

# FOOD & *Spirits*<sup>®</sup>

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Issue 8

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

MAGAZINE | OMAHA EDITION

Sage Student Bistro Reviewed pg.12

The Ethos of Cooking pg.22

**TOP 10**  
RESTAURANT INDUSTRY  
**TRENDS**

FSMomaha.com

## 1) Regional Culinary schools

Providing excellence while restraining cost demands culinary education be locally relevant, so we can engage directly with the industry in order to supply top students to the growing workforce demands.

*(Jim Trebbien, Dean, Institute for the Culinary Arts at Metro Community College)*

# “There is no army in the world

## 2) Better paying careers

In any business, the quality of service is usually a reflection of the management’s attitude and skill: in the restaurant business, this is especially obvious. Hiring the best manager at the best pay will bring you the best result.

*(Joellen Zuk, ICA Faculty)*

With the increased exposure of chefs and restaurateurs as legitimate cultural icons and engaged community leaders, there has been a change in the type of individuals drawn into this business, the desire to gain higher levels of refinement through education, and ultimately the bestowal of greater financial reward.

*(Brian O’Malley, Chef-Instructor ICA)*

## 3) Artisan crafted foods

Seeing the amounts and quality of locally made Artisan foods is quite amazing. The foods we get to play around with on a day to day basis at work and at home is something we should surely be proud of.

*(Øystein Solberg, Chef-Instructor ICA)*

## 4) Fresh, local ingredients and sustainable food use

“There is no army in the world stronger than an idea whose time has truly come.” Chefs are turning to local and sustainably produced ingredients not because we think there is money in them, but because it is the right thing to do—our customers expect it, the environment needs it, the economy benefits from it, and local apples are flat-out delicious.

*(Brian O’Malley, Chef-Instructor ICA)*



# stronger than an idea whose time

## 5) Innovative menus

With today's guests becoming more and more food savvy and the expectations on a chef growing, we are required to do the unexpected with the unexpected – at a reasonable price.

*(Brian Young, Executive Chef ICA)*

## 6) More independent, local restaurants

It's great that the private industry is really starting to up the standards that some of the higher end chain places provide. To give something fresh and original to the locals, a quality "treat", and a taste of something local to travelers is desperately needed in today's culinary world.

*(Cory Guyer, Executive Chef The Old Mattress Factory)*

## 7) Nutritious, low-calorie foods

People are very focused on their health and well being, including how we feed our bodies and how that impacts our overall health. We need to be aware of not only calories, but the vitamins and minerals of food that promotes healthy bodies.

*(Patty Trebbien, RD Alegent Health)*



# has truly come.” *(Brian O’Malley, Chef-Instructor ICA)*

## 8) More beef on menus

Beef has never lost its popularity with chefs in the Midwest, and with a lot of research in the industry on the under used cuts, chefs are discovering many exciting possibilities for menus and recipes.

*(Jim Trebbien, Dean ICA)*

## 9) Foods to go

It used to be your only to go selections were fast foods. Now, the consumer can choose from a wide range of quality foods pre-prepared. Just look at the counters at Whole Foods Market, Wohlner’s, and other locally owned grocery stores: you can pick up a simple meal for one, dinner for a whole party, or a finished side dish to complete a meal.

*(JoAnne Garvey, Chef-Instructor ICA)*

## 10) Fresh, original desserts

The legions of classically-trained, highly-motivated and ridiculously-talented pastry chefs moving through America’s culinary schools have finally started to wrestle the little fiefdom known as “candyland” from the dominion of the savory chefs in all but the most cookie cutter establishments nationwide. The dining public’s sweet tooth is at long last being satiated with artisan craftsmanship and elegant presentation.

*(Jim Trebbien, Dean ICA)*



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# FOOD & *Spirits* CONTENTS



Letter from the Publisher 9

Letters to the Editor 10

Experts Panel 11

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## *Sections*

Food 12

Industry 40

Spirits 54

ACF Newsletter 44

Listing Guide 64

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## *Features*

Sage Student Bistro Reviewed 12

*A review of Sage's unique dining experience*

The Ethos of Cooking 22

*A primer to cooking at its best*

Staying Cool 42

*How businesses can stay relevant today*

The Cigar Bar is Back 52

*What the new laws mean to you*

Libation Conversation 62

*Maurice Hennessy & his family's brand*

## *On the Cover*

Charcuterie Buffet at the Sage Student Bistro.  
Photo by David Ahlquist.





## LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



This issue of Food & Spirits Magazine, our eighth, moves us into an exciting time and a new decade,

marks two full years of FSM being in business. During FSM's short lifetime, and particularly in the last year, lots of difficulties have arisen and many changes have taken place in food and spirits – around the country, in Omaha, and, of course, here at FSM.

Nationally, we've got a new president and, hopefully, a new economy to match. Undoubtedly, the depression/recession rocked the restaurant world but it hasn't

**“Changes are afoot, but they promise to add more to our city and the food and spirits scene.”**

stopped the push for more local foods and healthier eating. Small independent restaurants were able to adapt and change in a difficult marketplace and the large chains were forced to identify customers' needs and wants and fulfill them affordably.

Omaha fared the crappy economy better than many other cities around the country. Unemployment stayed low and many new restaurants sprang up in the last year. Some of them have provided a formerly absent experience to Omaha dining and some of them have become a few of Omaha's most talked about establishments. As well, the Institute for the Culinary Arts at Metropolitan Community College said goodbye to their old building and began work in their new, state of the art facility (for a look at the former Sage Bistro location, see our review inside).

