avocado Burrito, stuffed with fresh ingredients and sealed with toasted perfection. Her local favorites are Brother Sebastian's, Jaipur, and El Aguila.

Krista O'Malley: After working for a wedding photographer in Chicago, Krista O'Malley was inspired to become an event planner. She pulled up stakes and headed to the New England Culinary Institute. There, she studied Culinary Arts in addition to Food and Beverage Management. Krista has been happily planning events ever since. She and her husband, chef Brian O'Malley, have been busy raising their two girls, Marin and Finley, and eating voraciously throughout Omaha.

Kelly Schumacher: Kelly learned to cook by watching her grandma and parents, and spent many hours canning, freezing and preserving produce from the family's garden. She loves to cook traditional meals and prefers her meals au naturel without too much spice or enhancement. She'll occasionally try her hand at something new and really likes to try new things while out and about in Omaha. With her background in fresh traditional food, Kelly is enthusiastic about trends towards more fresh and natural foods and has been enjoying the fruits of her garden in Omaha.

APPETIZERS

1 Crab Cakes \$10.95

Seared and served with pepperonata and aioli

Combined Average Presentation Score: 7.2

Combined Average Flavor Score: 8.8

Combined Average Overall Score: 8.6

SELECTED COMMENTS

Kelly: Presentation was very nice and colorful. It looked very appetizing. Surprisingly spicy. Typically I don't order crab cakes, but these were good.

Sarah: This was delicious! In the past when I order crab cakes they are dry and cake-like. I loved that it was creamy and smooth. This had a kick. A bit of spice is good.

Krista: To begin, the plate was very busy. The cake itself was not overworked which was good. I am missing something: salt. It was very spicy. Could be fantastic with more salt.

Derek: This was too spicy for me.



photo by J. Michael McBride

2 Goat Bread \$4.50

Goat cheese and marinara baked and served with crispy ciabatta bread.

Combined Average Presentation Score: 6.4

Combined Average Flavor Score: 7.8

Combined Average Overall Score: 7.4

SELECTED COMMENTS

Kelly: I love goat cheese. Simple and yummy, can't grow with this one.

Sarah: Considering the simple ingredients, it tasted as I would expect. I like the temperature. The cheese was smooth and creamy. Presentation was classic but not extremely inventive.

Krista: I found this too cool in temperature, a little heavy on goat cheese flavor, and the chips should be on the same plate.

Brian: A very well thought out dish. I love hot goat cheese and this was on its way to burning my mouth. Nice peppery finish.

Derek: Just really good. Well balanced.



3 Dates \$6.95

Dates stuffed with marscapone cheese and Marcona almonds, wrapped in coppa ham.

Combined Average Presentation Score: 7.2

Combined Average Flavor Score: 8.8

Combined Average Overall Score: 8.6

SELECTED COMMENTS

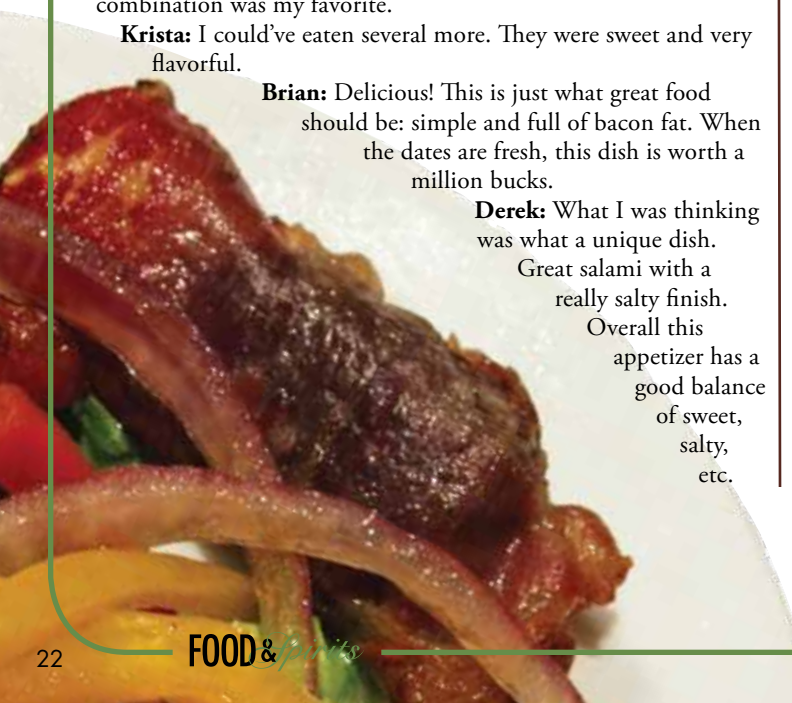
Kelly: I love these. Sweet and hearty, yummy. The nutty center was a welcome surprise.

Sarah: Wow, delicious! They say [bacon] ham makes everything better. The almonds were creamy but still had crunch. This flavor combination was my favorite.

Krista: I could've eaten several more. They were sweet and very flavorful.

Brian: Delicious! This is just what great food should be: simple and full of bacon fat. When the dates are fresh, this dish is worth a million bucks.

Derek: What I was thinking was what a unique dish. Great salami with a really salty finish. Overall this appetizer has a good balance of sweet, salty, etc.



ENTREÉS

4 Sausage Pizza \$11.95

Neapolitan style pizza with homemade Italian sausage with caramelized fennel and roasted mushrooms.

Combined Average Presentation Score: 8.5

Combined Average Flavor Score: 9.17

Combined Average Overall Score: 8.84

SELECTED COMMENTS

Krista: Being a girl from Chicago, this sausage pizza was fabulous. The sausage is so flavorful and delicious. Spot on, the crust is light and crispy. There was a little too much basil on this.

Brian: Wow! I think this is one of the top five pizzas of all time. But next time, hold the basil.

Derek: That sausage packs a punch. Nice and spicy Italian seasonings. This style is more balanced than the veggie pizza. Either way, wow!



5 Steak Panini \$9.95

Grilled steak served open-face, smothered with sautéed mushrooms, red peppers, onions and Muenster cheese, served with smoked black pepper aioli.

Combined Average Presentation Score: 8.5

Combined Average Flavor Score: 9.17

Combined Average Overall Score: 8.84

SELECTED COMMENTS

Kelly: I love steak sandwiches, and this one smells great! The steak is very tender and seasoned perfectly. The sweet potato fries that accompany this dish are much tastier than French fries. My favorite so far!

Sarah: This steak was so tender, cooked and seasoned perfectly. The onions and peppers were not mushy or limp, just to the desirable consistency. I like the combination of sweet potato and potato fries.

Krista: The components were well balanced making a great sandwich. Love the sweet potato fries and the dipping sauce was amazing!

Brian: The flavor of the steak was very nice. I felt that the panini needed to be more crusty.

Derek: Everyone has this on their menu, so nothing very surprising. The onions and peppers made it tough to eat.



photos by J. Michael McBride

6 Design Your Own Pasta \$12.95

Gorgonzola sauce (red peppers, mushrooms, spinach, red onions, gorgonzola cheese and Alfredo sauce) with sausage and fettuccini.

Combined Average Presentation Score: 7.2

Combined Average Flavor Score: 7.8

Combined Average Overall Score: 7.6

SELECTED COMMENTS

Kelly: The gorgonzola is great; it really enhances the taste of the sauce. The sausage is a nice addition, but I would've preferred just vegetables.

Sarah: This sauce is very creamy and smooth, quite rich. The vegetables were just right, not too crunchy and not overdone. This is my top choice of the four pasta dishes selected.

Krista: The fresh pasta is very nice. The sauce needs to adhere to the pasta better but has a good flavor. I enjoyed the sausage and gorgonzola sprinkles.

Brian: Overall flavor is fantastic. This sausage is amazing. The pasta is a touch overdone though.

Derek: I would tire of the flavor halfway through the dish. Good, yet basic.

DESSERT

7 Chocolate Mousse \$6.00

Chocolate mousse on a toffee almond crust, served in a pool of warm toffee sauce.

Combined Average Presentation Score: 7.5

Combined Average Flavor Score: 8.0

Combined Average Overall Score: 7.7

SELECTED COMMENTS

Kelly: First of all, this is a huge portion. Holy cow! The chocolate is so rich. No way would I be able to eat all this, but it's good, so share with a friend.

Sarah: Wow, so smooth, rich and creamy. I want to take a nap covered in blankets made of that cake.

Krista: This has a great crust with a nice combination between chocolate mousse and toffee. A dessert too large for one person. Is it humanly possible to eat a whole piece?



A Verbal Herbal

by Ann Summers

Whether you pronounce “herbs” with a silent H like normal people or make a point of pronouncing it like Martha Stewart, herbs are one of the good things cooks everywhere agree are indispensable. In a way, they are the ultimate local food because you can grow basil in just about any sunny spot, indoors or out. And if you spill flat leaf parsley seeds on just about anything except bare tile, they will come up whether you like it or not. Anyone with a border or window box can jam a mint or marjoram plant into it and expect results.

Possibly people don't grow or buy fresh herbs because of that one recipe they tried which demanded “fresh and no substitutes,” and they bought one of those awful 3-by-2 inch packets of wilted thyme priced at a shameless \$7.50, and what they didn't use quickly turned black. Well weep no more, and wonder not, for as John Donne said,

“Any herb out there goes with roasted meat, most herbs go with fish, and after that, it gets trickier.”

“here in this world are produced to us all herbs and fruits, all that is necessary for the soul to feed upon.” And there is nothing so good for the soul as waking up your palate with some fresh greenery that makes everything taste better. Get thee hence to the farmer's market or your local co-op where there are fresh herbs aplenty.

But hold on! Herbs can be overpowering. Indeed, the '80s saw such over-herbed horrors as: too many roulades (meat stuffed with herbs and things); poor roasted chickens beset with enough herbage to choke a horse; herb “confit” (which is not, properly speaking, a confit); and purées of every sort to overload and offend the senses. You must know what your herbs are all about, and for that you need an herb chart. Here is a copy of an old one I bought years ago, and it kills me because nobody even makes cream soup anymore, but

you should get the general idea. There are further guidelines you can go by:



Any herb out there goes with roasted meat, most herbs go with fish, and after that, it gets trickier. But it's not too tricky, because you just need to taste them before you use them, then smell them, and understand how they will cook down.

Rosemary is probably one of the best loved yet most reviled herbs because it has been both overused and underappreciated. Its flavor is deep, strong and pine-like, and it is the very best buddy of roast chicken, beef and pork. It can hold up under high heat and match the strong flavors of the grill or oven-browning, but it can also totally overpower what you are serving, so gently with the rosemary.

Sage falls into the same meaty category, and is so stunning with pork that you will wonder why pigs are not born with it under their skins. Nothing is nicer to a bit of lean pork than some white wine, shallots and mushrooms with sage, although nicer grassfed primo pork might not need as much herbal flair.

Sage also goes well with pasta. Northern Italians eat their fresh pasta with nothing other than butter and sage. Personally, butter and sage aren't enough for me, so I add a little garlic, cream and cognac, and then I call it good. Also, sage's strong flavors play well with beef, and it has an odd affinity for turkey, game or chicken based bread stuffing and cornbread dressing. And no self-respecting southerner would think to make dressing without rubbed sage. Finally, mind the thick woody bits and save them for the compost heap, and remember that those fuzzy little leaves pack one heck of an impact.

“Sage's strong flavors play well with beef, and it has an odd affinity for turkey, game or chicken based bread stuffing and cornbread dressing.”

Thyme is another meat helper, but unlike rosemary and sage, it is lovely in delicate sauces and superb with fish. Almost every soup stock known to man contains a sprig of thyme, and its teeny mouse ear leaves have plenty of flavor. Thyme is also a shrub and its branches can get woody, so strip the leaves off before chopping. As an alternative, you can cook with the whole sprig and fish out the woody stem from your soup or sauce before serving. If you are desperate to impress people, you can use the stems as smoking wood on your grill, or even do something unusual like soak them in water and pierce kabobs with them. You'll need a lot of thyme plant for that, though, and an excess of personality as well. I would rather mix the thyme into my marinade than go all “Three Musketeers” on my scallops.

Let's move on to the less woody, juicier herbs with higher water content in their leaves and much milder and less restrictive flavor. For the most part, these are members of the mint family, which have a square stem in their less developed and greener parts. Mint family herbs are roughly analogous to mint, but we in the Western Hemisphere are not accustomed to spearmint and peppermint being used in anything other than sweets.

Mints have great depth and versatility, but they come with the same warning as other herbs: don't overdo!

"Mints have great depth and versatility, but they come with the same warning as other herbs: don't overdo!"

Nothing is sadder than a chicken breast loaded with gobs of soggy basil cooked to the point of bitter lime rind destruction. These minty herbs deserve to be held out until the end of cooking for better flavor unless you are mincing them into a marinade for a fast poach, brown or grill. Fresh basil is the only thing for fresh summer salads of mozzarella and tomato, and I love it with veggie salsa, cold bean salads and on rustic homemade pizza. Basil is also good with fish, especially fish whole roasted on the grill.

Marjoram and its close cousin oregano are delightful with chicken, venison and bison. Where you want a wallop, use oregano (common in pizza or spicy meat sauces), and where you want a light whack, use marjoram. Mints will grow anywhere, and overgrow anywhere, too. While basil will confine itself to its planted bed, it can reseed wildly. All the others spread by their roots and with enough light and space will take over your entire yard, so pot them to be safe. Marjoram and oregano are similar in that they will turn bitter and brown if overcooked. My favorite thing for marjoram is lemon biscotti, and oregano is super in cheese breads.

Mint is a well-known lamb enhancer in the middle east, and there is almost nothing nicer than a leg of lamb roasted or grilled with a chopped fresh mint, garlic, lemon juice and olive oil marinade. Please, please save that hideous green jelly for making green peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and keep it away from the lamb. Use your mint and stew meat cuts of lamb for a Moroccan tagine (braise) that you will love enough to make again and again.

"Dill and its close relative fennel are nice with any fish, particularly salmon, and dill is great in a wrap with diced cooked potato, cucumber, sour cream and caviar."

Parsley is good in nearly anything. It adds a fresh green flavor to any soup, but it goes very well with root vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, parsnips or beets, as well as squashes such as zucchinis, yellow crooknecks, patty pans and eggplants. Dill is also a slightly underappreciated herb that can flavor more than pickles. Like parsley, dill is easy to grow and both are nice in the garden since they attract black swallowtail butterflies. Don't squish the caterpillars, though, and plant just enough for you and them.

Dill and its close relative fennel are nice with any fish, particularly salmon, and dill is great in a wrap with diced cooked potato, cucumber, sour cream and caviar. Even kids love that wrap. Dill is also used in veal and lamb meatballs and is ubiquitous in yogurt sauces. Nothing says summers like a cold dill yogurt sauce over some grilled veggies and fish. And don't forget to garnish your Vichyssoise with dill!

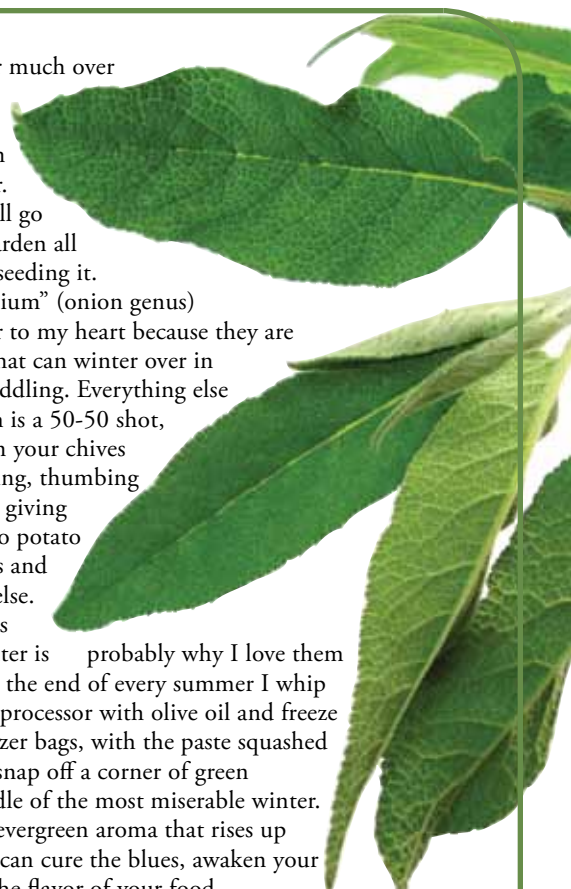
Cilantro and tarragon are two special herbs that take some care. Of course, rules are made to be broken, and if it tastes good to you, go for it. Tarragon is famous in French egg and butter sauces with fresh veggies and chicken. While I despise tarragon, I love cilantro, which many people I know can't stand. I once saw a chef stuff a whole beef tenderloin with cilantro and garlic and grill the thing, and it opened my eyes to the beef-cilantro combo.