In looking ahead towards the future, I came across a list from Nation's Restaurant News (see the entire list at <http://www.nrn.com/article.aspx?id=376444#ixzz0cL7V0y9q>) that speculated about the top 20 trends in food for the next year. In reading their predictions, I was pleasantly surprised to

note that Omaha has made significant strides in several areas identified as upcoming trends for 2010. I wouldn't quite say that the Omaha food and spirits scene is on the cutting edge – yet – but it is certainly moving in a direction that aligns itself with some of the more cutting edge food and spirits cities.

The top three items on the list of upcoming trends all have to do with locally, sustainably, produced meats and produce. Over the last two years, Omaha has made tremendous strides in this area. Local farmer's markets, CSAs and urban community farming options have sprouted up all over the Metro area. Additionally, restaurants and purveyors have taken notice of this increased demand and started sourcing local produce and meat from area farmers for their patrons. This cycle looks to continue, which leaves us all with fresher

and more nutritious options on our plate.

Trends in spirits are also prominent on the list with locally produced wine and beer coming in at number five, culinary cocktails 13th and micro-distilled/artisan liquor topping in at 14th. Omaha has also seen a great deal of improvement in this area with several establishments opening their doors that serve up unique cocktails and locally produced beer and wine. As well, Omaha now has a distillery producing liquor that is already on store shelves and at your local watering-hole.

All that is to say, Omaha looks pretty good and like it is moving in the right direction. Changes are afoot, but they promise to add more to our city and the food and spirits scene. It'll be exciting to see what happens next year and all of us at FSM look forward to continuing to do our best to keep you informed on everything in the Omaha food and spirits community. As always, if you see something you like let us know, and if you don't like something let us know that too – we're always listening.

No. 8

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EXERPTS FROM THE BLOG...

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### OMAHA DINING: A 50 YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

**Nancy**

I remember going to Trentino's a couple of times in high school. I think that it was adjacent to 10th Street, to the South of what is now the Old Market. I remember it sitting on a corner in what was the old Italian neighborhood. I'm still trying to find the recipe for the Chocolate Bavarian Mint dessert from the Hilltop House – does anyone have it? Does anyone out there remember Trixie's Bar in Downtown Omaha? They made the best shaved ham sandwiches baked in beer!

**Lynda**

I work at Qwest and we were visiting about our favorite restaurants: I remember Peter Citron so well.. he started with the South Omaha Sun... anyway, don't forget the Short Stop in south Omaha... we can't remember where Sparetime and Trentino's were located... was the Sparetime down on 6th, close to the original Caniglia's?

**Roger**

When we were kids, to celebrate our birthdays, my Grandmother would take us to The Silver Lining at Epply Airport for lunch – you could get your own little birthday cake! It was so cool to sit by the windows and watch the planes. My Dad used to take me to Trixie's to pick up those killer ham sandwiches.

### TAXI TROUBLE

**Don**

When drinking, it's all about you. The entitled American brat, with a few bucks that make you the king or queen of the world. Not the real world, your 'stupor world'.

**You all should become designated drivers: a few weekends of loading your stinking, obnoxious friends into your own ride should cure you."**

Spoiled little bottle babies, each more important than the next. There is no reasoning with your mentality, especially in the state of mind you deliberately put yourself in. You tip the many well paid intoxicators that push the poison, and belittle the resources you summon to your rescue. The common person doesn't understand the logistics or financial feasibility of the industry, let alone those that abuse themselves and others with with acceptance and addiction to booze. Now you may hate me for the truth – that's your problem. You all should become designated drivers: a few weekends of loading your stinking, obnoxious friends into your own ride should cure you.

### LIBATION CONVERSATION: THE AVIATION COCKTAIL

**Avy**

I'm a bartender in Adelaide and in most of the recipes, the ratio is 45ml plymouth gin, 15ml maraschino, 30ml lemon and in some (rare cases) a bar spoon (5ml) of creme de violette... it seems to be the common recipe in the good bars here and it tastes bloody good too. Other ratios I've tried are either too weak and lacking in substance as the drink takes on a less lemon juice approach.

**Kayla & Aaron**

We went on a creme de violette hunt and came up with two bottles. We're now enjoying aviations as they were intended – properly blue-ish – in our soon to be restored 1948 home in Long Beach. We used Hendrick's gin, your recipe - amazingly smooth. Thanks for the write-up!

### THE DUMPSTER: MOLDING OPINIONS

**Ali**

Interesting - thanks for sharing. I would have never known the facts about blue cheese. I'll eat it nonetheless. Looking forward to more insights from your writing!

## EXPERTS PANEL

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



### 1 Jesse Becker, M.S.

Jesse has 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 worked for Burgundy producer Maison Camille Giroud before relocating to Chicago as a sommelier for Charlie Trotter's and NoMI. He passed the Certified Wine Educator exam in 2006, and is one of just 173 Master Sommeliers worldwide. Recently, Jesse joined chef Paul Kulik at The Boiler Room in Omaha. 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](http://PickyMick.blogspot.com). He is the author of *Are You Going To Eat That?*, a collection of fifty humor essays.

### 3 Corey Caughlin

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

### 4 Dan Crowell

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

### 5 Dr. John Fischer

Dr. Fischer is a member and two-time president of the Omaha Branch of the International Wine & Food Society, past director of the Nebraska chapter of LADV, and the founding member of the

Council Bluffs Branch of the International Wine & Food Society. He teaches a course on matching wine with food at the Institute for the Culinary Arts in Omaha and is the author of two books: *The Evaluation of Wine—A Comprehensive Guide to the Art of Wine Tasting* and *Wine and Food—101*.

### 6 Judy Gilliard

Judy grew up in the restaurant business in Ventura, CA, later obtaining a degree in Hotel Restaurant Management and receiving her teaching credentials in food and food technology. For three years, she wrote the monthly feature "Simply Entertaining" on [emeril.com](http://emeril.com). Judy later moved to Omaha to host "Judy a la carte", which first aired on News Radio 1110 KFAB and to date is on more than 30 radio stations in the US. She is a member of the Association of Culinary Professionals, the International Food, Wine & Travel Writers Association, American Women in Radio and Television, Women's Chefs and Restaurateurs, and the American Culinary Federation. Judy is also the author of several cookbooks.

### 7 Jeremy Hunter

A food service warrior, Jeremy's 20 years of experience spans every aspect of the industry, from a dishwasher to owner of his own pizza restaurant. Above all, he loves being a server. When he's not behind the bar or helping customers, you'll find him with a nice microbrew and a glass of Grand Marnier.

### 8 Paul Kulik

At 19, Paul began working through a number of restaurants in Omaha, Washington DC, Berlin, Chicago and Paris before opening The Boiler Room Restaurant in the Old Market. Paul has contributed to food columns at the *Reader* and *Omaha Weekly* and has been a chef instructor at Omaha's MCC Culinary Arts Institute. Paul is also a partner in Dundee's Amsterdam Falafel and Kabob. Updates to Paul's menu, which changes daily, can be found at [www.theboilerroomrestaurant.com](http://www.theboilerroomrestaurant.com).

### 9 John Larkin

John, co-owner of Jake's Cigars & Spirits (Omaha and Lincoln), began his career as a tobacconist in Salt Lake City. In 2002, John moved to Lincoln to run Jake's for longtime friend Alex Roskelley. After a tour of Iraq with the Army Reserve, he bought into the original Jake's in downtown Lincoln. John and Alex

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

### 10 Jason McLaughlin

Jason is a Beer Judge Certification Program judge, craft beer aficionado and award-winning homebrewer living in Lincoln. His love for beer started when lifelong friend, Adam Curfew got his start at Squatter's brewery. Jason travels around the country judging beer competitions and attending related events. Beer tasting and evaluation is his passion: he appreciates a great example of any style, regardless of hype.

### 11 Brian O'Malley

Brian 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.

### 12 Ron Samuelson

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

### 13 Brian Smith

Brian 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?

### 14 Ann Summers

Ann is a writer, amateur naturalist, mother, cook, and slow food advocate. She writes children's nature books as well as print and web articles on food, fitness, nutrition, education and families. Her recipes and food ideas can be found on [annrsummers.com](http://annrsummers.com) and the NE Food Coop website: [nebraskafood.org](http://nebraskafood.org).



# Review: Sage Student Bistro

photos by David Ahlquist and J. Michael McBride



For Food & Spirits Magazine's quarterly roundtable review we paid homage, and a visit, to what has become, literally, an institution in the Omaha food scene – The Sage Student Bistro (32nd & Sorenson) at the Institute for the Culinary Arts at Metropolitan Community College on the Fort Omaha campus.

The Bistro is a unique experience in Omaha dining. The Bistro is a concept, not just a class or restaurant, and is designed to enable students to put all of the skills they learned in the first four quarters to practice in a time controlled environment.

Rather than as a restaurant, the Bistro was started as a class at the ICA in 1995 as a dining room for students in evening classes to cook food in quantity. In 1997 it was made into a bit of an upscale cooking class and in 2005 it was combined with another class (Gourmet Cooking) to become the fine dining class it is today.

That decision to turn a quantity cooking class into more of fine dining cooking class experience was made, in part, due to a cross country trip by ICA Dean, Jim Trebbien.

“During the trip I was looking at how over 30 leading culinary schools around the country operated in a 'best practices' model of education,” Jim explained. “It probably has made us a leading school in merging business operations and sales of food into the curriculum.”

In 2006, with Chef Brian O'Malley's guidance, it was further developed into the excellent and renowned class that it is



Chocolate/Peppermint Ganache Tartlette.  
Photo by David Ahlquist.

today. Now, all students are required to take the class in order to graduate. It was also teamed up with the Plated Desserts, production class, Table Service, and student manager's class to have the Bistro a complete 'real life' fine dining experience that has taught many valuable skills in a semi-realistic setting. Nearly 1000 students have taken a "Bistro" class.

And the Bistro has done more than teach budding culinary students. Since its inception, over 5000 people have eaten in the Bistro. The customers come for the food, the experience and for the uniqueness provided by the teaching experience.

In January 2010, the Bistro opened in a new building that provides even more for the student and dining customer alike. The new dining room is a classroom, and is designed for learning as well as dining excellence.

## The Review

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...