Your fresh, out-of-the-garden pico de gallo (unlike salsa which is cooked) cannot do diddly squat without fresh cilantro. It won't

keep in the fridge for much over a few days, even if you cut it like fresh flowers and stick it in a plastic cup of water. However, cilantro will go gangbusters in the garden all summer if you keep seeding it.

Chives are the "Allium" (onion genus) relatives that are near to my heart because they are the only sure thing that can winter over in Nebraska without coddling. Everything else besides the marjoram is a 50-50 shot, but you can count on your chives coming up every spring, thumbing their noses at winter, giving you great additions to potato dishes, cold fish, eggs and just about anything else.

Because fresh herbs signal the end of winter is probably why I love them so much, and why at the end of every summer I whip them up in the food processor with olive oil and freeze them in separate freezer bags, with the paste squashed flat enough so I can snap off a corner of green goodness in the middle of the most miserable winter. That fresh, fruity or evergreen aroma that rises up from a steaming pot can cure the blues, awaken your senses and enhance the flavor of your food.



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WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?



by Brian Smith

photo by J. Michael McBride

Organic, local, biodynamic, ethical, free range, natural, grassfed, and GMO free.

Confused? You should be. With so many food buzzwords, so many talking heads in the media using them, and a new “Super Cure Everything Diet” coming out seemingly every six months, it’s enough to make you feel like the Food Pyramid fell on your head.

And it doesn’t help that the multinational food conglomerates want to capitalize on the specialty food craze. In May 2009, a snack chip company launched an ad campaign claiming its potato chips were “local,” all 2 billion pounds of them, which came from 27 different states. The company’s rationale was that the potatoes were grown near the processing plants where they were sliced, fried and put into bags and shipped all over the country. The lesson is that if there’s money to be made by using certain food buzzwords, you can be sure a few fibs will be told.

“If there’s money to be made by using certain food buzzwords, you can be sure a few fibs will be told.”

Originally, these food buzzwords developed from grassroots movements outside of the mainstream food system. These grassroots movements established standards to help concerned consumers more easily find and buy food they could feel good about eating. “Organic,” for instance, is a word which sprouted from the desire to avoid the chemical sprays which entered agriculture in the early 1900s.

Organic agriculture was an underground movement until the 1970s, and considered little more than a fad until the late 1990s. With the explosive growth of Whole Foods and an increasing interest in health and nutrition, major food companies started buying organic food companies and promoting them zealously. Today, organic food is mainstream. Everyone has heard of it, and there’s probably even something organic for purchase in your favorite gas station.

But to the purists, “organic” doesn’t mean now what it used to mean in the 1970s. When the big players like the Federal Government and Big Business started to get involved, they started to change what it meant to be “organic” and issued regulations that could be manipulated so that it was easy to follow the letter of the law, but not necessarily its spirit.

When the USDA wrote the first draft of national organic

“When the USDA wrote the first draft of national organic regulations, they allowed the use of sewage sludge as fertilizer.”

regulations, they allowed the use of sewage sludge as fertilizer. Using sewage sludge as fertilizer is a common practice in non-organic agribusiness, but organic supporters freaked out. Can you imagine using the gunk in your sewer system on your food, and then calling it organic?

The USDA received a record amount of negative feedback from the public, so it revised its earlier decision. But still, the original organic movement feels cheated by a lot of the lobbying that happened. It’s like a really cool band that signed on with a major record label and was never as good as they used to be after that. It kind of makes you want to throw away the t-shirt.

Regardless of these frustrations with the USDA, hopefully the following definitions of these food buzzwords are in plain English we can all understand.

Organic

Food produced without the use of manmade chemicals, particularly those made from petroleum. Food may not contain any GMOs (genetically modified organisms).

Local

Food produced in a location common to the grower and the eater, usually within a radius of 25-100 miles.

Biodynamic

Food produced under guidelines established in the 1920s by Rudolf Steiner of Austria. Major considerations are given to the relationship of the farm to the cosmos, using a philosophy based on movements of the moon and constellations. Fertilizers are produced on the farm by composting animal manure and site-grown plants.

Ethical

Food produced in ways that do not exploit workers, especially migrant laborers in the U.S. or farm workers in developing countries. The most widely recognized ethical food certification is Fair Trade.

Natural

This is the most confusing term because it does not have any regulation or official definition. It generally means that the food was processed minimally and without artificial additives.

Grassfed

A somewhat misleading term because all cattle eat grass for at least part of their lives. It's common for producers to graze cattle until they start fattening them on corn before slaughter. Look for "grass finished" instead.

Free range

Also misleading because federal requirements only require chickens to "have access" to an exterior door. They don't have to go outside. Ever.

GMO free

Food produced without genetic modifications. Most of the corn and soy products in the U.S. include genetically modified crops. Because there are no labeling requirements, you'll never know whether the food you're buying at the supermarket is GMO free.

Of course, most of these movements contain aspects of the others. For example, the ethical food movement features ethical

"The more you know about how your food gets to you, the more you'll realize how tricky it is to buy completely ethically and organically."

treatment of humans, animals, society and the environment, while biodynamic food production prohibits the use of chemicals, GMOs and unethical practices.

So, what's an eater to do? The more you know about how your food gets to you, the more you'll realize how tricky it is to buy completely ethically and organically. If sewer sludge seems unpalatable, you can buy organic. But if you want to support small companies, you can't just buy any organic product in the store because most brands are owned by the big guys. Then you might have to ask yourself: was it produced with oppressive labor tactics? And just what did that cow eat, anyway?

Or maybe you just don't want to know.

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POINT & EAT: *Fishing for Your Dinner Online*

by Bill MacKenzie



Many readers of this magazine are new to Omaha and looking for a little culinary fun. Maybe you are a recent transplant or are here on business. Or maybe you're doing the family thing, visiting Aunt Bessie and Uncle Ron, but can't stand one more night of Bessie's leftover meatloaf. You want to make the best of your time in the place we call "The Big O." You're in luck, as anyone who has spent any time in this city will tell you: Omahans love to eat, but we don't particularly love doing the dishes.

"If all you ever sample in this town is a rib-eye steak or mostaccioli and meatballs, you are just scratching the surface of what Omaha eats when it lets someone else do those dishes."

You may already have heard that Omaha is a restaurant town. Steaks were practically invented here. We also love ethnic cooking. There are probably more Italian eateries here per capita than anywhere else outside New York City's Little Italy. Heck, I grew up here, and until I was 20 I didn't know there were any other sit-down dining options besides steak and Italian! But if all you ever sample in this town is a rib-eye steak or mostaccioli and meatballs, you are just scratching the surface of what Omaha eats when it lets someone else do those dishes.

It used to be that when strangers to a new city contemplated dinner at a nice restaurant, they let their fingers do the walking through the yellow page listings. This is still an option, of course, but it sounds so "old school," and seldom offers more than a name, address and phone number. If you are lucky you'll see an ad listing the specialty of the house and a mention of "cocktails."

We all have so many more—and better—options now for accessing information. Magazines like *Food & Spirits* give you in-depth information and articles about the food and beverage industry. The weekly entertainment magazines sometimes contain partial restaurant listings and maybe a review. But maybe you prefer to view the menus before you step into your cab or drive across

town in search of a memorable dining experience. Or you would like to read customer comments before shelling out your hard-earned simoleons?

Literally dozens of websites profile the Omaha area dining scene! They vary in style, quality and timeliness as much as our restaurant options. Some are more professionally organized than others, but each has its own vibe. What follows is a look at several popular area foodie websites. I would encourage you to check them out and bookmark the ones you think offer your favorite features. The next time you are trying to decide what's for dinner in Omaha, you might find the answer is just a few clicks away.

Omaha to Go www.omahatogo.com

This site claims to offer 200 menus for viewing, grouped both alphabetically as well as by cuisine. Menus are complete, easy to read and are printable. On the downside, a number of popular restaurants are not listed, and I found several listings for places that have been closed for over one year. So maybe call ahead before venturing out.

Omaha Dining Guide <http://omaha.diningguide.com>

Diningguide.com has restaurants from all over the world, and the Omaha page cross-references restaurants by geographic location and cuisine. The guide seems relatively up-to-date (the Boiler Room has a listing), although at least one listed steakhouse had been reduced to a hole in the ground the last time I drove by. Listings of suggested dress codes are a nice touch, and price ranges are included in each listing, which sort of makes up for not being able to view any menus on the site. The site lists 20 pizzerias in Council Bluffs (who knew?), but only one Japanese restaurant (Hiro) for the entire metro area. It also lists the Valentino's at 102nd and Maple under the "downtown" dining section, and claims 84th and West Center Road is in "North Omaha." Moreover, there simply is no "Western Omaha" section. Obviously they need to work out some kinks here. Some restaurants feature user reviews, but they are sparse in number and quite brief in detail. One unique feature is the ability to click on one of 14 listed restaurants and make a dinner reservation without having to pick up the telephone.

TripAdvisor.com www.tripadvisor.com

This site is primarily aimed at travelers and is very popular. No menus are available, and little more than restaurant name, location, price range and contact info is offered. Where this site shines, however, is with the extensive and frequently insightful customer commentaries offered for a majority of the more popular restaurants listed. Restaurants are listed either alphabetically or by customer popularity ranking. Over 500 eateries are featured, including delis, neighborhood joints and fast food under the Omaha section. You can make reservations directly from this site for 14 of the listed restaurants.

Yahoo <http://travel.yahoo.com>

This site, also aimed at the traveler, contains basic info and map references for the restaurants, often accompanied by color photos. Now you don't have an excuse for getting lost on the way to Lo Sole Mio! Candid, sometimes blunt commentary is dispensed with aplomb! I didn't know these out-of-towners could be so nasty! Groupings include "Family Friendly," so you can either pack the urchins into the car and head to one of those listings or avoid them like the H1N1 flu.

10 Best www.10best.com/Omaha,NE/Restaurants/

This site claims to cut to the chase. You'll find no listings for any of the hundreds of Golden Arches. Instead, a select group of mostly higher-end restaurants are the only ones featured. This site, too, features a number of closed restaurants, so user beware. Still, it's an interesting concept. Map links and user comments are included.

ExaminerOmaha www.examiner.com/Omaha/

This is an absolutely fascinating site I had never heard of before researching this article. Click on "Food & Drink" in the lower-left corner and prepare to have some fun. There is a reviewer for local restaurants, plus separate reviewers for local wine, drinks, bakeries, vegan options, ethnic foods and healthy eating, as well as other non-food topics. Links to 173 other food reviewers for other cities are provided. This site's lack of generic restaurant listings is more than made up for with its freshness and depth of coverage.

Gastronomic Fight Club www.gastronomicfightclub.com

If you haven't heard of this group, where have you been? Food lovers with attitude populate this site. Blogs and commentary abound. Right now the "Best-ter-est of Omaha 2008" is available for perusal: local food and drink locales are ranked in 27 categories, and the top 3 finishers in each are listed along with the winners' websites. Check out their winners and the blogs and let the arguing begin!

Menupix.com www.menupix.com/omaha/

With over 1,200 listings for the metro area, you sure can't short this site on quantity. Accurate maps for each restaurant are included, along with links to websites and limited customer reviews. Restaurants are grouped by cuisine and community. There are no in-depth reviews, but the data seems very up-to-date. This is not a bad site if you already have an idea of what you are looking for, but are not sure where to find it.

Each of the restaurant websites referenced seeks to fill a niche in the vast dining community, but none is perfect. Given the ever-changing dining scene, that would be too much to ask. My suggestion is to give each one a spin on the ol' laptop, and soon you'll find one or two that best serves your needs. Bon Appétit!



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LOBSTER *for the* LAND-LOCKED

by Matt Ronco

It can be fairly stated that the lobster has endured many injustices in its culinary history. Originally used as fertilizer by the Native Americans, lobster was first fed en masse to indentured servants against their will in colonial New England. Lobster was loathed to such a degree that it actually caused uprisings and rebellions that led to the drafting of contract clauses stating that servants could not be fed lobster more than three times per week. Even the Bible includes lobster under its general grouping of “Abomination,” which is about the worst descriptor one could use for food.

“Indeed, most people would speculate that Omaha is not a good city for finding excellent lobster, but then again, what do most people really know?”

Despite the beating it has taken over the years, lobster has a tough shell and has managed to claw its way into one of the top luxury food spots. What is it about the lobster that makes it both terrifying and fascinating at the same time? For me, this spiky, armored being has always been a marker of special occasions, holding a firm place in my stomach’s memories.

Growing up in Maine, I was frequently subjected to the lobster (pronounced “LOB-stah”) as a sort of state mascot.

A good deal of the state’s economy hinges on tourism to the coastal areas, with tourists coming from all over the world to catch a glimpse of New England

coastal life and beauty in charming sea towns like Bar Harbor and Kennebunkport. After sampling fresh Maine lobster, which is available in seemingly everything, even Ben & Jerry’s lobster-flavored ice cream made with real lobster meat, many will take home souvenirs such as lobster buoys, bibs, oven mitts and key chains. You name it, Maine can lobsterize it.

My father, like many locals, enjoyed lobster and would sometimes prepare the dish at home. I still fondly remember him chasing my brother and me around the kitchen with a live lobster, or releasing the lobster onto the kitchen floor or counter to watch it lumber around with its claws raised pugnaciously in the air. This tactic usually failed to save it from the pot, and I can still conjure the smell of the sea as the boiling lobster changed from ruddy brown to bright red and the sound of a final departing scream filled the air (actually just steam escaping from the shell).

We also occasionally took trips to Bar Harbor to visit one of many local lobster pounds (holding pens for lobsters that often doubled as restaurants). The pounds are placed near the ocean and constantly cycle fresh seawater through holding tanks so the lobsters can maintain their sea flavor, which is lost rapidly when being held in captivity. Although they may look like a shack with steaming chimneys on the side of the ocean, any true Mainer will tell you these rustic pounds are the best and cheapest way to get your fix. The lobster is usually served unpretentiously on paper plates with butter and a side of corn, or as a sandwich known as a lobster roll, and eaten outdoors at a picnic table. While it may not be fancy, lobster pounds often house





“Downtown Omaha is also no stranger to great lobster venues, although most hide their reputation behind a great steak.”

generations of lobstermen that could go toe-to-toe with an Iron Chef any day, that is, if lobster were the secret ingredient.

Fast forward years later to college and on the absolute opposite end of the country in La Jolla, California. A surfer friend of mine jumped into the ocean from the patio of his beach house, only to return a half-hour later paddling a surfboard full of poached lobsters. I was horrified that he had committed what would be a felony offense in Maine: stealing lobsters from a trap. I was also perplexed that he had gone to such great risks, only to find several lobsters missing the large front claws that are probably the best part of the lobster, although some would argue for the tail. He assured me the police would not be kicking down our door, and that he had been enjoying lobster for years without ever seeing these mysterious “front claws” that I was raving about. It turns out lobster from the San Diego coast is of the *Langusta* or “spiny lobster” family, which is woefully lacking in the claw department.

And then there’s Omaha, with the nearest ocean several hours away, and grocery store tanks full of lonely lobsters that have been there so long that you have given them a nickname and secretly hope they escape to freedom. Indeed, most people would speculate that Omaha is not a good city for finding excellent lobster, but then again, what do most people really know? Greg Lindberg, owner of Absolutely Fresh Seafood, knows a thing or two about lobster. He’s been providing it to many local restaurants and residents for over 20 years.

“Lobster popularity definitely dropped from approximately the late 90s up until a few years ago as they became too expensive. In the last year, however, as we dove into this latest recession, prices have dropped a little and there are new, rekindled, pockets of

interest,” Lindberg said, and “depending on who is running specials and the market price, sometimes we go through 50 lobsters in a week, other times a few hundred.” (continued on next page)

Lindberg’s own restaurant, Shucks Fish House & Oyster Bar, keeps lobster bisque as a permanent menu item. This rich and creamy dish is great, but connoisseurs should keep an eye out for the New England style lobster rolls that often appear as a daily special. Cooked lobster knuckle and claw meat is pulled, tossed in a citrus mayo dressing, and placed in a toasted hoagie with shredded lettuce for a delicious sandwich that can probably compete with your traditional New England lobster pound.

“Absolutely Fresh provides live Maine lobster by the pound as well as frozen lobster meat and tails.”