**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.

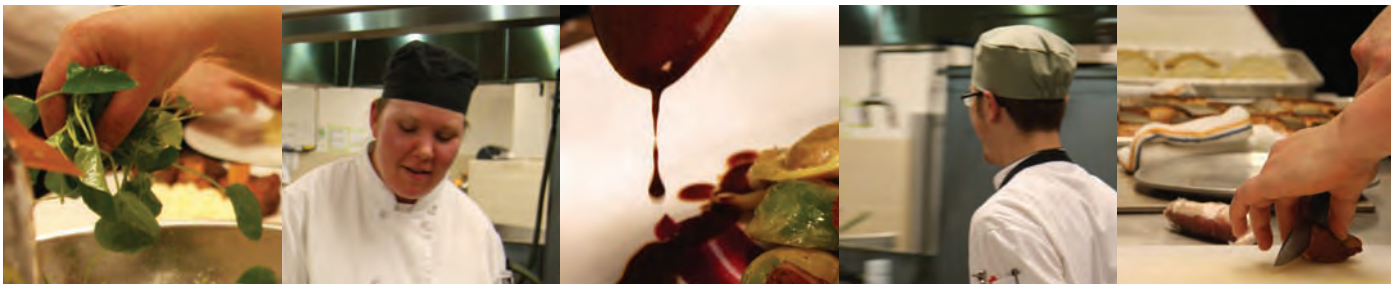
**Kelly Schumacher** – Kelly Schumacher grew up in a small town eating homemade, heart meals daily. Her close family all has a love of food and enjoy cooking. Kelly learned to cook watching her grandma and parents and put in lots of hours canning freezing and preserving produce from the family's garden. Kelly's not finicky and will try most anything, but she loves to cook traditional meals and prefers her meals au natural without too much spice or enhancement. She'll occasionally try her hand and something new and really likes to try new things while out and about in the big "O." Since moving here a few years ago, Kelly has been particularly excited about the variety of wines available in Omaha that she couldn't find at Casey's General Store back home. 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 own garden here in Omaha.

**Paul Kulik** – Beginning at 19, Paul worked through a number of restaurants in Omaha, Washington DC, Berlin Chicago and Paris before opening The Boiler Room Restaurant in the Old Market. He is firm believer that a strict commitment to quality and learning makes the job enjoyable. He has contributed food columns at the Reader and Omaha Weekly and has been a chef instructor at Omaha's MCC Culinary Arts Institute. Paul is also a partner in Dundee's Amsterdam Falafel and Kabob. Updates for Paul's daily changing menu can be found at HYPERLINK "<http://www.theboilerroomrestaurant.com>"[www.theboilerroomrestaurant.com](http://www.theboilerroomrestaurant.com).

**Jeremy Hunter** – Jeremy has lived off and on in Nebraska for 18 years. He has been in the industry for nearly 20 years. 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.

**Sarah Benck** - Sarah is 23 years old, and was born and raised in Omaha NE. She 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 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 Sebastians, Jaipur, and El Aguila.





## 1 Charcuterie Buffet

Pork & Pistachio Pâté, Chicken Liver Pâté, Gravlax, Marinated Olives, Pickled Onion, Drunken goat cheese, Gorgonzola, Manchego

**Average Presentation Score: 8.1**

**Average Flavor Score: 8.1**

**Average Overall Score: 7.925**

### SELECTED COMMENTS

**Jeremy** – The Pickles and onions were great, I loved the vinegar. The chicken liver pate had very strong liver flavor which isn't my style. As for the pate en croute, the flavor of pork really came through and was very meaty. The cheeses were also good, but I really thought the mustard was awesome.

**Derek** – I thought the duck liver pate had very nice flavor, though the fat solids coated my tongue on the finish. The center of the pate en croute was a tad more firm than I would've liked, but the flavor made up for it. On a scale from one to ten the Salmon was a five: I think this was an execution error. I really was looking for great grave lox. The raisin compote was very nice.

**Sarah** – The presentation of the dish was perfect, very meticulous. I loved the homemade mustard; it was smooth at first with a little fire at the end. Something I've never tried before was the liver pate; I was surprised how smooth and tasty it is – very mild.

**Paul** – Dynamite flavor on the pate, but I found it a bit on the gluey side. The raisin compote had great depth and the pickled onions were a bit sharp, though very flavorful. I'm sure the cucumbers were overcooked.

**Kelly** – The presentation was sleek and simple I almost couldn't tell if it was edible. The chicken pate was very smooth and delicious: not at all how I would have imagined. I really enjoyed the simplicity of the raisin compote. It was sweet like a preserve but not gelatinous and a touch of black pepper added a zip. The brie was bitter and sour tasting: I really didn't like it at all. The manchego and Parmigiano reggiano were delicious all by themselves; I could eat them all day.

**“The presentation of the dish was perfect, very meticulous.”**



## 2 Amuse Bouche

Sweet potato soup with citrus and portabella mushroom topped with chives.

**Average Presentation Score: 7.2**

**Average Flavor Score: 7.4**

**Average Overall Score: 7.2**

### SELECTED COMMENTS

**Jeremy** – This soup was way too thick. I was looking for more sweet potato flavor. It was almost like cheese sauce.

**Derek** – I felt there was something lacking about the presentation. The flavor was nice and the citrus added a nice twist. I couldn't understand why the mushrooms were in this dish. I thought this amuse was a bit like a starburst candy.

**Sarah** – This had a good mix of flavor between the sweet potato and orange – unexpected goodness. Overall, the small dish was quite flavorful, but a little too different for my liking. I also was thinking the presentation was lacking.

**Paul** – I really liked the texture of the soup.

**Kelly** – I enjoyed the presentation for a single portion. I didn't enjoy the touch of orange with the savory flavor of the potatoes. The consistency was smooth and creamy; almost fluffed, which was wonderful. Overall I really enjoyed this, although the temperature could've been warmer.

Amuse Bouche. Photo by David Ahlquist.



### 3 Duck Duo

Seared Duck Breast, Duck confit Ravioli, Beet Purée, Brussels sprout, cherry jus.