If you prefer to prepare your own lobster but are balking at the price of having one flown in from hundreds of miles away, Absolutely Fresh provides live Maine lobster by the pound as well as frozen lobster meat and tails. “Lobster tails, frozen immediately after processing, have a very good texture and flavor, and do not have the mortality problem of live [lobsters]. The bulk of lobster business in the area, as well as the nation, is in frozen lobster tails and frozen lobster meat,” said Lindberg. “Usually the freight will be prohibitive to buy just a handful of lobsters from the East Coast via telephone or Internet, so I always recommend buying them from us,” he said.

For those that want a full-service lobster meal, Omaha definitely has no shortage of chefs willing to step up to the armor plate. I caught Chef Cedric Fichpain in the middle of a recent “Lobster & Champagne” special event at Le Voltaire in West Omaha. The event was scheduled for one day only, but the very reasonable price of \$25 for a lobster meal and a glass of champagne saw such success that Fichpain extended the special for a second day and invited me into his busy kitchen to experience lobster

in action. Known for his French cuisine, Fichepain talked about running the event for the first time and his preparation.

"This is a special I've wanted to do for a long time, but only recently have prices agreed," exclaimed Fichepain, while preparing to drop yet another lobster into a boiling pot. "We serve the lobster traditional with sides of rice and veggies along with a glass of Brut champagne. This is different and more popular than European style Langusta, which is generally cooked, cooled and served with mayo," he said.

Wandering into the kitchen to catch his father at work, six-year-old Julien Fichepain was quickly presented a live lobster, straight from a box of seaweed. Much like I did in my youth, he curiously eyed the lobster and kept a respectful distance—the beginning of another long love affair with lobster.

Experienced lobster lovers would be well advised to keep an eye on Le Voltaire for this event in the future and be sure to book in advance. Like many of Le Voltaire's special events, this one fills up quickly.

Downtown Omaha is also no stranger to great lobster venues, although most hide their reputation behind a great steak. Sullivan's delivers a wonderful fresh Maine lobster in a unique atmosphere that has been lauded as one of the metro's best places to have a business dinner. Don't be afraid to go for non-business reasons, though, because the atmosphere is great for wooing a date or for special occasions with friends. Those booking reservations for their lobster dinner at Sullivan's should request to be seated down the escalator in the wine cellar where they will be able to view Sullivan's extensive and award-winning wine collection in full view as they eat.

General Manager Hal LaPonsie describes the lobster preparation and a few good wines: "Our Australian cold-water lobster tails are deshelled tableside and served with drawn butter. The Maine lobster is split down the middle, basted in heavy cream and broiled. Both are great with the

Newton Chardonnay 2005 or white burgundy like the Chassagne-Montrachet, Joseph Drouhin 2004." For the not-so-faint of wallet, this author recommends dessert of Louis XIII Cognac in a snifter and a fine cigar from Sullivan's humidor enjoyed on the patio.

For the ultimate in local lobster, the Paxton Chophouse has to take my Golden Claw Award. Executive Chef Zeb Rogers and Sous Chef Brian Langbehn do things with lobster I've never heard of but desperately want to try.

"We keep a live lobster tank here with fresh Maine lobster flown in two to three times weekly and we do go through quite a bit of it in many variations," Rogers said. "While classic style is the most popular, we do a variation where we cut the lobster in half, fill it with Maryland crab and broil it," he said. "Some other dishes we are known for include lobster Thermidor, lobster pot pies and even lobster corn dogs. We are

also willing to deshell lobsters by request for those that aren't ready to get their hands dirty," he said.

The Paxton encourages diners to try lobster by offering it as a regular Friday special for only \$19.95 when added to two entrees as a centerpiece. This is a great way for lobster newbies to split a lobster and try it for the first time while enjoying an entrée they might be more

comfortable with, such as one of the Paxton's flavorful aged steaks.

Lobster cannot be mentioned without bringing up a staple of lobster dining: Red Lobster. While this national chain is not going to wow you with amazing wine selections or exotic variations of lobster preparation, there is something to be said for their consistency of flavor and pricing as well as a family-friendly atmosphere. This is another great place for a first-timer to crack some claw and earn their lobster bib.

Wherever you decide to enjoy that next land-locked lobster dinner, remember not to wave the lobster around like a toy or chase small children around with it unless you are at home.

"For the ultimate in local lobster, the Paxton Chophouse has to take my Golden Claw Award. Executive Chef Zeb Rogers and Sous Chef Brian Langbehn do things with lobster I've never heard of but desperately want to try."





Vivace's Hummus, served with grilled pita,
Calamata olives and feta cheese. \$5.95
photo by J. Michael McBride

Carolina on my Mind

THE SECOND EMPIRE



"The wood floors, chandeliers and decorations of the restaurant really set the tone for the type of experience the Second Empire offers."

Second Empire is truly one of North Carolina's finest dining experiences. The restaurant's setting takes place in a beautiful old Southern Mansion that was most likely built around the turn of the 20th century. The wood floors, chandeliers, and decorations of the restaurant really set the tone for the type of experience the Second



Empire offers. In addition to the restaurant there is also a tavern in the basement that allow for a great before/after dinner drink.

The food, service, and spirits at the restaurant did not disappoint. The two favorite entrees of the table were the roasted five spice Pennsylvania duck breast and the North Carolina coastal grouper. The restaurant put a huge emphasis on buying local organic produce and serving meat products off of locally grown farms.

In addition to the entrees the four appetizers that table sampled were truly spectacular.

The wine list at the restaurant put a major emphasis on Spanish, Italian, and French. For our first bottle, we chose a versatile Spanish Rioja in the \$50 price range. The table found this wine to go extremely well with the four different appetizer pairings. For the main entree, we had decanted an Italian Barolo in the \$100 price range. Again, we found the Barolo to go very well with everyone main entree at the table.

Overall, this was a memorable dining experience in terms of atmosphere, food, and spirits that our table enjoyed.

Second Empire is located in the heart of Raleigh that conveniently located close to downtown and the NC State Campus.

OCEANIC RESTAURANT



"The views of the Atlantic Ocean are superior whether you are dining outside on the pier or inside on one of the restaurant's three stories."



Oceanic restaurant is located on Wrightsville Beach just outside of Wilmington, NC. The highlight of the restaurant was the outdoor seating available on the pier which overlooked the Atlantic Ocean. As expected the restaurant had a wide selection of fresh seafood, along with steak and chops. The calamari we enjoyed for an appetizer was average/above average. Our group of three ordered Salmon, Mahi Mahi, and fresh Ahi Tuna. All three were acceptable dishes, however it was nothing that truly stood out. The wine selection was fairly limited to your basic California Cabs and Chardonnay's.

In conclusion, Oceanic is a place you want to dine simply for the atmosphere. The views of the Atlantic Ocean are superior whether you are dining outside on the pier or inside on one of the restaurant's three stories. Many restaurants on Wrightsville Beach could easily be considered a tourist trap. However, Oceanic seemed to have the right mix of locals to tourists. Its obvious the restaurants managements does not put as much emphasis on the food and spirits as they do the experience and the views.

REY'S RESTAURANT



"Formerly a Ruth Chris Steakhouse, Rey's has transformed the building into a Southern, French Quarter type of feel."

Anytime I have flown into Raleigh, Rey's is always the first restaurant that we dine at. Formerly a Ruth Chris Steakhouse, Rey's has transformed the building into a Southern, French Quarter type of feel. The walls and the decorations reflect the old Southern charm of the restaurant. In addition the walls have fantastic pictures of sports memorable primarily the Carolina Hurricanes NHL team that has supposedly made Rey's their restaurant of choice.

The menu continues to back up the Southern charm of the restaurant. The appetizer menu is full of shrimp, crawdad's, oysters and other New Orleans type seafood. For the soup and salad course, the choice was rather obvious to go with the New Orleans Turtle

"For the main entrees, Rey's offered a wide selection of prime cuts of meat, including French Quarter classics as Osso Bucco, Decatur Street Pork Tenderloin and Bourbon Street Pork Chops."

Soup. Even when dining in the south the Turtle Soup remains a rarity. For the main entrees Rey's offered a wide selection of prime cuts of meat including French Quarter classics as Osso Bucco, Decatur Street Pork Tenderloin, and Bourbon Street Pork Chops. The four of us each decided to go with either the Prime New York Strip or the Filet Mignon's. While the steaks were excellent, the southern flare spices seemed to make the cuts of meat stand out. In addition to the steaks, our table enjoyed two bottles of full bodies Napa Valley Cab. At a place like Rey's there's little debate that the Cabernet is the only way to go.

The wait staff at Rey's was knowledgeable, professional, and prompt with their service. The few times we have dined there, the owner, Rey is always walking around the restaurant making sure everyone's needs are fully attended to. The signature desert is the Bananas Foster for two. Usually, the presentation is done by a chef or the waiter. However, Rey comes out to each table and puts on the presentation himself. You can truly tell that ownership takes a great deal of service and pride in owning and operating the restaurant.

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FOOD SERVICE WARRIOR

How the Industry Has Shaped My Life
by Jeremy Hunter



When I sit back and reflect upon my life in the restaurant world I often wonder if I made the right choices. Maybe I should have gone to college or pursued my love for extreme sports. I think about what would make me the happiest and I can honestly say I am glad I didn't go to college. I never was good in school. I have had office jobs and they drove me nuts. I thought about being an auto mechanic but found myself being sidetracked too easily.

I made the right choice. I have a job where everyday a new challenge arises. I get to meet new people and I don't leave work feeling pressured to reach any deadlines. And most of all I have a lot in common with everyone I see: we all like food and spirits.

My first two years in the restaurant world were in fast food. I hated it. That's when I started working at a gas station/machine shop. I thought I could build engines and work on cars all day but that was short-lived. I was convinced that restaurant work was out of the question. I spent the next year running around with the wrong crowd. I eventually went back to cooking, but not in fast food. I got a job at a real place cooking real food. It was great. I was learning a lot and got along with everyone I worked with.

It was a place that had just come to Omaha and was one of the hottest spots in west Omaha. I stayed and worked myself into a management position. After being there for a while I moved to Kansas City to open a new store. This was by far one of the most demanding kitchens I had ever seen.

I was able to see a lot of what goes on when opening a new place. We were in our early 20s and thought we were on top of the world. We were working seven days a week and making more money than we ever imagined we could at that age. It didn't hurt that we had no time to spend any money, either.

That all came to an abrupt halt when 11 months after opening, the owner left town

with most of the money the place made. Paychecks were bouncing and delivery companies wanted cash only. Within two months of that the doors were chained shut by the government for tax evasion.

After some time being unemployed and depleting all the money I had saved, I found a job at a new place coming to town. They were opening stores all over the Midwest.

"As they say: "When one door closes another one opens."

That's when my focus shifted to having my own store. I had yet to work in the front of the house and had no desire to. I became a corporate kitchen trainer. I traveled around and opened numerous stores. I loved it. I ate and drank for free. I met new people every three-and-a-half weeks and was teaching people how to cook.

After three years as a trainer I finally got the break I was looking for. I was offered the chance to open nine stores as the head trainer down South. Unfortunately, corporate backed out and it didn't happen. As they say: "When one door closes another one opens."

I was asked to help open our own concept. It went very well. In a year there was talk of a second store. I didn't stay with them much longer because of a difference of opinions with another manager. So I went back to where I first started. I had no desire to be in the front of the house, but that was all that was available. I became a server.

I was never too excited to be a server, but the money was decent and it was every night. Then one night there was mutiny on the front line: five of six cooks walked out at 7:30 p.m. on a Friday night. I was waiting tables and had a full section. I was able to pass off my tables to other servers and go help the kitchen. When all was said and done I went to the manager and owner and

asked to be a manager up front so that if this ever happened again we would be more prepared. I became a manager and did that for a year or two until I had an offer to be a kitchen manager at an Irish pub.

Within a year and a half I had worked my way into the general manager position. After I did that for about a year I was relieved of my duties because of another manager's poor judgment. I again returned to be a server, but downtown this time. This was the best job I have ever had working for other people. I was there for two years and decided to move to the East Coast to work at a private golf course as the beverage manager, my second-best job ever. After two years of that I decided watching my nephews grow up was more important than being on the East Coast.

I came back and got a job at a microbrewery as a manager until I had an accident and couldn't do my job any more. I was released from that job and had a nice severance check to go with it. As they say: "When one door closes another one opens." I finally got to start my own company with my brother.

My brother had an idea to open a small pizza place north of Omaha. This is where all of our experience came together. We both had run restaurants and had been fairly successful. We were open for 14 months and decided the profit wasn't worth the sacrifice. I then again went back to waiting tables and bartending downtown. I'm still there and will not stop until I have another business of my own.

So now when I ask myself if I made the right choices with the way I lived my life, I don't doubt that this is what I was meant to do. I have tried other things through my journeys and always find myself wanting to be around people and having fun. This is it. I might not be in the exact place I want to be right now, but I am having a fun time trying to find it.

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Restaurant Technology Trends & the Customer by Tami Catron

As this year's figures continue to come in from restaurants during 2009, we will continue to see a year of contraction in total restaurant industry sales. Nevertheless, we as consumers will continue to eat out and rely on restaurants as a key part of our lifestyle as the industry continues to provide the food, value and service we seek.

Restaurants and restaurant owners will continue to try to think of technology that will make our dining experience fit our lifestyles. Eating out is a way of life for Americans. It is not a question of if we will eat out, but where we will go and how much we are willing to spend. As restaurants continue to vie for our shrinking

"As restaurants continue to vie for our shrinking spendable dollar, technology, convenience and service will become an important part of how we chose the next restaurant."

spendable dollar, technology, convenience and service will become an important part of how we chose the next restaurant and where we will spend our dollars.

Technology will continue to play a bigger part in our daily life and it will also become a way we fit dining or takeout at our favorite restaurant into our lifestyles. We are a society of speed and convenience, yet we still expect, especially when it comes to our favorite restaurants, the ability to enjoy dining with ever more convenience.

Think about it: wouldn't it be nice at the end of a long day that we could go on to our favorite restaurant's website, click on a button that would take us to their menu, and be able to place our order via the website and pick it up on our way home? Even more, wouldn't it be great if we could save our family's favorite orders, and within a click of a button have our order sent off to our favorite restaurant for lunch or dinner? That is truly convenience and it isn't just a dream. This great service does exist at some of the restaurants that understand what it takes to adapt to our fast-paced consumer lifestyles. This great cutting edge technology is called Patronpath Online Ordering through US Foodservice.

In addition to making life easier for consumers, a restaurant can help increase traffic and customer loyalty. The restaurant can keep your history of orders, and when they have a special or a coupon that could help you save money on your restaurant favorites, an e-mail would arrive with a coupon that you would be able to use on your next meal or takeout order.

As a restaurant, it will help you attract new customers, increase sales and average tickets, make your operation more efficient, and increase loyalty and frequency from your patrons. Lansky's, a three-unit chain here in Omaha, has put this technology out to their customers and the response has been great. Paula Hoffman, owner of Lansky's, said, "Online ordering at our three restaurants has added to our bottom line and it did so quickly. We have seen a marked increase in purchases of higher-priced items and customers are 'up-selling themselves.' It has also dramatically cut the time our people spend on the phone taking orders, especially for catering. Patronpath's 'invitation ordering' is a godsend. We have received only positive feedback from our customers because the online ordering process is intuitive and easy.

"From the onset, Patronpath/US Foodservice asked and listened to our needs and method of operation. They built a program that is infinitely user friendly. After viewing their web tutorial, I easily made changes to our menu, adding new items and deleting others.

"They responded promptly to every question and every adjustment we needed to make. If you're considering implementing online ordering, go with Patronpath through US Foodservice."

So as a consumer, begin to look for restaurants that offer you ways to help get great food that fits your fast-paced lifestyle. As a restaurant, don't be left behind, because technology will continue to be a big part of everyone's future. Why not make it part of yours?

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INDUSTRY RECYCLING

by Steve Andrews



In this age of green it is not easy to practice what is being preached, or at least on the surface it isn't. Each green step we take requires change, time and funding. Of course, disposing garbage via the traditional land disposal method, while somewhat easier, doesn't come without its own unique set of problems. I would like to present my case for changing your current waste disposal practices for ones based on conservation of natural resources and expenses.

Don't get me wrong. I understand that whether you are running a fast-food, full-service or fine-dining establishment, finding ways to increase profit margins without affecting your customers' dining experience is important to your survival. What we must note is that by making green changes, one can enhance the experience of the customer and also create a positive working environment for staff. In a 2008 survey, the National Restaurant Association found that 62% of diners would prefer to eat at an environmentally friendly restaurant. As the Association noted, going green is no longer an option. It is imperative.

"In a 2008 survey, the National Restaurant Association found that 62% of diners would prefer to eat at an environmentally friendly restaurant."

Although waste reduction and recycling have become an integral part of many hotels and restaurant management plans, space constraints often make recycling prohibitive for some establishments. Most receiving docks are designed for trash receptacles and compactors, but not for the additional space needed for recycling containers. However, newer establishments are learning to design space for recycling containers at the building design stage to overcome this problem.

In some cases, the establishment has little or no control over the placement of containers, and because they share the disposal cost, won't directly see a cost savings from waste diversion practices. There is also a misperception on the value (i.e., savings) from waste diversion through recycling and reduction. Often the only return value calculated is what the establishment is paid for the recyclables. Restaurants tend to overlook the cost diversion savings. When combined, the overall value is more significant.

Other barriers include a lack of cooperation from the waste-hauling community, lack of communication with employees, high turnover of employees, and fluctuating market prices for collected materials. Each of these can be overcome with time and patience.

So how do you increase the bottom line and do your part for the environment? By integrating periodic reviews of workflow practices and simple resourcefulness, restaurants can find ways to cut purchasing, waste disposal and utility costs without having a negative impact on food quality or service. While waste reduction and recycling will cut disposal costs, economic benefits

"Restaurants can find ways to cut purchasing, waste disposal and utility costs without having a negative impact on food quality or service."

will also come through resource efficiency, smart purchasing and management of end-of-life material use.

So how do you get started? The first step is to gain top-down support. Proper waste and recycling management procedures must be sponsored and encouraged by management. Make sure your employees know you support the program and the more they recycle the better.

Once top-down support is in place, recruit employees to join your new Green Team. I recommend that this Green Team help develop and write a company environmental policy. This policy will guide your green program from initiative to implementation.

A first step for your Green Team is to conduct a waste audit. A waste audit is a simple assessment of the type and quantities of material or waste a restaurant generates. A waste audit is important because it will help you decide which type of materials to recycle, reduce and reuse. Moreover, it provides guidance on the type and number of collection containers needed inside and outside the restaurant in addition to providing the metrics on which you will measure your program's success.

Not all establishments are the same. The amount of waste and recyclables produced is affected by variables that differ from one establishment to the next, which is why a waste audit is so important. One approach is to sort and weigh several samples of your trash over time. This will provide a good accounting of your waste stream composition.

Another waste audit method involves a review of purchasing and waste removal records. These records can help you develop a decent baseline from which to grow the program. A waste audit also includes a walkthrough of your facility, noting what type of waste is discarded in each area, how material moves through the facility, and who moves the material. This information and data is then incorporated into logistical changes.

What you will find is that going green isn't just a recycling, waste reduction and minimization issue, but a change in structure.

The Last of the Great Bear Men: *A Tribute to Chef Scott Schreiner* by Rocco Caniglia

On June 21st 2009, Scott Schreiner lost his battle with brain cancer and passed away. He was a mentor to me and many other young chefs over the years. He was also a great friend and a great human being. I will miss him for the rest of my life.

You meet someone like Scott once in a lifetime. He was a kindred spirit, a true class act, teacher, student and caring human being. He was one of the best friends that a guy could ever hope to have. I only knew him for a short time, but it was a time that I won't forget.

"You meet someone like Scott once in a lifetime...a kindred spirit, a true class act, teacher, student and caring human being."

I met Scott in January 2008. I was a snot-nosed and arrogant cook just looking for the perfect job, something beyond banging out food on a hotline. I saw an ad for a salad guy at Shadow Ridge Country Club, and went there on my day off.

Before I finished filling out an application, Scott came out to see me, which I was not expecting. He was a round man in clean, bright chef whites. He was wearing glasses and had shoulder-length gray hair held back by a Kangol hat. I couldn't help but think that Sam Kinison had come back to life as a chef!

I remember the smells emanating from the kitchen: garlic, stocks, herbs and wines being reduced. We soon went to his office to talk.

"Okay, look," he said sharply, "just remember to say 'yes sir' and 'no sir.' Keep yourself presentable and polite." After fifteen minutes, I had a job offer and Scott took me back to the kitchen for a tour.

After my first few days I realized that it was the same there as everywhere else I had worked, except we had to wear chef coats. Scott and I would talk a little, mostly about training. After a month or two, Scott began to open up a little. He talked about culinary school in Florida and we shared our hatred for cooking mahi-mahi. Soon after, Scott took me under his wing as his protégé. He showed me all about being a chef and cooking, the correct way to trim a tenderloin, and how to make soup from scratch.

Scott taught me a thousand lessons: how to make hollandaise with one hand while cooking eggs to order; the beauty of nasturtiums and chamomile; 100 degrees internal temperature on a prime rib is medium rare (I still don't get that one).

But the most important lesson Scott showed me was in his death. You need to live life to the fullest. You need to love instead of hate, be happy instead of mad, and show up on time ready to work. I only regret that I never got a chance to know Scott for longer. But I know Scott would've told me not to let it eat me up and go on with my life, and that I would see him again one day in heaven.

Goodbye, man. We all love you.

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ACF NEWSLETTER

FALL 2009

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SEPTEMBER 18

18th Annual Fort Omaha Intertribal POW WOW

OCTOBER 2-3

Village Pointe Farmer's Market: Harvest Festival

OCTOBER 3

Sage at the Market: Cooking Demonstrations at the Village Pointe Farmer's Market

OCTOBER 5

"Sage at the Market: Dining Series, Gourmet Dinner"

OCTOBER 18

Omaha Hospitality Hall of Fame

CERTIFICATION UPDATES

July 25th and 26th saw a spectacular event occur for the first time in the recent history of our chapter: A locally hosted Certification Practical Exam. The Institute for the Culinary Arts played host to almost three dozen chefs from around the country as they sought Certification as Approved Evaluators, Executive Chefs, Chefs de Cuisine, Sous Chefs, Executive Pastry Chefs, and Pastry Culinarists.

The practical exam portion makes up 1/3 of the certification process for most levels of achievement also requiring a written exam and a tested work history in order to attain the given rank. Outgoing Chapter President and certification guru Michael Roddey led the weekend's affairs as both chapter liaison and site liaison. Chef Chris Dwyer CEC from the Minneapolis Chapter shared his experience and insight as the lead evaluator.

Overall, sixteen chefs or pastry chefs executed practical exams, with 6 out of the 16 hitting their mark above the standards set forth by the National Certification Committee of the American Culinary Federation.

Participating Chefs from the Heartland Chapter in the ACE Program as Apprentice Evaluators:

Kevin Newlin CEC
David Updike CEPC
Jo Anne Garvey
Tin O'Donnell CEC
Chris Pulling CEC CCA
Maybell Galusha CCE CWPC CSCE

Heartland Chapter Chefs that Passed their certification practical exam and the level of the exam:

Alexander James Swanda -Certified Sous Chef
Brian Young -Certified Chef de Cuisine
Lorraine Howard -Certified Executive Pastry Chef
Jo Anne Garvey -Certified Executive Chef

Omaha Standard: *Jam's Coconut Chicken Salad*

by Brian O'Malley

"Having a dish from your menu that bleeds into the community is spectacular—especially one that so eloquently bleeds sweet and savory, soft and crisp, and hot and cold."

Jam's has given Omaha more gifts than can be aptly appreciated: wonderful food, a cool location, a powerful training ground for area chefs and service staff, a serious wine list, and a fiercely independent and stringently local disposition. When Jam's opened, each of those gifts was in short supply in our town. Now, while there are many more places providing similar gifts, none does so with the tenacity and complexity of Jam's. There is another element to the success of Jam's that is a bit more elusive to explain—their popularity. Perhaps more than any other eatery opened

since, Jam's was crazy busy. They were that "local joint with an hour wait on a Tuesday" kind of busy. It was so jammed, pun intended, that my brother-in-law once said, "nobody goes there anymore, they are just too busy." Pretty funny. This popularity is important not just because it has made Jam's itself a viable operation for so many years, but also because it proved without question that a non-corporate entity could handle the crush of sustained popularity.

Many dishes at Jam's are worthy of praise. I thank god for Jam's frequently. It was there I ate my first quesadilla, devoured my first crab cake, and sipped my first martini. Jam's hosted the dinner for my first serious break-up, and one of the best celebration dinners I have ever attended (they were not the same event:) When I worked the line at The Champion's Club, we "stole" one of the great standards of the Jam's menu—The Fried Coconut Chicken Salad. Now, I am sure Chef Hoch already knows this, but our chef used to go in once a week, eat the salad and then report back to us what tweaks we were to make. The Fried Coconut

Chicken Salad, known as the "Bob's Coconut Chicken Salad" at Champions, outsold all other lunch items 2:1.

Hopefully, Chef Hoch and his crew are flattered by the continued presence of the salad on the menu at the Club. I assume it is there as I haven't been in many years. Having a dish from your menu that bleeds into the community is spectacular—especially one that so eloquently blends sweet and savory, soft and crisp, and hot and cold. Only M's lavosh enjoys a more frequent hijacking in the Omaha community (see "Omaha Standard: M's Lavosh" August 2008 ACF Newsletter, *Food and Spirits Magazine*). Whether you are a diehard regular, a loyal, yet casual fan, or among the unthinkable initiated, Jam's is worth it. Keep going, go more frequently, or for god's sake make it a point to get there. Jam's is an icon. Their kitchen is a temple of spirited, like-minded, hard working Culinarians that crank out the Omaha Standards like Stevie Wonder did hits. Bravo.

Recent Food Trends

The dream of every chef is to create some food or dish that is original and legendary. It is not just for the notoriety, but that this feat means the chef has gone where no one has gone before. Our chef hearts are always yearning to create something new and exciting, something with which we can amaze others through our ingenuity and craftiness. This must be why there are always new trends in the world of food.

Let's take a look at some of the "new" creations from the past. Take the first caveman chef that cooked meat over flame. Without him, we wouldn't have grilling, roasting, sautéing or any of the basic meat cookery applications. Then take the clever person who created the chocolate bar. Imagine stressful situations without chocolate and the women of the world who could never make it through the month. There are many food inventions taken for granted in this day and age, but some chef in

our past had to create them. Imagine French fries without ketchup, chicken salad without mayonnaise, or cookies without chocolate chips. Dismal, no?

The next creations involved adapting other cuisines to American palates.

This came about mostly by the World Wars, but also world travelers. People traveled to different countries and ate indigenous dishes like spaghetti, curry or sushi, and brought elements of those cuisines home with them. With intercontinental travel less than a plane ride away, there are no new cuisines left to discover. Well, maybe in the deep, dark South American jungles there are undiscovered cuisines, but I'm not sure I'm interested in what they eat. Maybe beetle juice soup!

Although there have been a few new twists in American food lately, such as fusion cuisine, microwaveable frozen dinners, space food in a tube, and molecular gastronomy, there seems to

be very few new and exciting things left to invent. What is an aspiring chef supposed to create if there is nothing new? Have you ever heard of the saying "what is old becomes new again?"

The new "trends" for fast food junkies are the old ways of cooking, raising and preserving food. But if we have resorted to recycling old ways, what can possibly come next? Perhaps there will be more combining of savory and sweet elements. For example, chefs are using more and more fruits and nuts in the preparation of protein salads and sides, like candied-pecan crusted salmon or pineapple salsa, and pastry chefs are using more savory ingredients in their desserts, like caramelized fennel for tarts or tomato basil for sorbet. Is this the future of food, the complete switch of savory to sweet and vice versa? The Chef only knows.

20 Questions with Chef Alfred Hiltbrunner

by Amelia Timms



This Interview is with Chef Alfred Hiltbrunner, retired Executive Chef of more than 35 years at Le Café de Paris in Omaha, Nebraska. The restaurant decided to shut its doors following the departure of Chef Hiltbrunner. I had the amazing opportunity to train under Chef Hiltbrunner in preparation for my first job in the culinary industry. He is my mentor and I have the highest respect for him as a chef and a friend.

AT: Chef, please tell me how you got started in the culinary field.

AH: I started out working as an apprentice when I was 16 years old in an upscale hotel in Switzerland where I am from.

AT: Did you have a mentor?

AH: I would say that the chef that I apprenticed under was my mentor. I trained for 3 years under him.

AT: Did you attend a formal culinary school?

AH: I attended a type of trade school. Once a week during the apprenticeship, I attended classes that gave me an education in costing menus, wine pairings and the business side of being a chef. The classes were taught by certified chefs. The school also taught different types of trades alongside the culinary trade. In Europe, they focus mostly on the practical

training when preparing a chef for the industry.

AT: How did you end up in Omaha?

AH: When I was working in Montreal, Canada, I met a chef that knew of the job and could not get his papers to get to the U.S. He told me of the job at Le Café de Paris.

AT: What year did you start at Le Café de Paris?

AH: I started in 1971, about one and a half years after it first opened.

“To be successful is to know and use the basics in good cooking... Don’t take shortcuts and always use good-quality ingredients.”

AT: What was one of the most popular dishes that you served during your time there?

AH: The Dover Sole was very popular.

AT: What year did you retire?

AH: I retired in 2006, after almost 36 years.

AT: Why do you think the restaurant was so successful for so many years?

AH: We were always consistent in the preparation of our food and we served a high-quality product.

AT: Did you develop any friendships with some of your regulars?

AH: Many friendships over the years, and I still keep in touch with some of them.

AT: What would you say your overall cooking style is?

AH: French classically trained.

AT: Do you think technology will have a large affect on the culinary field, or will future chefs need to rely on classical methods?

AH: To achieve success, they need to be classically trained, and then can translate some of the classic methods into modern techniques. To be successful is to know and use the basics in good cooking, like making your own stocks, knowing how to make good sauces. Don’t take shortcuts and always use good-quality ingredients.

AT: How are you staying active in the culinary world now that you are retired?

AH: I have an organic garden, and sometimes I cook on the side for friends. That is about it. I feel that I spent a long enough time in the industry and now it is time to be retired.

“I worked 6 days a week for over 35 years.”

AT: What year was your induction into the Omaha Hospitality Hall of Fame?

AH: I was inducted in 2002.

AT: What do you miss about working at the restaurant?

AH: Sometimes I miss the rapport with the customers. We had many regulars. The owner would talk to the customers during their meal and always give a rose to the women as they were leaving. He would thank them and walk the customers to the door when they would leave. That is the kind of service you do not see very much anymore.

AT: Were you ever involved in any culinary organizations?

AH: No, I never had the time. I worked six days a week for over 35 years.

“Put in the hours to make it work. Always serve consistent, high-quality food.”

AT: How important is it to have a good relationship with your vendors?

AH: Very important! If you have a good relationship with the vendor, it saves time and money. They know what you want without even asking. They will get you the freshest ingredients and highest-quality products.

AT: What role do you think this economy is playing in a restaurant's survival?

AH: Restaurants are always under a strain during a healthy economy. The smaller restaurants will suffer the most, and the chains will most likely survive. Be consistent.

AT: What advice can you give to a chef wanting to start a new restaurant?

AH: You must be there all the time, and put in the hours to make it work. Always serve consistent, high-quality food.

AT: What would you say is your favorite meal to cook?

AH: I like to cook a rack of lamb, I really don't have a favorite. I just like to cook in general.

AT: What is one of your favorite places to eat in Omaha?

AH: I don't go out much. If I do, I normally get prime rib. It is hard to mess up a prime rib!

The Great Corn Debate



by Jen Valandra

If you've ever read anything by Michael Pollan, you might exhibit a certain nervousness when talking about corn. (Thou shalt try to eat no corn?) But let's just come out and admit it: as you strolled through the farmers market last year at this time, lasciviously eying those golden ears of buttery, sweet temptation, piled high in all their glory, right out in the open for all to indulge, guilty thoughts nagged, but you caved and hastily loaded your bags full (I really tried, Mr. Pollan).

“When corn is everywhere, it's important to take a look at the issues while we have corn on the brain.”

You love sweet corn. I love sweet corn. We all love sweet corn. And hiding your addiction from the fellow corn-conscious only promotes lonely picnicking.

Sweet corn is fodder for summertime memories in the Midwest, bringing to mind a freckled, smiling six-year-old child who just had a visit from the Tooth Fairy, chomping down on an oversized cob as he wipes the melted butter from his chin. So what's the big deal? What's with all the corny concern?

It's a heated debate. According to Pollan, corn itself isn't really a bad guy: cultures have been subsisting on the tasty treat for generations. The dilemma

“The inclusion of so much corn in our diets has many health experts concerned.”

lies with the overwhelming amount of corn in our diets. And to really be fair, sweet corn causes less arguments than field corn, but at this time of year in Nebraska, when corn is everywhere, it's important to take a look at the issues while we have corn on the brain.