**Average Presentation Score: 7.6**

**Average Flavor Score: 7.4**

**Average Overall Score: 7.0**

#### SELECTED COMMENTS

**Jeremy** – Normally, I am not a fan of duck, but the ravioli was good. The star of the plate was the Brussels sprouts: they were great. The cherry sauce was very flavorful and added great color.

**Derek** – This dish was far too rare. In addition, the fat needed to be rendered a lot more. Looking around the table, I saw most plates were undercooked. I believe duck should be medium-rare, and this came out just barely rare. The pasta was a touch too dense, but had nice flavor. The Brussels sprouts were good, but not amazing: they could've used a touch more color. Finally, the cherry sauce was great.

**Sarah** – I thought the presentation was nice and simple: it looked very yummy. The duck was rare, or not cooked all the way, but very flavorful. Both of the sauces are great compliments. Although

the Brussels sprouts may have also been a bit undercooked, they were nice and crispy.

**Paul** – I loved the great earthy flavors, but the duck was undercooked. The flavor of the sauce complimented well with not too much sugar.

**Kelly** – I enjoyed the Brussels sprouts: they were not overly buttered or oily, soft and still slightly crisp. The ravioli was a little dry, but had good flavor. Normally I am not a beet fan, but they didn't seem so overwhelming in this form. The skin of the duck had a good flavor, but had a tremendous fat content. The duck was slightly undercooked for my taste, but still mouthwatering. My favorite part of this dish was the Brussels sprouts.

**“The star of the plate was the Brussels sprouts...The cherry sauce was very flavorful and added great color.”**



Duck Duo. Photo by J. Michael McBride.



#### 4 Braised Short Ribs

Short Ribs with whipped potatoes, glazed carrots, Watercress and sherry vinaigrette.

Average Presentation Score: 7.6

Average Flavor Score: 7.4

Average Overall Score: 7.0

#### SELECTED COMMENTS

**Jeremy** – The short ribs were a little dry. The whipped potatoes were good, but not flavored. Overall, the flavor of this dish worked, but the carrots could’ve been sweeter.

**Derek** – The carrots were undercooked, but the potatoes were nice and surprisingly flavorful. The short ribs were good, though they were a bit dry, which made me want more Au Jus. The salad was difficult to eat as presented.

**Sarah** – The presentation was great. It made my taste buds excited from the start. I did think the ribs were dry, but the sauce on top made this a little more moist.

**Paul** – I found this dish a bit basic, and dated. I kept thinking “really, glazed carrots?” The puree is the highlight. The short ribs were braised well, but the sauce was under seasoned.

**Kelly** – Delicious – the meat fell right off the bone. The length of the cress made it a little difficult to eat, but other than that, I found no flaws with this dish. The beautiful presentation was a real treat.

**“Delicious – the meat fell right off the bone. The beautiful presentation was a real treat.”**



photos by David Ahlquist and J. Michael McBride

Braised Short Ribs. Photo by J. Michael McBride.



## 5 Chocolate/peppermint Ganache Tartlette & Crème Brûlée

Average Presentation Score: 7.5  
Average Flavor Score: 8.0  
Average Overall Score: 8.0

### SELECTED COMMENTS

**Jeremy** – This crème brûlée was done perfectly, nice, crisp and not burnt. The flavor is excellent: not too overpowering and the cranberry crème was awesome. I like the creamy start with a crunchy finish.

**Derek** – Just a hit! Way beyond a standard crème brûlée. The execution was spot on but crème brûlée is always on the safe side.

**Sarah** – Mmm... an enormous peppermint patty, which was super creamy and I loved it! The crunchy shell complements the creamy filling.

**Kelly** – Deliciously smooth filling which was very rich and chocolatey, just the right amount of mint. I loved the beautiful presentation. The thin layer of cranberry on the bottom looked pretty and blended well with the flavor of the crème. The caramelized sugar on top is always a treat.

### FINAL SCORES

Service: 7.9  
Atmosphere: 7.0  
Food: 7.5  
Price: 9.0  
Overall Experience: 8.6

### FINAL COMMENTS:

**Jeremy** – Great time, great people; the wines and food both were good.

**Derek** – Sage is always a great experience, though you have to make some concessions for service and other factors.

**Sarah** – Yeah! Another great review. Some of the food blew me away; others were fairly basic, yet great classics. I always loved the metro cafeteria – love the bistro even more. I'll be back.

**Paul** – The point here is to come in with an open mind and not to be critical, but rather see where the students are at. I really thought the Charcuterie presentation was impressive.

**Kelly** – The service was very attentive, yet unobtrusive. Overall, the presentation was beautiful, through and through. The majority of the food was delicious.

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A shot of the bistro at the Institute for the Culinary Arts.  
Photo courtesy of Metro Community College.



ICA faculty members will teach students the trade in live demonstration rooms complete with a full kitchen. Photo courtesy of Metro Community College.

# THE POWER OF CHEESE

by Matt Biggins



**“Overall, it’s a great time to be a cheese lover in America.”**

I was raised on mild Cheddar cheese. It was omni-present. On burgers, sandwiches, nachos, salads, on damn near every meal. Now, there’s really nothing wrong with mild cheddar. It’s the Swiss army knife of cheeses. You can use it anywhere. And, until recently, there were few other cheeses to pick from at the local grocery store. Sure, you could find a block of Swiss or Monterey jack, but cheddar was the ruler of them all.