At an average picnic, corn is present in the syrupy soft drinks and ketchup, as fillers in hot dogs, and indirectly comes to us in the form of protein in our burgers, because a good amount of the corn grown in the U.S. lands is fed to the animals we eat (Pass the corn chips, too, please). A varied diet is best for supreme health and the inclusion of so much corn in our diets has many health experts concerned that we are not receiving all of the nutrients needed, because we rely so much on one source of food for nourishment. Producing all of this corn is also problematic, says Pollan, because soil needs to be manipulated in a way that is beneficial for high corn production, but may cause imbalances in the environment. In addition, the fossil fuels used to produce, ship and store corn is consumed in, what he considers, staggering amounts.

However, proponents of current corn

production suggest that inexpensive, locally-produced, corn-based biofuels could effectively reduce our dependency on foreign oil and provide a sustainable solution to our fossil fuel consumption. And doesn't that corn-fed burger of yours mentioned earlier taste delicious alongside those sweet kernels?

While the debate forges on, what's a hungry picnicker to do? I say to relax. Enjoy the summer sunshine with sweet corn, but eat it with conscience. Buy corn from a local grower. This will

“Eat it in season when it tastes the best and is the most nutritious.”

offer you a fresher product, help your local economy, and reduce the amount of fossil fuels attached to your meal. Eat it in season when it tastes the best and is the most nutritious. And become informed about the corn debate and the uses of corn, because an informed consumer can only help the right answer emerge. In other words, fellow Corn Lovers, perhaps it should be: thou shalt eat no out-of-season, faraway corn without first doing your homework.

Smoking-hot Summer Tobacco Legislation

by Matt Ronco

Unbeknownst to many local tobacco lovers, two new tobacco laws have come from the Nebraska Legislature this summer. One of them, LB 355, affects the statewide smoking ban. Introduced by Senator Scott Lautenbaugh and passed by a 27-22 vote on April 17th, LB 355 is an exemption to the existing statewide smoking ban that took effect June 1st. Even though Governor Heineman signed the bill on April 22nd, the close vote means that the exemption will not take effect until September, and will likely be reviewed by the Nebraska Supreme Court if challenged.

The exemption is for cigar bars that hold a Class C liquor license and earn at least 10% of their revenue from cigar and other tobacco products. Cigarette sales cannot be included in hitting the 10% revenue level, only cigars, little cigars and pipes can actually be smoked in the establishment. Other provisions of the exemption include: no food sales in the establishment; a walk-in humidor requirement; and payment of a \$1,000 application fee. Drink specials or discounts cannot be linked to cigar or other tobacco purchases, and owners are responsible for submitting proof of the revenue requirements being met, as well as ensuring only acceptable forms of tobacco are smoked inside of exempt establishments.

The main goal of the legislation is to provide an exemption so that cigar bars are still a viable and lawful business model. At the same time, the exemption strives to make sure only true cigar bars qualify, and not every establishment that just happens to sell cigars.

Jake's Cigars and Spirits in Omaha and Lincoln are two of the establishments affected by the exemption. Joe Zierke, General Manager of the Omaha location, commented on LB 355 with little worry. "Meeting the 10% tobacco revenue requirement is not a problem for us as we are already well beyond that number," Zierke said. "In fact, we have seen an upswing in the revenue generated by cigars

in general this summer thanks to loyal returning clientele," he said.

While the exemption is great for cigar smokers, it continues to leave cigarette smokers out in the cold (or heat), something Zierke suggests is no surprise. "I think most cigarette smokers are already used to being outside and have kind of accepted the fact



photo by J. Michael McBride

"The main goal of the legislation is to provide an exemption so that cigar bars are still a viable and lawful business mode...only true cigar bars qualify, and not every establishment that just happens to sell cigars."

that legislation isn't going to swing in their favor on this one," he said. "As for bars and nightclubs, we are doing fine. People are still going out and they are still drinking despite not being able to smoke cigarettes inside," he said.

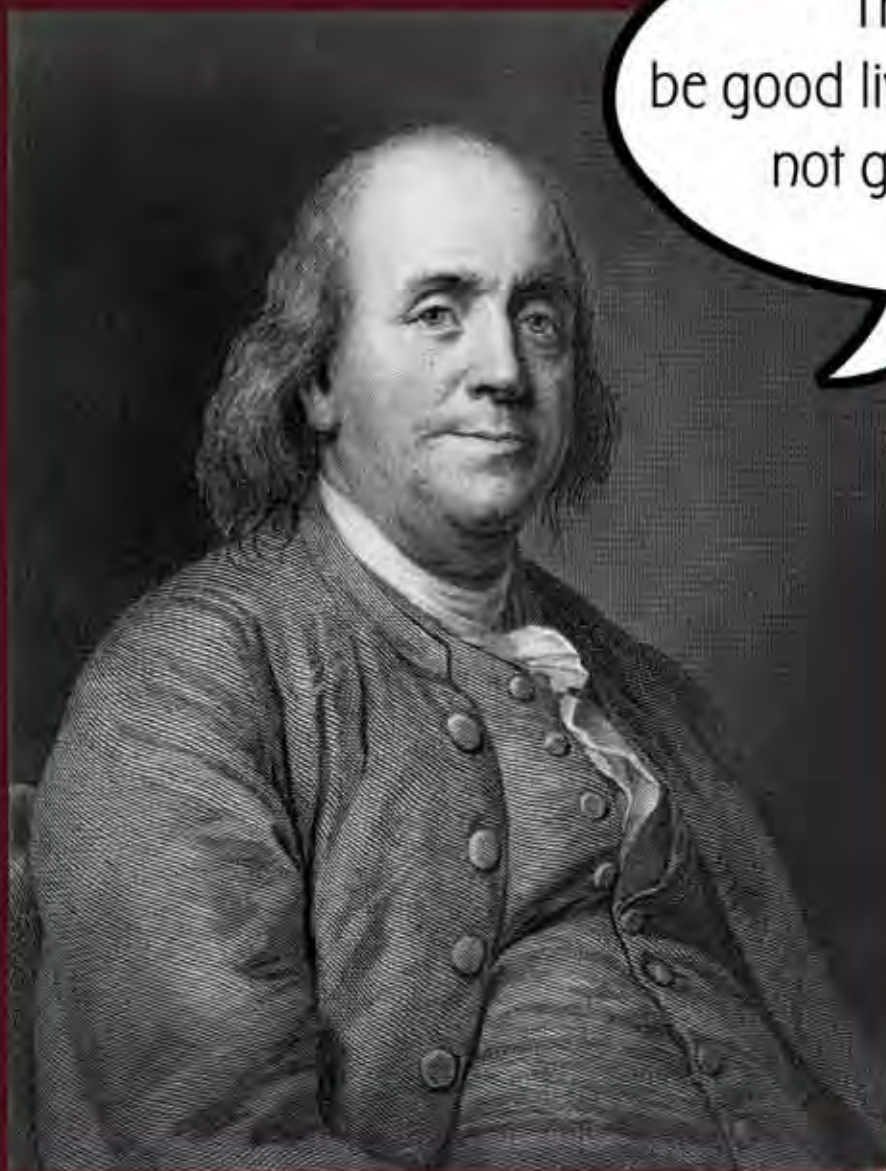
Cigarros of 13110 Birch St. in Omaha is another establishment that is probably breathing easier due to the exemption. While Cigarros management had no comments on the legislation at the time this article was written, their large walk-in humidor is one of the largest in Nebraska. Combined with more than 10 years spent building clientele, Cigarros can probably

more than meet the 10% revenue tobacco requirement.

While Jake's and Cigarros will have a special privilege among Omaha bars and restaurants, it will also fall on their respective staffs to police clientele to ensure that no guerilla cigarette enthusiasts are sneaking puffs into the haze. Will both establishments suffer more surprise inspections than the average bar due to their exemption? Other bar and restaurant owners, paranoid of losing clientele to cigar bars, will most likely be waiting in the wings along with politicians and ne'er-do-wells that want to stop smoking indoors at all costs. They argue: why should a cigar bar be any different from any other bar where workers' and patrons' health rights are compromised by smoke?

On the business end of things, how will the regulations of the exemption affect newcomers to the cigar bar scene? What of existing business owners that make the investment for a walk-in humidor but end up falling short on the 10% revenue requirement? Does paying the \$1,000 application fee and the building and stocking of a walk-in humidor show intent that will let a "newer" cigar venue remain legal long enough to show it's at the 10% revenue level? Several tobacco shops exist in town and supply a market that is probably narrower than many would think. Casual cigar smokers can often find cigars at liquor and other retail stores to smoke at home or on the golf course just as easily as visiting a specialist.

A second bill, LB 89, affects chewing tobacco and snuff consumers. Passed March 12th, LB 89 changed the taxation from 20% of snuff's purchase price to 44 cents per ounce in attempt to seek higher revenues. This move will bring down the average tax on premium chewing tobacco and snuff while increasing the tax for those who prefer discount brands. The good news is that the tax was originally planned at 65 cents per ounce, a number the Legislature debated down to 40 cents before settling on 44 cents.



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be good living where there is
not good drinking"

Benjamin Franklin

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YEAST INSPECTION:

Beers Reviewed by Jason McLaughlin



Boulevard Long-Strange Tripel (Kansas City, MO)

Total Score: 39/50

Appearance 2/3

The pour lends to a hazy deep golden orange hue. Huge creamy off-white head of tightly packed bubbles delivers beautiful lacing across the glass.

Aroma 9/12

An inviting toasty malt aroma peaks through first with a delicate toffee note. Hop aroma is moderate, and shows off a mairrage a floral and spicy character. Very clean and complex aroma.

Flavor/Mouthfeel 21/25

First impression is of fresh pear and a rich sweet caramel character. Peach, melon, lemon and fresh pineapple add to the fruity complexity. Toasty/bready notes again mingle with light banana and coriander with the addition of white pepper. Medium in body with very creamy carbonation feel and slight alcohol warmth.

Overall: 7/10

Complex and delicious. This is not the most authentic-tasting Tripel, having little of the Belgian yeast character found in other examples, yet is still a great beer that will do great with age. Grab a few bottles and open one each year.

Chimay Tripel (Belgium)

Total Score: 45/50

Appearance: 2/3

The pour leaves a beautiful, burnt golden color that has a slight haze. An off-white huge creamy head shows no sign of diminishing, and leaves a beautiful blanket of lace around the glass.

Aroma: 11/12

Bready notes are abundant, followed by a wonderful honey aroma. Light stone fruits make way for a slight banana smoothie and clove character.

Flavor/Mouthfeel: 23/25

Delicate spices and toffee come to mind instantly. Pepper, coriander and clove also comes to mind. Great bready/toasty lemon tartness supports. A delicious caramel and honey sweetness turns into a long dry finish. Medium-light in body with smooth and creamy carbonation.

Overall: 9/10

Amazing complexity makes this a top example of the style, round and creamy throughout. Everyone should enjoy a Trappist brewed version in order to fully understand the heights your taste buds can reach with this style.



Modern Monks Trippel (Grand Island, NE)

Total Score: 41/50

Appearance: 3/3

The pour leaves a brilliant clear golden color that truly glistens. A lasting frothy off-white head lasts for ages, and finally leaves a tightly packed webbing of lace sticking to the glass.

Aroma: 10/12

Wonderful bouquet of freshly sliced pear, oranges and faint banana mingle with a toasted bread character. Some mild clove adds a spiciness that complements.

Flavor/Mouthfeel: 20/25

A honeydew/cantaloupe like sweetness is followed by a dried apricot and light banana flavor. Toasted bread notes are accompanied by spicy clove and white pepper. Starts sweet and evolves into a dry finish with a higher than normal but pleasant hop bitterness. Medium in body with a creamy effervescent carbonation feel.

Overall: 8/10

This one is a flavor powerhouse. The depth and quantity of different fruits is incredible. This is one you want to jump on quick, as this is a small craft brewery that likes to rotate what they offer.



New Belgium Tripel (Fort Collins, CO)

Total Score: 34/50

Appearance: 2/3

Pours a brilliantly clear and vibrant deep golden color. Moderate white head is creamy in texture and dissipates rather quickly, leaving some delicate lacing that clings to the glass.

Aroma: 7/12

Banana dominates the nose and is backed up by a huge biscuity/bready aroma. Light clove, caramel and sugary pear release as the beer warms up a bit.

Flavor/Mouthfeel: 18/25

Candied banana topped with melted caramel is accompanied by bubblegum flavors. Closer tasting reveals a bread character and a tangerine sweetness. Slight peppery spice makes way for a moderately dry finish. Medium-light in body with a creamy carbonation feel, and virtually no detectable alcohol warmth.

Overall: 7/10

This could be a good choice for those looking to ease their way into the world of Belgian style beers. It is available virtually everywhere, and is not as dominating as many others in this category.



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Understanding Beer Fests

by Paul Kavulak

For many of you, the universe of beer spans about 20 feet and is contained within your local grocery store. This isn't necessarily a bad thing I guess but given the simple fact that there are nearly 1,500 breweries in the United States today and that most neither bottle nor distribute their beer – it doesn't take much to create a small mental image of the beers that must be missing from that grocery aisle.

So what to do? Well, if you embrace the simple ethos that Craft Beer provides tremendous diversity in brands and styles, you must also then seek to encounter this rich and varied landscape. But it may take a little work which is why today's treatise is centered on one of life's seasonal requisites – the Beer Fest.

"American Craft Beer Festivals exist to create an educational environment."

Before we discuss how to find one, let's dispel a few myths and seek some clarity. First, a Beer Fest is not a drunk fest. Believe it or not. American Craft Beer Festivals exist to create an educational environment within which attendees are able to discover and sample Craft Beers that they've likely not encountered previously. True, there may be some familiarity with a particular brewery or two but the excitement exists in the realm of discovery. Many times, breweries not only haul along their flagship brands but bring with them one-offs, reserve creations, and experimental beers. It is important that we create some mental distinction between a Craft Beer Festival and a Beer Garden, which does tend to gravitate simply toward a place to relax and consume but a few brands and little more. And I suppose this drives us on to our next little point.

Size matters. Drawing further distinction between the Beer Fest and the Beer Garden, one of the more interesting differentiators tends to be the size of the serving. As the Beer Fest has as its main goal a journey of discovery, servings tend to be of the 2 oz. variety while the Beer Garden, with its main goal that of refreshment, usually creates much larger servings of the 12 oz. or 16 oz. variety. Given a Beer Fest breadth of time that typically runs around 4

hours, toting around a 2 oz. sampler glass allows the attendee to move from beer to beer while keeping the eye on the prize – diversity.

"The beer garden many times provides a few macro-brands from which to select while the Beer Fest tent can sometimes have hundreds."

Diversity. I think this one word tends to provide, quite possibly, one of the largest reasons the entire Craft Beer movement is garnering such attention. Consider for a moment again that grocery aisle. If you can picture it in your mind's eye, you'll see that the large, mass produced brands tend to occupy the largest amount of space. The same is essentially true under the separate beer tents if you will. The beer garden many times provides a few macro-brands





“A beer fest is a tremendous way to connect with a community eager to learn, experience aspects of life that exist off the beaten path and find enjoyment in a serving that comes 2 ounces at a time.”

from which to select while the Beer Fest tent can sometimes have hundreds. Diversity is the spice of life and I’m here to help you encounter it.

Ok, so we’ve now created distinction and hopefully, a better awareness as to the purpose of a true Beer Festival. And beyond that, if you’re like me, we’re already wondering where and when the next Beer Fest might be. Well, let’s feed that inner appetite and malted barley desire. They are out there and easily found...

The largest within our fine country is the Great American Beer Festival held each year in Colorado. Hundreds of breweries and thousands of beers gathered in one massive setting to set your Craft Beer World on fire. But for many of you, distance remains a barrier. So let’s get to the heart of the matter.

Local! Man, I wish I had a nickel... you get the point. Omaha, Lincoln and the surrounding areas probably have more beer fests than you know. Unfortunately, and as you might expect, the organizers of these events many times deal with very tight budgets which limits the extent of advertising. Quite the paradox. But we have some pretty slick options when it comes to information. One of the largest beer event clearing houses can be found at Beeradvocate.com. As the name implies, BeerAdvocate has become an epicenter of sorts for local and regional information related to Craft Beer, beer events, and news within the Craft Beer community. Heading to their events page and running a query on the State of your choice will get you there.

As if I needed to create further desire, you’ll find that Beer Festivals tend to further an element of cultural expansion as well. Although not a mandate, charities tend to indirectly benefit in some fashion and local musicians and artists in general also find a common bond with the central themes of creativity, the eclectic nature of the attendees, and the knowledge that a beer fest is a tremendous way to connect with a community eager to learn, experience aspects of life that exist a little off the beaten path, and find enjoyment in a serving that comes 2 ounces at a time.

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

by Jason McLaughlin



“It’s great to find an American brewed lager with character. A very well rounded and well crafted beer.”

Lucky Bucket Pre-Prohibition Lager

Total Score: 42/50

Appearance 3/3

Pours a very attractive golden copper color, and is brilliantly clear. Large creamy white head has a rocky and frothy-like texture. Good dense lacing is left clinging to the glass.

Aroma 10/12

An inviting toasty malt aroma peaks through first with a delicate toffee note. Hop aroma is moderate, and shows off a mairrage a floral and spicy character. Very clean and complex aroma.

Flavor/Mouthfeel 21/25

A toasty and lightly sweet malt flavor is again a standout, and balances with a round soft bitterness. A floral hop flavor with just a touch of spice shines, but is not harsh or overbearing. Finish is dry and has a light lingering bitterness. Medium-light in body, with moderate carbonation feel.

Overall: 8/10

Refreshing is an understatement. No flavors are overpowering, yet there is a wonderfully complex balance of toasty malts and floral hops. It is great to find an American brewed lager with character. A very well rounded and well crafted beer.



Five Places to Get Bombed —Sake Bombed!

by Matt Ronco

The simple yet effective combination of dropping a shot of sake into an imported Japanese beer creates a wonderful shooter known as a sake bomb. While many restaurants, bars and nightclubs in the Metro now serve this delicious and rapid buzz agent, the following are Food & Spirits Magazine's top picks for bringing great food, atmosphere and service into the equation.

Blue Sushi Sake Grill and its offspring

Located at the Shops of Legacy at 144th and Maple or downtown in the Old Market, this local chain features some of the most chic environments for enjoying a sake bomb. Aquariums, beautiful liquor, beer-bottle art arrangements and architecture blend with a sexy staff that serves up sake bombs alongside what many argue is the best sushi in town. Happy hour and reverse happy hour (late night) specials include half-price appetizers along with \$2.50 sake bombs. They even call their bar "Sake Bombers." The hardest thing about this place is figuring out which great location to get bombed at!

@ Casual

Located in the Old Market at 10th and Farnam, this fusion cuisine restaurant and lounge offers a unique range of appetizers and dishes fused from French, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese and American cultures to accompany your sake bomb. The atmosphere mixes classic and contemporary styles with subtle lighting, and the second-floor lounge that overlooks Farnam is a great place to people watch while enjoying happy hour drink specials and great food. This eatery also has a top-notch service staff and multiple party rooms for those special occasions that require sake bombs for large numbers of people.

Kona Grill

Located in Village Pointe, this national chain is known in Omaha for having a patio and lounge that is a great late night sake bomb spot. The sushi is excellent, and many appetizers on the menu are half price for both happy hour and reverse happy hour, with many unique entrees available for those that need a cushion for the sake

bombs. In addition to getting sauced on sake bombs, you can also be sure that Kona has the right sauce for anything you are eating, with over 40 varieties of sauce made daily for their imaginative entrees. It's also one of the only places in town where you can get pizza alongside sake bombs!

Hiro Sushi

From the moment you enter the hallway that separates Hiro from 129th and Maple, you are transported to a land of sushi and sake bombs. This is another great place to enjoy sushi with a presentation that often looks too beautiful to eat in a setting made for contemplation. The kitchen delivers great Japanese and Chinese cuisine to back up happy hour and reverse happy hour specials.

Genji Steakhouse

Located on the southwest corner of 144th and Center, Genji does a great happy hour with discount sake bombs, appetizers and sushi. They make the list for having a cozy lounge and great staff, but moreover for providing the option to watch a chef/comedian throw knives and food should you choose to have dinner with your sake bombs.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Sakura Bana

Located off of 74th and Dodge, this traditional Japanese restaurant has been around for years, formerly as Sushi Ichiban off of 84th and Dodge. Unique tearooms provide the perfect venue for a small celebratory gathering so that the general public doesn't have to view your sake bomb debauchery.

Sushi Japan Yakiniku Boy

Located on the northeast corner of 144th and Center, you'll find great sushi and Japanese food as well as some very lively veteran sushi chefs. This place doesn't get the attention it should because of being "hidden," but it is a great lunch and dinner sake bomb spot.

Bar Chat: LIV Lounge

by Dan Crowell

LIV Lounge, located at 2279 S. 67th St. in Aksarben Village, is Omaha's new "classic cocktails" lounge. I sat down recently with proprietor Sam Hohman to find out what LIV Lounge is all about. Read highlights of that conversation below.

FSM: Describe the concept behind LIV Lounge.

LIV: Back to the basics. Good drinks, excellent service and a home away from home.

FSM: What is your philosophy in terms of the overall bar and cocktail profile?

LIV: Meet and exceed people's expectations. Of course we'd love people to try classic cocktails or at least a new cocktail based on classic principals, but at the end of the day, if someone really wants blue vodka with a chemically treated liquor then that is their prerogative.

FSM: What is your goal with the bar?

LIV: Create a long-lasting establishment that stands the test of time by being neither trendy nor too literal in our approach.

FSM: What is your background?

LIV: J.D./M.B.A., former HR executive, currently lead a non-profit organization. My husband is a business and real estate attorney. We both put ourselves through college working in the service industry.

FSM: From where do you draw inspiration?

LIV: Periodicals and experiences—we're always game as long as it's legal and leaves our limbs in tact.

FSM: Name some challenges associated with your approach.

LIV: Good drinks take time to make. We don't have a sour button on the gun.

FSM: Aksarben Village is constantly evolving. What do you think it will be like in a year? How does your approach at LIV take this evolution into consideration?

LIV: Aksarben is going to continue adding new elements over the next five to 10 years. This is exciting. Each new addition brings a new set to the community and therefore a new group of people to serve. We don't see ourselves changing from our core principles. Listening to what people want helps us to seamlessly greet each new influx of people.

"Old ladies, business people, hipsters, Junior Leaguers, the gay community... we've seen it all in a very short amount of time. The best part is they all keep coming back."

FSM: Describe your customer base. Who is coming to LIV?

LIV: All types, and that has been the most fun. Old ladies, business people, hipsters, Junior Leaguers, the gay community, bikers, small town visitors—we've seen it all in a very short amount of time. The best part is they all keep coming back.

FSM: Describe the response you've received from customers.

LIV: Tremendous. We continue to receive enormous compliments from first time visitors as well as regulars. Number one compliment is on the friendly staff, number two on the décor, number three on the cleanliness which we absolutely won't compromise on.

FSM: How do you approach bar staff training? What about floor staff?

LIV: All staff members receive the same training. We want our doormen to know as much about scotch as our bartenders. We do a lot of training. In the month that we have been open our staff has all had over 10 hours of training, not including the four soft

openings. Knowledge equals power. If our staff is knowledgeable then they have the power to sell.

FSM: How do you approach product consistency and quality control?

LIV: It's a constant battle, especially when we are busy. But because of the training our staff receives, they understand the importance of this element. As managers we are constantly working to give the staff what they need so that quality doesn't fall to efficiency or vice versa. Also, we listen to our clients. They are only too happy to tell us if a drink isn't right. If we know it's right, we take the time to educate them but always stay mindful of pleasing them. If we didn't do it right, we fully own up to it and correct the situation.

FSM: Are you using social networking sites to promote LIV? If so, which sites do you use and how do you use them?

LIV: Currently we have a website and a Facebook page and MySpace page. We will be entering the world of Twitter soon. We have a strong following on Facebook. People really look forward to our posts.

FSM: What's your favorite drink/liqueur/spirit?

LIV: It's ever-changing. Right now I'm really into sidecars. They are so delicious without being sweet. My husband pretty much sticks with draft beers. I'm also on a personal mission to get people to understand gin, its complexities, variances and use in cocktails. It's frustrating, though, because we simply can't get the wide variety of gins that exist in the market to Omaha.

FSM: What's the most recent product or development that has inspired you?

LIV: At the bar we are doing a lot with St-Germain. If we can get people to try it, they are hooked. We have created a number of amazing cocktails with it.

FSM: What do you drink when you go out?

LIV: Unfortunately, we keep it simple because we have had some pretty bad experiences.

FSM: What's your best-selling cocktail?

LIV: Our signature LIV Frei made with St-Germain and the Manhattan.

FSM: Do you use a cocktail list? Does the content change regularly?

LIV: We currently have 108 drinks on our cocktail menu. We don't foresee changing it yet, but of course it will continue to evolve. And just wait until we can actually get our hands on a bottle of Chartreuse or Maraschino Liqueur.

FSM: What would you like to tell the folks at home?

LIV: Stick to your guns. If we had a nickel for every piece of advice we got along the way that would have bastardized our vision, we'd actually be making money but not as a bar. Create a vision. Believe in yourself. Don't waver. And most importantly, continue to listen to that advice even if you don't follow it. Because if you are smart, it will either confirm your instincts or let you know when the vision isn't working.

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Libation Conversation: *Rediscovering the Classics*

by Dan Crowell

Classic cocktails have become classic for a very compelling reason. When made properly, they're delicious. However, the average cocktail consumer is subjected to a broad continuum of "interpretations" of these classics, many of which fail to demonstrate the true beauty of the actual cocktails upon which "interpretations" are based.

This failure stems chiefly but not exclusively from the common practice of substituting pre-made cocktail mixes for authentic ingredients and techniques required by the original recipes. While this is often a somewhat understandable concession to efficiency, it is nonetheless regrettable. High fructose corn syrup, coloring agents and such culinary gems as sodium metabisulfite have no place in a truly great cocktail.

One sure way to afford these cocktails all their rightful glory is to make them yourself according to the original, or as close to the original as possible, recipes.

Let's take a look at the recipes behind a few popular classics...

"One sure way to afford these cocktails all their rightful glory is to make them yourself according to the original, or as close to the original as possible, recipes."



THE MOJITO

(recipe from "The Craft of the Cocktail" by Dale DeGroff)



- 2 sprigs of mint
- 1 ounce simple syrup (one part sugar, one part water shaken together until the sugar dissolves)
- 3/4-ounce freshly squeezed lime juice
- 1-1/2 ounces light rum
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters (optional)
- Soda water

Muddle one mint sprig with simple syrup and lime juice in the bottom of the mixing-glass half of a Boston shaker. Add rum and bitters and shake with ice. Strain over cracked ice into a highball glass. Top with soda and the other sprig of mint.

Creating a balanced Mojito can be deceptively challenging. Fresh mint and lime juice both have prominent and distinctive flavor profiles. The sweetness of the simple syrup is required for the other elements to coexist peacefully, but it can be easily overdone. The bitters add a welcome depth and complexity to the drink, but must be applied with prudent restraint. And of course the better the rum, the better the cocktail.

There is no need to pulverize the mint during the muddling process. A firm bruising of the leaves is sufficient to extract the essential oils from the mint leaves.

THE MARGARITA

(recipe from Tommy's Mexican Restaurant, San Francisco)



- 2 ounces 100% blue Agave tequila
- 1 ounce freshly squeezed lime juice
- 1 ounce Agave syrup

Combine the ingredients in a shaker with ice. Shake well and strain into a chilled cocktail glass or over ice in a rocks glass. Salting the rim of the glass is optional.

As it is the most popular cocktail in America, there are countless opinions regarding the construction of the perfect Margarita. Tommy's Mexican Restaurant in San Francisco houses a world-class tequila bar and is widely considered to serve one of America's best margaritas. It is the essence of

simplicity, and lets the rich complexity of 100% blue Agave tequila shine through. Agave syrup is available at organic food stores and is naturally lower in carbohydrates than sugar. Its flavor profile marries perfectly with 100% blue Agave tequila (both are derived from the same part of the plant) and the combination is perfectly complemented by fresh lime juice.

I tend to favor reposado tequila over blanco in this recipe, but whichever suits your tastes is the correct choice for you. If the mood strikes, I may add a touch of Grand Marnier to my Margarita for added depth and richness.

Do your best to apply the salt only to the outside rim of the glass. This will keep salt from falling into the cocktail, thereby altering its flavor balance. I also like to garnish my Margaritas by topping them with a pinch of freshly grated lime zest from my Microplane.

THE MARTINI

(recipe from "The Joy of Mixology" by Gary Regan)



- 2-1/2 ounces gin or vodka
- 1/2-ounce dry vermouth
- 1 pitted olive or lemon twist for garnish

Add ingredients to an ice-filled mixing glass. Stir for 30 seconds. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Add garnish.

Many liberties have been taken regarding the use of the term "martini." Nearly all the drinks served in these glasses are technically just "cocktails," except of course an actual Martini. Yet a great many of these concoctions have had the word "martini" or "____-tini" incorporated into their names. At the end of the day, it's your booze and your glass. Call it whatever makes you happy, maybe a Happymaker. The purpose of this discourse, however, is to attempt to shed light on the true Martini. The Martini is a descendent of the Martinez cocktail which evolved from the Manhattan. Early print versions of the Martinez (which was made with sweet vermouth) described it as a Manhattan with gin instead of whiskey. Dry Martinis first began to appear in the early 1900s. Vodka wasn't a prominent force in the American cocktail culture until the mid-20th Century, and the idea of shaking a Martini and adding vodka to the mix can be attributed, of course, to cinematic James Bond.

In my own humble opinion, a Martini is made with four or five parts gin to one part dry vermouth, stirred thoroughly, not shaken, and served in a chilled cocktail glass, garnished with a single pitted olive. Gins vary fairly widely in flavor. Some gins are sweeter than others, some display prominent citrus notes, and some are more noticeably juniper-influenced, offering distinct, cooling piney notes. Experiment with several gins to find your preferred flavor profile, or use vodka and shake your Martini to pieces if you like. After all, it's your drink.



Is **Bigger** Better?

by John Finocchiaro

We are Americans. We like big things—big cars, big houses, big food portions, big shopping malls with big stores in big cities with big skyscrapers. The world of wine is no exception.

Western Europe had at least a good half-century head start on the business of making fine wine before Americans got serious. We had to play catch-up. We had to prove that we could produce wines that would compete with those from France, Italy and other western European nations. So we asked ourselves: how could we improve our wines and showcase them center stage and not be made the fool? It was time to implement our time-tested method of product improvement. Let's supersize 'em.

"Yes, we had done it. We had made our wines bigger than ever... But were they better?"

By prolonging the hang time of the fruit on the vine prior to harvest, we were able to produce grapes with huge ripeness. The resulting high sugar content allowed for higher alcohol wines, often exceeding 14 percent, resulting in wines with heft and punch. You didn't just taste these wines, you felt them. And by allowing the juice prolonged skin contact during fermentation and aging, these wines extracted high tannin levels and juicy, almost sweet flavors with deep and dark teeth-staining colors. We had jammy zinfandels that tasted like Port, and thick, high-octane, fruit-bomb cabernets.

Our white wines underwent a similar transformation. Ripe fruit coupled with lengthy periods of aging in new oak barrels produced rich, buttery, sometimes syrupy, sometimes cloying wines. Just as a shot of tequila is followed with a slice of lime, drinking big and rich American chardonnay sometimes tasted as if it had been followed by biting on a pencil—with a little butterscotch on top.

Yes, we had done it. We had made our wines bigger than ever. We had produced some of the world's first Botox wines. Call them wine on steroids. Call them Frankenstein wines. Call them wine-a-saurs. Whatever you call them, there was no denying that we had succeeded in producing "bigger" wines. But were they better?

The world took notice and consumers cast their positive votes at the cash register. Many of these wines were terrific and still are today. However, the consensus is not unanimously in favor of the "bigger is better" theory. As we have come to learn over the years, wine is all about balance of flavors. Just as more ketchup on

a burger doesn't necessarily make for a better burger, too much sweetness or oak or ripe fruit flavor can put a wine out of balance. A fine wine should be greater than the sum of its parts.

We have also learned from our European friends that wine is best served as an accompaniment to food. Wine should not overpower the dish it accompanies and vice versa. While a good wine should not assume the role of a mere side dish, it would be out of place for it to be bigger and bolder and richer in flavor than the food which it accompanies. Likewise, wine should not be so subdued and subtle and minimal in flavors and body as to vanish in the company of the food being served. All flavor components need to complement each other. The food and wine being served must be in balance with each other to be fully appreciated.

We have learned much about winemaking in this country over the past generation. We know how to make big, powerful, bold wines. But we have also learned that finesse and elegance in a wine may often be preferred.