Times have, inevitably and dramatically, changed. Most grocery stores now offer a wide array of interesting cheeses. You’ll find your brie, chevre, blues and more. There are blocks of parmeggiano, Romano and asiago. Smoked and flavored farm cheeses are abundant. Overall, it’s a great time to be a cheese lover in America. The only problem now is navigating this wonderful world of artisan fromage. This large array can be not only confusing but downright intimidating.

My goal here is to provide a bit of a primer: an overview, if you will, of the grocery store cheese aisle. Before we get down to this, one caveat: As much as I do love the aforementioned selection, these cheeses are pre-cut and wrapped. Most are produced and pasteurized by large dairies. If you really want top-of-line cheese, you should find a local cheese shop or look online (I use [igourmet.com](http://igourmet.com)). The good stuff isn’t cut from the large blocks and wrapped until you order it. And yes, this does make a difference. But that is a story for another time.

For now, let’s take a walk through that grocery store cheese section. Here’s a very broad list of the most often stocked types: Cheddar, Swiss, Gouda, Farm Cheeses, Blue, Hard, Chevre and Mozzarella. (note: no these are not traditional varieties, remember, this is but a primer)

**Cheddars** – While cheddar can be laughably bland, there is a world of flavor within the genre. The Tillamook extra sharp and smoked varieties are great crowd pleasers. My personal favorite is Irish Cheddar. Its white (the traditional orange is an American invention) and quite hard, almost crumbly. Its sharp, strong flavor is unique and tasty.

**Swiss** – Emmentaler is a well-known Swiss variety. Semi-soft with a lively but not sharp flavor, it is silky smooth and another sure fire crowd pleaser.

**Gouda** – Very soft and smooth, available most commonly smoked or traditional. Great for snacking or melting (heavenly on a turkey sandwich). I love the smoked types. The smoke works wonders with the subtle Gouda flavor.

**Farm Cheeses** – Usually locally produced and flavored with herbs, garlic, horseradish etc. These are softer than cheddars. I’ve found most of the flavors overwhelm the cheese itself. Some can be great, but too often, I’ve been disappointed.

**“We’ve all seen the green cans of grated ‘parmesan’. The less said about those cans, the better.”**

**Hard Cheeses** - There are three popular types - parmesan, asiago and Romano. This class includes the finest, most versatile cheese on the planet. The undisputed king of them all, Parmigiano-Reggiano. Now, in the US anyone can produce and sell “parmesan”. We’ve all seen the green cans of grated “parmesan”. The less said about those cans, the better. There is but one Parmigiano-Reggiano. Produced only in specific regions of Italy under strict guidelines, there is little reason to accept anything but. I use the words “little reason”, because this stuff is not cheap. But a block can last a long time in your fridge. If you take only one thing out of this article, I hope it is this. No other parm can compete. Not even close. On pasta, meats,

veggies, in sauces, by itself, there is virtually no food that doesn't work. Spend the extra dollars. You will not be disappointed.

The asiagos and Romano's are slightly stronger in flavor. The Romano is noticeable saltier. Try a little of either one on a pasta primavera. Any one of these cheeses will compliment most foods and add a nice touch of flavor.

**Chevre** – Chevre refers to goat cheese (it's the French word for goat). Available in many forms, from very soft to hard. The most common type is soft and spreadable. I put some type of soft chevre on every cheese plate I prepare. Its simple yet sublime flavor is appealing to virtually everyone. It's also a nice palette cleanser when exploring some of the other, more pungent varieties. Available with all sorts of spices and blends, I prefer the simple plain ones. One note: a few extra bucks will pay off nicely. The simplicity of chevre can be downright bland in the cheapest brands.

**"Slices of fresh tomatoes, buffalo mozz and fresh basil topped with extra virgin olive oil and a drizzle of balsamic. Simple cuisine gets no better."**

**Mozzarella** - You don't see many cheeses packed in water. Just one, in fact, that I know of, Buffalo Mozzarella. Except for string cheese (ahhh... memories of childhood), the dry stuff is completely uninteresting. Made from the milk of water buffalo, this cheese is soft and lightly flavored. More interesting here is the texture. It is an essential ingredient in a caprese salad. Slices of fresh tomatoes, buffalo mozz and fresh basil topped with extra virgin olive oil and a drizzle of balsamic. Simple cuisine gets no better.

**Brie** – A soft cheese with a white mold rind. They can range from lightly flavored to crazy pungent. Different types can be aged from just a few months to a year. Any yes, you are supposed to eat the rind. You'll get a lot of flavor from that thin bit of mold. It's usually served in an entire wheel. While you may be tempted to pick out the gooey middle and leave the ends behind, which is considered to be a significant breach of cheese etiquette.

**Blues** – Blue cheese can be downright scary to many people. Moldy and pungent, the blues pack a powerful aroma. Some of the

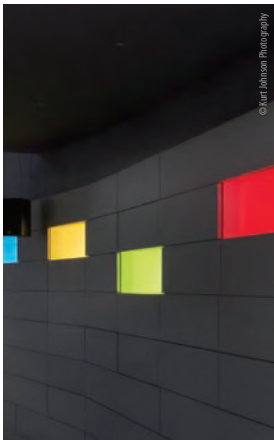
**"Blue cheese can be downright scary to many people... Simply put, man up and try 'em."**

funkier varieties are not for beginners. Maytag blue is produced right here in the US. It's a great middle of the road blue. Serve it simply with a slice of granny smith apple, in pasta or on a burger. Gorgonzola and cambozola are other readily available and wonderful tasting types. I could devote an entire article (or more) to the wonderful, funky world that is blue cheese. Simply put, man up and try 'em.

While we've but scratched the surface here, I hope this will help de-mystify artisan cheeses. There is arguably as much complexity and variety in cheese as there is in wines. You can approach them in much the same way. Do some research, invite some friends over and serve six, or eight different types. Talk about them. And above all, Enjoy!

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FOOD & Spirits



# The Ethos *of* Cooking

by Ann Summers

Often when we cook, we think only of ingredients, number of diners, seasonality, or cost, but rarely do we consider the *attitude* we have to muster in order to pull certain kinds of dishes off. One may say, “I don’t feel like cooking,” but perhaps the right response is, “You don’t feel like cooking *what?*” Here, then, from my experience in the kitchen and from reading and watching other cooks, are the emotional states necessary to succeed with various dishes in the broad span of kitchen life.

## *Powder-leavened Baked Breads*

Be delicate, deft, and deliberate with your quick breads, muffins, biscuits, scones and biscotti. Do not whistle, but hum softly and breathe through the nose. Stand at ease, shoulders back, ready to come up onto your toe points. Have a blistering hot oven ready before you wet a molecule of flour. Mix the dry ingredients with the steady force of a cement mixer. Fold the wet ingredients in and, mix the dough with a hand that could cradle a baby (or a spoon) until scarcely over the threshold of combined and lumpy. Hands up! Picture Michelangelo, not hacking away at David with a pile driver, but lovingly tapping the cheekbone, and then smoothly withdrawing. Overworking destroys sculpture and biscuits alike. When mixed, without dallying, plop the dough with speed and accuracy onto a baking sheet, and slip it into the oven like you’re crossing the line of the Paris Tours one-day cycling classic.

## *Kneaded Breads and Pasta*

Be forceful and vigorous with bread and pasta doughs. The only way to ruin it is to put in too much flour, so go light and add as you go. Sing the “Rocky” theme song in your head, or Beethoven’s “5th,” crack your knuckles, stretch your calf muscles and lay into it, mixing the ingredients with relentless oomph. Form a ball,

thwack it, smack it, swing it like a baseball bat and slap it onto the counter. Shove it, fold it, and smush it onto itself. What doesn’t kill it only makes it stronger. Regard its texture skeptically, and will it to be smooth and silky. Then walk away and leave it alone like an irritating lover after a tempestuous argument.

**“Flex your muscles, ice your tendonitis, and repeat the physical cycle of exertion and neglect, and finally, slash the top in flourish of triumph, and bake.”**

For pasta, whip it through the roller and cutter as if fabricating steel and being paid by the piece. For bread dough, ignore it—be utterly blasé, and when it is nearly too big for its bowl, start in on it again, then walk away again. Flex your muscles, ice your tendonitis, and repeat the physical cycle of exertion and neglect, and finally, slash the top in a flourish of triumph, and bake. Time with the seriousness of an Olympic trial. Cast pasta willy-nilly into boiling water and hover like Darryl Porter at home plate.

### *Butter Pastry*

Be zen-like and focused when you handle pie crust and pastry. If you must touch it at all, do so as if it is C-4 or enriched plutonium. No music. Utter silence. Gently, gently bring the ingredients together with a fork or spatula, in a nested bowl surrounded by the most frigid ice water possible if you are a sissy—no touching!—and speedily wrap the dough in plastic, and rush it pell-mell into the fridge for a lengthy quarantine. When forced to work it again, be calm and alert, dexterous and swift as a Navy Seal setting detonators. Roll it out, cut it and re-chill. Remove from the cold, and avoiding hand contact with surgical skill, begin the final stage of panning up. Touch it only if absolutely necessary. It's not TNT; it's worse; it's butter. If you're using shortening, go ahead and massage away, it's not worth eating anyway and your tasteless dough will be useful for hurling at barking dogs. Work the final filling, docking or shaping and try not to let your hands shake or sweat dot the perfect pastry. Bake, and breathe deeply in a decompression chamber or hot tub.

**“Tilt your knifeblade away from your busy fingers, grip the handle with practiced ease, not a white-knuckle stranglehold.”**

### *Fresh Produce Prep*

Be lively and nimble-fingered when paring, peeling and dispatching vegetables and fruits. Listen to Vivaldi or Stravinsky and leap gracefully to the refrigerator. Pivot on the balls of your feet, with the heel lifted, and glide to the counter like Baryshnikov coming center-stage for an ovation. Peel with advancedly trained muscle memory, but sprightly lest you bog down in a pile of peelings and beet root ends. Remove the piles neatly by collecting them on sheets of soy newsprint and lightly waltz them to the compost, and commence cutting. Tilt your knifeblade away from your busy fingers, grip the handle with practiced ease, not a white-knuckled stranglehold. Note the various densities of your vegetables, the scents, the colors, imagine the glossy braise, or crisp stirfry, dewy freshness, or Maillardian roasty brown that your plant bits will display. As you move about the kitchen, keep your knees bent, absorb the shock, and never pound the floor with your heels, causing the wine glasses to tremble and clink. Present your blanched, stewed or stir-fried fruits and veggies breezily, and move on with a light heart and a lighter step.