A Little Corner of France in West Omaha

Le Voltaire
569 North 155th Plz.
Pepperwood Village
 (156th & West Dodge Rd.)
402-934-9374

www.LeVoltaireOmaha.com www.OverstockWineOnline.com



Grüner Veltliner Has Arrived...

by Jesse Becker

Summer grilling and a garden salad is great with a cold Coors “Banquet Beer” but is transcendent with Berger Grüner Veltliner.

Listen up: Grüner Veltliner has hit mainstream and for several years has been teacher’s pet of the wine industry. This is one of the hottest white wines in the wine world, and Grüner’s dry and electrifying profile is packed with citrusy acidity and flavors of Granny Smith apples, white peach and freshly cracked white pepper, a quality Austrians refer to as “Veltliner-Pfeffer.”

Grüner Veltliner is by far the most widely grown grape variety in Austria but is rarely found outside of its native country. It perplexes me that a wine with such compelling character can go unnoticed by other major wine regions (have you seen any Napa Valley Grüner Veltliner lately?), but Austria’s marquee varietal has taken little hold elsewhere mainly due to its former reputation as the simple carafe wine of Vienna’s “Heurigen” (wine cafés). However, this hasn’t been the case in recent years, and even though Grüner gives high yields and can be produced inexpensively, it is nevertheless loaded with interesting flavors and laser-like acidity. I enjoy Coors “Banquet Beer,” too, but it doesn’t taste like white pepper and it just isn’t as good with a fresh garden salad and grilled hamburgers.

The Grüner Veltliner grape is interesting.

“Grüner’s dry and electrifying profile is packed with citrusy acidity and flavors of Granny Smith apples, white peach and freshly cracked white pepper.”

Think about it this way: Grüner-Veltliner is made with no interference from the winemaker, as often is the case, meaning the crushed grapes are allowed to ferment naturally and age with minimal oxygen contact in stainless-steel tanks. This results in a multilayered, spicy dry white wine with a focused acidity that drives its finish for an unusually long time. Sounds pretty good doesn’t it?

Compare this with Chardonnay, a grape variety so popular that

“Grüner Veltliner comes from beautiful lower Austria, and most of the primo Grüner comes from Kamptal, Kremstal, and Wachau, three districts to the west of Vienna.”

some consumers believe “Chardonnay” is synonymous with any dry white wine, even though some Chardonnays are not dry at all. The actual flavor of Chardonnay fermented in stainless steel is, at its best, quite neutral with faint apple, lemon and bread dough aromas. At its worst, it has a quality I liken to diluted lemon water.

Taste any of the affordable Grüners listed below and you’ll be reminded of an array of interesting fruit, vegetable and spice flavors. After looking at hundreds of Grüner Veltliner tasting notes I’ve written, I found descriptors such as: radish, green beans, dill, bay leaf, lemon zest, lemon pith, Meyer lemon, kaffir lime leaf, lime blossom, white peach, and on and on.

The lesson? Grüner Veltliner is interesting! You should be drinking this stuff!



Picture of the terraced vineyards of the Wachau wine region.
photo by Jesse Becker

Grüner Veltliner's motherland, the spectacular terraced vineyards of the Wachau

Grüner Veltliner comes from beautiful lower Austria, and most of the primo Grüner comes from Kamptal, Kremstal, and Wachau, three districts to the west of Vienna. If you can remember those three regions in that order, you'll have a general idea about how powerful the wine is. Generally speaking, Kamptal is soft, Kremstal has medium weight, and Wachau is the most powerful. All three regions lie along the Danube River which cut a deep river valley where Grüner seemed predestined to grow.

The flat valley floor is extremely narrow, and steep hills jet straight up on both sides of the river. Because crops, farm animals and people need to live on the valley floor, the only place to grow vines is directly on the hillsides. While this is extremely difficult and sometimes dangerous work, the vines grown there benefit from exposure to the sun and the stress from growing in poor, rocky soil where they must root. It was probably the Romans who first cut terraces into these hills, and today many of the best wines are labeled "Hochterrassen" (high terraces).

Beer and BBQ go together, but why not try some Grüner?

Grüner Veltliner just might be one of the world's greatest food wines. Sommeliers love Grüner for its ability to work with foods that are otherwise problematic. Foods that have astringency or bitterness like asparagus and artichokes are tamed by Grüner, and Grüner even holds its own with heavier foods, say a juicy cheeseburger or bratwurst, because its zippy acidity act as the ultimate foil to fat and protein. And Grüner can work equally well in an elegant setting with refined cuisine like freshly shucked oysters, seared sea scallops or veal. And, Grüner Veltliner works wonderfully with many ethnic cuisines like Vietnamese or Dim Sum.

Finally, Grüner Veltliner is affordable.

Many Grüner Veltliners are relatively inexpensive. Sure, Coors "Banquet Beer" costs less and you can build a nifty beer-can

pyramid with your empties. And yes, super-fancy Grüners from cult producers like F.X. Pichler can get pricey. But if you stick to the producers listed below, you won't be disappointed, and when you show up at an after hours party with a liter of Grüner shouting "Veltliner-Pfeffer!" you will be the envy of all of your friends.

Berger Grüner Veltliner 2008 1L. \$15.99

Available at: La Buvette Wine & Grocery
511 S. 11th St. / (402) 344-8627
www.labuvetteomaha.com

And: The Winery
741 N. 98th St. / (402) 391-3535
www.thewineryomaha.com

Berger Grüner Veltliner tastes like lime, spice and green rhubarb. Better still, it's sealed with a crown cap, so you'll need to dig out your church key. This should be one of your summertime wine staples.

Salomon Undhof Grüner Veltliner Hochterrassen 2007 \$12.99

Available at: Cubby's Old Market
601 S. 13th St. / (402) 341-2900
www.cubbys.com

Cubby's is a great store. Bert Salomon is a great guy. And the Salomon Undhof Hochterrassen is a great value. What's not to like?

Loimer Lois Grüner Veltliner 2007 \$15.99

Available at: Spirit World
7517 Pacific St. / (402) 391-8680
www.spiritworldwine.com

This is a super-fresh style of Grüner Veltliner from Fred Loimer, one of Kamptal's hottest producers.

Stadt Krems Grüner Veltliner 2007 \$22.99

Available at: The Omaha Wine Company
701 N. 114th St. / (402) 431-8558
www.omahawinecompany.com

And: Whole Foods Market
10020 Regency Cir. / (402) 393-1200
www.wholefoodsmarket.com

This winery is owned by the city of Krems in the Kremstal region of lower Austria. It is fresh and fruity with citrus fruits and the classic white pepper aroma known as "Veltliner-Pfeffer".

Hirsch Grüner Veltliner #1 2008 \$15.99

Available at: Jake's Cigars and Spirits
6206 Maple St. / (402) 934-9633
www.jakescigarsandspirits.com

Juicy and bright, Johannes Hirsch's 2008 Grüner Veltliner #1 shows plenty of pepper and herb and is clean and refreshing. This is another terrific value from the Kamptal region.

Wines from Abroad:

Exciting New Zealand Wines

by John Fischer

It wasn't until the 1970s that winemakers in New Zealand paid serious attention to viniculture and the art of making quality wines. But by the 1980s, New Zealand wines gained world prominence. The vineyards from the Marlborough region began producing exceptionally high quality Sauvignon Blanc, and soon descriptions like "world class" and "unforgettable" were associated with New Zealand wines.

"New Zealand's vanguard wine is Sauvignon Blanc... the wine's consistency in quality and affordability is truly remarkable."

There is little doubt that New Zealand's vanguard wine is Sauvignon Blanc. These wines have the clean, citrus acidity that is typically found in Sancerre from the Loire Valley, yet compounded with a myriad of exotic savors commonly found in New World wines. What's more, the wine's consistency in quality and affordability is truly remarkable.

Many connoisseurs consider Marlborough the best place in the world to grow Sauvignon Blanc and feel that its wines are unmatched worldwide. That's some high talk, given that Sauvignon Blanc is successfully produced in so many wide-reaching areas. New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc is not oaked, which makes it relatively light, crisp and very food friendly. This is in contradistinction to Sauvignon Blancs produced in California and Bordeaux (white Bordeaux wines) that may be heavily oaked or blended with a softer, richer varietal called Semillon. These ministrations make the wine heavier, rounder and less food friendly.

The flavor profile of a New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc contains such flavors as lime, apple, grapefruit, guava, gooseberry, minerals and grass. These are supported by a crisp, clean and vibrant acidity. If you are interested in experiencing top quality New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, I would recommend the 2008 Kim Crawford or the 2008 Cloudy Bay, both of which are less than \$20 per bottle.



Although less auspicious than the Sauvignon Blanc, New Zealand Chardonnay is noteworthy. Its typical structure lies somewhere between white Burgundy and California Chardonnay. They are typically seasoned with a little oak, but are usually lighter in body than the usual California or Australian renditions. The country makes several other white varietals such as Riesling, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, Viognier and Gewürztraminer. However, some of these are difficult to find as they are not commonly exported, and none can compete with the quality of the Sauvignon Blancs.

Another wine from New Zealand that is getting a lot of buzz is Pinot Noir. It is the most widely planted red varietal, occupying about half the acreage of Sauvignon Blanc. The number of vineyards growing Pinot Noir has more than doubled over the last decade, indicating that winemakers are placing a great deal of stock in this varietal. Some wine aficionados consider New Zealand Pinot Noir able to compete with the best of those produced worldwide, save for those from Burgundy.

Pinot Noir is a finicky grape that is difficult to grow and tricky to vinify, which naturally makes them expensive to produce. However, it appears that the climate and soil in New Zealand is a perfect place to grow the grape. In many areas around the world, the climate is too warm, which results in an overripe, jammy wine that lacks finesse and refinement. On the other hand, if the climate is too cool, the wines become herbaceous and vegetal. New Zealand strikes a happy medium somewhere between these extremes. The climate in New Zealand is slightly cool, which makes its Pinot Noir a little tarter than those produced in other localities. Look for flavors of currant, cherry, cocoa, minerals and spice.

Not only is New Zealand Pinot Noir good, but it is priced right: most are less than \$20 per bottle. For wines of this quality, they represent a great bargain. Unfortunately, New Zealand Pinot Noir is difficult to find. However, as the wine becomes more plentiful, exports are bound to increase. If you happen to find a bottle, try it. You will be pleasantly surprised.

Growing Cabernet Sauvignon in New Zealand presents a little more of a challenge as the climate and soil are not ideal for the grape. The cool climate and fertile alluvial soil produce wines that have aggressive green vegetal flavors, especially that of green bell pepper. Nevertheless, there are areas in New Zealand where the grape has had some success (e.g., the Havelock North region of Hawke's Bay, or Waiheke Island near Auckland). The gravelly soils in these regions are warmer and can successfully produce good sound wines.

New Zealand reds are typically made from a blend of varietals, such as Cabernet Sauvignon blended with Merlot, or even using the usual Bordeaux blends: Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, and Malbec. There are also wines made from Syrah, Tempranillo, Montepulciano and Sangiovese. Unfortunately, none of these reds can match the quality of New Zealand's Pinot Noir.

Although the wine industry of New Zealand is young and many of its varietals have only recently been grown there, it is producing some high quality wines. Expect to see ever-increasing quality in its wines as winemakers continue to search New Zealand for ideal microclimates and favorable soils to match the needs of the many different varietals.

Food & Wine Pairings and WineToMatch for the iPhone

by Jesse Becker



After five months of work, WineToMatch, my iPhone App for food and wine pairing, is finally out and available at the iTunes Store for \$2.99. For anyone who may have asked themselves what wine to drink with what food, we hope you'll find our app and corresponding website, WineToMatch.com, a useful and fun tool to use. You may have asked yourself questions like "why do I need to match certain wines with certain foods anyway?" or "why can't we just drink the stuff and leave it alone at that?"

"The first rule of food and wine pairing is that there are no rules."

I want you to know that I've also asked those questions of myself. I frequently purchase wines I've never tasted before and I simply want to satisfy my curiosity. And just as frequently, I haven't the faintest idea of what I'll be eating with the wine when I purchase it, and there are many wines—Champagne being one of them—that can be extremely pleasurable even without a food pairing.

I'm also sympathetic to the idea that you really ought to drink what you like and eat what you like without the pretense of having to apply rules or guidelines to enjoy a meal with a bottle of wine. As we teach budding sommeliers in the Court of Master Sommeliers Introductory course, the first rule of food and wine pairing is that there are no rules. I wholeheartedly believe this and I also believe that some of the so-called "rules," like red wine with red meat and white wine with fish, have probably caused more anxiety about choosing the right wine than was ever necessary. With that being said, I want to relay a couple of personal experiences which I hope will convey why we as sommeliers do what we do and why we decided to create WineToMatch.com.

Food and Wine Pairing Disasters

Powerful, tannic red wines meet fish and shellfish.

I have seen this over and over again in my career as a sommelier and it has probably contributed to more fish courses being returned to the kitchen than for any other reason. Tannin, the component in red wines that coats the mouth with a certain gripping astringency, is especially prevalent in powerful red wines. The Nebbiolo-based wines of Barolo and Barbaresco are undoubtedly the most tannic

wines of all, but tannin is also a key feature in Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Malbec.

When tannin meets the umami-rich oil found in fish, our palates immediately become overwhelmed with a sensation that my colleague, Evan Goldstein, MS, describes as "sucking on a penny." It also amplifies the fishiness of the dish, making the fish seem as if it is old and rotting. This is something that we as sommeliers try to avoid at all costs. A sommelier friend of mine at a South American restaurant in Chicago goes so far as to pour a complimentary (complementary, even) glass of the dry white wine *Vino Verde* for guests who want ceviche as a starter, but have ordered a powerful Malbec from Mendoza to accompany their dinner.

Dry red wines meet chocolate.

I'm afraid this combination (or collision) is not a very good one, and the frequency with which it occurs is probably due more to wishful thinking by its practitioners than anything else. Bittersweet to sweet chocolate and dry red wine, often New World Cabernet Sauvignon, results in a bitter, chalky astringency on the palate. The temptation to make chocolate and red wine work together might stem from an idea that chocolate and red berries work together—which they do—and there are a few sweet red wines that pair very well with chocolate.

Banyuls, the fortified sweet red wine from France's Roussillon region is a classic partner with chocolate, as is Brachetto d'Acqui, the fizzy sweet red wine of Piemonte. Ruby Port can work occasionally, and the delicious sweet red Recioto wines of Veneto are other examples of chocolate-friendly red wines.

When Food and Wine Pairing Can be Transcendent

In situ moments highlight what grows together goes together.

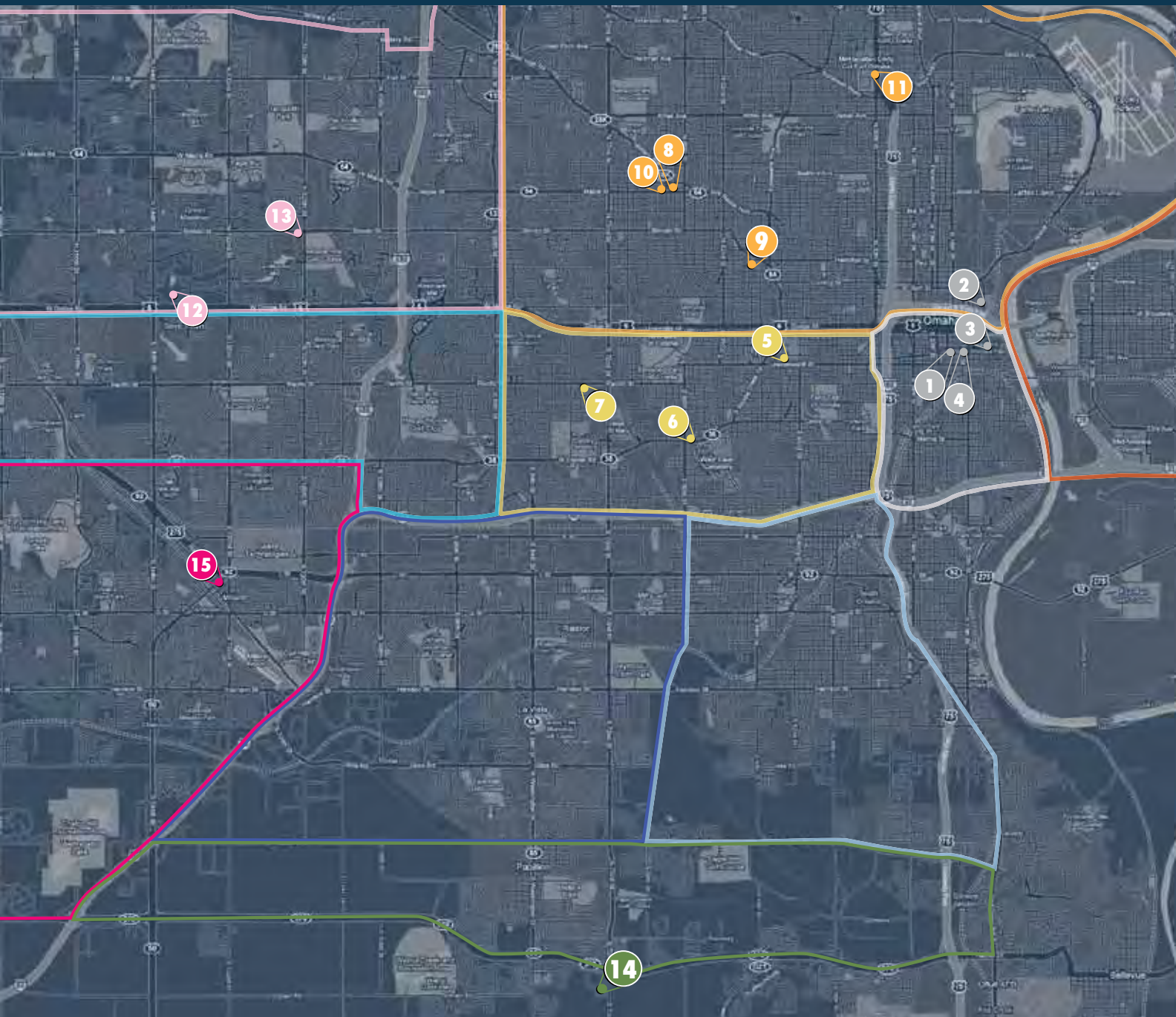
In situ sums up a vast majority of successful pairings. For example, a cool glass of the citrusy, almost saline quality of the dry white wine *Verdicchio* paired alongside a plate of ultra-fresh crudo, the classic raw fish preparation of Italy's Marche region, is one of my favorite food and wine pairings of all time. And sipping Pinot Noir in Oregon's Willamette Valley during the height of salmon season will make you a lifetime fan of this modern classic. Many of these regional pairings developed simultaneously and their synergy is no accident. It is the responsibility of the sommelier to have an extensive understanding of knowing "what grows together goes together," because so often these pairings cannot be bested.

Derive pleasure from über-refinement.

Even in the finest, most extravagant restaurants of the world, perfected and highly conceived food and wine pairings rarely occur. When they do, it can be a dazzling display of culinary fireworks, making the dinner one that will be remembered for a lifetime. I recall an incredible pairing of the Nebbiolo-based *Antoniolo Gattinara* with a lamb course at *Cyrus* in Healdsburg, California, where it seemed that all of the wine's structural and aromatic complexities were taken into consideration when the dish was conceived. It was a truly unforgettable experience.

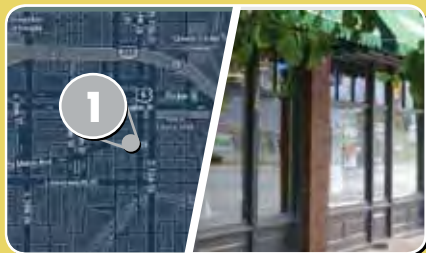
SELECTED OMAHA RESTAURANTS, BARS & LOUNGES

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



1 Cubby's Old Market Grocery

402-341-2900
601 S. 13th St



The original downtown grocery & deli. Featuring an eclectic domestic and imported cheese selection; 130+ craft, micro and import beers; Boar's Head meats & cheeses and an outstanding collection of wines. Custom catering, gourmet & specialty groceries, & fresh made deli salads. Monthly food & wine tastings.

2 Liberty Tavern

402-998-4321
1001 Cass St



Award winning Chef Glenn Wheeler invites you to enjoy selections from his wonderful menu. Liberty Tavern, located inside the Hilton Omaha, serves great American food and spirits in a comfortable, casual atmosphere with genuine hospitality. A perfect choice for those going to the Qwest Center or just looking for a relaxing dining experience, the Liberty Tavern offers complimentary parking at the Hilton.

3 M's Pub

402-342-2050
1110 Howard St



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

4 Vivace

402-342-2050
1110 Howard St



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

5 La Casa

402-556-6464
4432 Leavenworth St



Open since 1953, La Casa Pizzeria features the same Neapolitan pizza recipes it always has, but the menu has evolved to include a myriad of pasta dishes, utilizing our 4 signature sauces, as well as several specialty pizzas. Patrons can also enjoy calzones, salads, sandwiches and other Italian specialties and will appreciate our extensive selection of micro-brewed beers and wine.

6 Petrow's

402-551-0552
5914 Center Street



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

Downtown - BARS & RESTAURANTS

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

Central - BARS & RESTAURANTS

BROTHER'S LOUNGE	402-553-5822
THE 49 R	402-554-5841
THE DOWNUNDER	402-342-3806
THE ELBOW ROOM	402-556-0867
CANIGLIA'S VENICE INN	402-556-3111
GERDA'S BAKERY	402-553-6774
GOLDBERGS	402-556-2006
GORAT'S STEAK HOUSE	402-551-3733
HARKERT'S BAR-B-Q	402-554-0102
JONESY'S TACO HOUSE	402-551-6088
LA CASA PIZZARIA	402-556-6464
LITHUANIAN BAKERY & KAFE	402-391-3503
MCKENNA'S	402-393-7427
SPEZIA	402-391-2950

North - BARS & RESTAURANTS

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

7 Spirit World

402-391-8680
7517 Pacific Street



Spirit World is gourmet deli and specialty spirits store located in midtown Omaha. Our knowledgeable, loyal staff has the experience and love of food, wine and spirits to help you make the perfect selection. Our deli offers a variety of fresh homemade salads, soups and sandwiches. In the evenings, enjoy a glass or bottle of wine with a cheese plate, appetizer or entree.

8 Burke's Pub

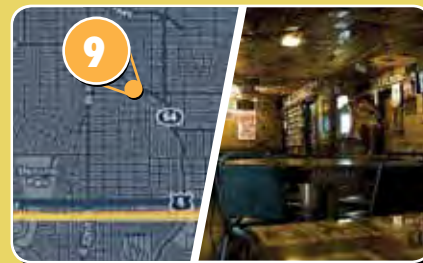
402-558-1365
6117 Maple Street



A quiet neighborhood sports bar with an Irish flair. Enjoy a large selection of beer on tap and a vast variety of ice cold bottled Micro Brews. Have a great conversation and play Touch Tunes Jukebox, Golden Tee Live 2008, Silver Strike Bowling, Keno, or watch your favorite Sports on one of our 13 TVs. Stop in today.

9 The Homy Inn

402-554-5815
1510 N Saddle Creek Rd



The Homy Inn has been an Omaha landmark since 1956. It was currently recognized in the June '07 edition of Esquire Magazine as one of the '50 Best Bars in the US'. The only place to go for your next celebration with Omaha's only champagne on tap, a vast assortment of tap and bottled beers plus all your favorite liquors in one of the most unique atmospheres you will find anywhere. Every visit a new experience.

10 Jake's Cigars & Spirits

402-934-9633
6206 Maple Street



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

11 Sage Student Bistro

402-457-2328
30th and Fort Streets



Providing guest-centered learning experiences, Sage Student Bistro is an integral force for the Institute for Culinary Arts at Metropolitan Community College (MCC). Each visit is an opportunity for our faculty to create a training exercise for the benefit of instruction. Customer feedback and gratuity provide valuable support to the learning community at MCC's Institute for the Culinary Arts. www.mccneb.edu/bistro
Bistro Hours - Mon. - Thurs. 6 - 8:30 p.m.

12 Charleston's

402-431-0023
13851 1st Natl. Bank Pkwy



Charleston's is a casual, upbeat restaurant with a modestly-priced menu featuring traditional American items prepared from scratch daily. With hard-wood grilled steaks, seafood, chicken, ribs, salads, burgers, sandwiches and a kids menu, Charleston's has something for everyone. The atmosphere is warm, cozy, and inviting with dark woods and gas lighting, that create a handsome, understated décor. With an emphasis on service, Charleston's is for you.

Northwest - BARS & RESTAURANTS

LIBRARY PUB	402-571-6262
NORTH SHORE	402-571-1150
OLD MILL	402-493-1456
DI COPPIA	402-392-2806
DJ'S DUGOUT	402-498-8855
DON CARMELO'S PIZZERIA	402-289-9800
HIRO JAPANESE CUISINE	402-933-0091
HOLLYWOOD DINER	402-445-8000
HONG KONG CAFE	402-493-8383
LE PEEP	402-408-1728
LE VOLTAIRE	402-934-9374
LIGHTHOUSE BAR & GRILL	402-498-3824
RED ZONE BBQ	402-431-9663
VINCENZO'S RISTORANTE	402-498-3889

South - BARS & RESTAURANTS

BG'S UNDER THE BRIDGE	402-734-9068
BROWN DERBY BAR	402-734-6198
DARBY'S TAVERN	402-733-9696
DONOHUE'S PUB	402-738-9780
JOHNNY Z'S	402-733-9602
HOMESTEAD CAFE	402-738-9989
HOWARD'S CHARRO CAFE	402-731-3776
JOE TESS' PLACE	402-731-7278
JOHNNY'S CAFE	402-731-4774
JOHN'S GRECIAN DELIGHT	402-731-8022
KAHN'S MONGOLIAN BBQ	402-731-4800
TAQUERIA TIAJUANA	402-731-1281
THAI KITCHEN	402-733-0579
ZESTO'S	402-932-4420

Bellevue - BARS & RESTAURANTS

DOUG'S TOWN TAVERN	402-291-5155
HAM'S BELLEVUE BAR	402-291-9941
JAMMER'S PUB	402-291-8282
PHARAOH'S	402-991-9000
PAT AND WALLY'S	402-291-9215
AMARILLO	402-571-2333
CHANDLER INN PIZZA	402-734-0663
CHINA CAFE	402-292-6999
CHINA STAR	402-292-6999
LUMS RESTAURANT	402-733-1646
NETTIES FINE MEXICAN FOOD	402-733-3359
STELLA'S HAMBURGERS	402-291-6088
VARSITY SPORTS CAFE	402-932-0303
VIDLAK'S FAMILY RESTAURANT	402-884-5111

13 Taxi's

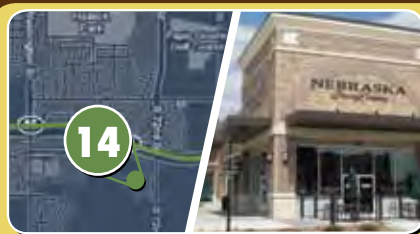
402-898-1882
1822 North 120th St.



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

14 Nebraska Brewing Co.

402-934-7100
7474 Towne Ctr Pkwy



Locally owned & operated, the Nebraska Brewing Company is located in Papillion's Shadow Lake Towne Center. Nebraska Brewing Company offers fine American cuisine in a casual dining atmosphere. Nearly 60 items in a selection-rich menu are guaranteed to satisfy any hunger — confidently backed by the finest Hand-Crafted Beers available anywhere.

15 Millard Roadhouse

402-891-9292
13325 Millard Ave.



A Millard family restaurant specializing in all your favorite home style foods; like broasted chicken, liver & onions, chicken fried steak as well as chicken & homemade mashed potatoes. We also have great appetizers, salads and sandwiches. There's a game room for all and one of Omaha's largest children's menus. Join us weekdays, 11-2 for our lunch buffet, and Sunday, 10-2 for our brunch buffet.

16 Le Voltaire

402-934-9374
569 N. 155th Plaza



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

Want to see your bar
or restaurant listed?

Give us a call at 402-203-6145
or email info@fsmomaha.com

FOOD & Spirits
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South Central - BARS & RESTAURANTS

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

Southwest - BARS & RESTAURANTS

PAT'S PUB	402-934-4242
PICCOLO'S BAR	402-895-9988
RATIGANS	402-895-3311
THE BEST PUB	402-891-9888
WHY-NOT LOUNGE	402-895-9990
CHINA BISTRO	402-895-5888
CRACKER BARREL	402-891-8665
DON & MILLIE'S	402-991-9112
FINNEGAN'S	402-333-6181
FRANK'S TREEHOUSE	402-731-3297
FUDDRUCKERS	402-932-7790
GREAT WALL, THE	402-895-3811
JULIAN'S SPORTS GRILL	402-991-2663

West - BARS & RESTAURANTS

MIC'S KARAOKE BAR	402-934-8640
NO WHERE BAR	402-502-5656
OBSERVATORY LOUNGE	402-334-9996
REDNECK SALOON	402-733-6365
SHARK CLUB	402-397-4275
THE REEL MARTINI BAR	402-884-7885
THE DRAFT HOUSE	402-884-2845
CHEEBURGER CHEEBURGER	402-884-5554
CHEESEBURGER IN PARADISE	402-289-4210
CHINA GARDEN	402-397-1995
CHIPOTLE	402-697-4903
CICI'S PIZZA	402-991-2992
CLANCY'S PUB	402-505-4400

The Dumpster: For Good Measure

by Michael Campbell

Recipes used to be simpler:

1. Hit pigeon with rock;
2. Pull off feathers;
3. Hold over fire until inside temperature reaches . . . ow!

Our ancestors learned the feather trick after some trial and error.

Then came the invention of tools. Cooks, sensitive that they had previously done nothing but burn things, decided they would get more respect if they renamed every tool that applied to cooking. They stopped using sticks and started using “utensils.”

Once they invented the arrow, the knife and the alphabet, things changed fast. Food parts were cut into littler and littler bits until they became too little to eat, fostering the invention of bowls, mixers and measuring spoons to put it all back together again, according to a “recipe.” Cooks became “chefs.” And that’s when trouble began.

“How much does an actual tea spoon hold? We don’t know, because even the British don’t use tea spoons.”

How could they screw up something as simple as a spoon? If a recipe calls for a tablespoon of ground pigeon flakes, you can’t use a spoon off the table and measure with it, because a regular spoon holds only a teaspoon. How much does an actual tea spoon hold? We don’t know, because even the British don’t use tea spoons. You stir tea with a demi-spoon, which, in spite of its name, is not half a spoon. We have a soup spoon but nobody measures with it, even though it holds nearly a tablespoon.

They also invented the “heaping” teaspoon, two words nobody thought would ever go together.

Does a drinking cup hold a cup? Of course not. It holds 1.5 cups. If I cup my hands I can carry one eighth of a cup. A cup holds

eight ounces of flour, which weighs four ounces. See how easy it is? Maybe this is why we give up and just go to Burger King.

Heaven forbid we use the metric system like the rest of the educated world. You know you are on shaky ground when your only compatriots using cups, pints and quarts are the British who can’t be trusted with food or naming things.

The British call a spatula a “scoop.” The Scots call it a “tossler,” but that’s forgivable: if your homeland was famous for haggis you’d toss your food too.

I like indistinct measurements like a “pinch” and a “dash.” While not clear, at least they’re not confusing. Besides, they use our fingers, which we happen to have handy.

We need more such measurements. For example, a “fistful” of cumin. Okay, maybe not cumin, because then you go around with your hand smelling like . . . cumin. Or how about a “finger” of cake frosting.

Maybe you’d argue that we shouldn’t measure using our body parts, because bodies aren’t consistent in size. I see that as a strength. A guy with big hands eats more, and his recipe would turn out accordingly.

How about a “glom” of yogurt? A “swipe” of peanut butter? I know there is a “schmear” of cream cheese, but I always feel a little shorted.

I love coffee because I grind the coffee beans in a coffee grinder, put them in a coffee maker, and make coffee in a coffee cup. I appreciate that clarity first thing in the morning.

Did we really need to call it a frying pan?

In my kitchen I have a whisk which is a mixer. My mixer uses beaters. I beat with a tenderizer which mashes. To mash potatoes I use a ricer, and I cook rice in the steamer while I steam vegetables in the colander before I toss them into a salad with dressing I whip up with my whisk.

My blender has buttons to chop, grate, crumb, puree, liquefy and whip. Guess what it doesn’t have a button for.





BEYOND

pulling off the impossible, they helped cater an event even a rabbi would love.

Catering a huge kosher event can be a test of faith. So when the fish failed to show up and the kitchen wasn't kosher, I found myself praying to a higher power. Short of parting the Red Sea, my U.S. Foodservice division team pulled off the miracle I needed...fresh fish and kosher equipment arrived in time. The day was saved and my prayers were answered! Mazol Tov U.S. Foodservice!

- Jeffrey Kollinger, Spice of Life Catering Company, Texas





Metropolitan Community College Fort Omaha Campus 30th and Fort Streets Building Ten



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fertile ground caramelized onion tart
shadowbrook farms roasted root vegetables



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