### *Animal Protein*

Be somber and mindful when trimming and trussing and dressing meat, birds and fish. Mahler or Brahms is appropriate, or Delta Blues or gospel music if you prefer. With respect, gratitude, and hope, trim, slice and denude the protein. Hold in your mind the carbon cycle, and the great circle of life. Run your tongue over your protruding canine teeth, and artfully rub the roast with lemon, spray and speckle with salt and pepper, splash with wine. Recall savory dishes of the past, when family sat round a hunk of something and sang or didn't, and went away full, adamant and rich. Watch your grill, oven or skillet with the cool nerves of the secret service scanning a crowd and never, never prematurely turn, poke, prod, or wrestle the meat. A light testing with the tip of a washed finger in a prudent amount of time, like a

vintner, silent, but flushed with anticipation. Make the call—done or not—with the conviction of a referee at a World Cup final, and serve with unwavering confidence and bursting generosity.

**“Lurch about the kitchen until slightly dizzy, and have your most exhausted guest set the table.”**

### *Late-Night Snacks*

Be drunken and vociferous when preparing a latenight or early morning feast, such as pasta carbonara, fried rice, or apple waffles. Close the door to the wing or floor of the house where the children or old people are sleeping, and loudly play Chaupin, Lizst, Bob Marley, or Sold Me Down the River by the Alarm. Sway breathlessly close to the hot pan or iron or boiling water, but recover with surprising ease, and then check and recheck the ingredient list to find the one that you were about to disastrously omit. Laugh hysterically and get the hiccups while smashing garlic or grating apples with the drooling wanton bliss of a dental patient on nitrous oxide. Burn or spill something, giggling helplessly and then shush everyone sternly and demand another prosecco. Lurch about the kitchen until slightly dizzy, and have your most exhausted guest set the table. Use the last two clean pots in the kitchen, abjure the mess, and produce perfectly cut garnishes at the last moment. Serve with tipsy gentility. Gobble down food communally and swoon.

### *A Word To The Cooks*

While you are mastering the above skills, avoid violating the major rules of culinary emotional freedom:

- Never ask anyone's opinion about what to cook if they are going to eat.
- Never say, “Don't worry, you're going to love this.”
- Always keep your guests waiting, but not in trepidation.
- Never give out recipes at the table, and only afterward if asked.
- And never, ever, *ever*, no matter how horrendous things turn out, never apologize for the food at the table. Do it later, and admit when you botch it. If food poisoning is involved, send flowers.

By sticking to your cooking guns, you may not avoid catastrophe, but you will learn to express yourself freely in the kitchen, without dependence or guilt-inducing rancor, and produce flavor-balanced and mentally balanced meals.



# Gotta Have It!

by Judy Gilliard

Turn your kitchen into a fun place to create the meals you enjoy with friends and family with some of my tried & true gadgets.

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This glove is a must: you just need to remember to put it on before you start using a greater or Microplane... you will thank me for this one! The Microplane Cut Resistant Glove protects your hands while using zester/graters. This glove is made out of cut resistant fibers. Material is stretchable, light weight, and breathable. One size fits most, glove works for either hand. Machine washable, please drip dry.

effortless.

## Microplane 4-Sided Box Grater



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# Eating Fresh: So Easy, Even a Caveman Can Do It

by Brian Smith

## Grow Your Own

Ever been called a “food snob?” It hurt, didn’t it? After you cried in your vichyssoise (which made it a touch too salty), you probably considered taking refuge in a plate of tiramisu, but the chef soaks the ladyfingers in coffee instead of espresso. It’s just not the same.

The fresh food movement has often been labeled elitist. Farmers markets? Organic produce? Seasonal eating? The critics say that Michael Pollan’s vision of food is out of reach of most Americans (plus, he’s from Berkeley!). According to their argument, the poor cannot possibly afford to eat well. It costs too much money, and it takes too much effort.

**“The decline in access to quality food stems from the fact that Americans rely on someone else to feed them.”**

I think that’s a bunch of compost. According to *The Institute of My Opinions*, the decline in access to quality food stems from the fact that Americans rely on someone else to feed them. By

some estimates, 90% of colonial Americans were involved in food production. Today, farmers make up less than 2% of the population. Our meals come from drive-thru windows instead of from our own gardens. There are more people in our prisons than on our farms. But I digress.

**“With a dollar, a backyard and a few months of growing time, your dollar gets 200-250 pounds of fresh cucumbers.”**

## Can You Spare a Dollar?

A recent study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that a dollar could buy 1,200 calories of potato chips or 875 calories of soda but just 250 calories of vegetables or 170 calories of fresh fruit. We all know that junk food equals cheap calories.

What they didn’t tell you is how much food you could grow from a dollar’s worth of seeds. Even buying the organic heirloom varieties, you can get in over your head pretty quickly. A packet of 250 cucumber seeds is \$5. You can pretty much bet that your

neighbors would call the cops if you tried to grow 250 cucumber plants. But let's take this down to \$1. At this price, you get 50 cucumber seeds. Depending on the variety, you might get 4-5 lbs of fruit per plant.

**"If you don't have access to a yard, you can join one of Omaha's many community gardens."**

So, with a dollar, a backyard and a few months of growing time, your dollar gets 200-250 pounds of fresh cucumbers. At 45 calories per cuke, that's 9,000 - 11,250 calories. (Yes, I had to do the math to maintain my journalistic integrity. All the data came from the Internet, which further boosts my credibility.)

#### So Easy, Even a Caveman Can Do It

When starting a garden, it's common to be afraid of failure, but experience breeds confidence. You can make it happen. Just get in the dirt and do it. The way I look at it, humans have been growing food for 10,000+ years. If we've survived this long, how badly can you screw up?

You need several things to get started: dirt, seeds, sunshine and water. These things are cheap and/or free. If you don't have access to a yard, you can join one of Omaha's many community gardens. That's an easy way to get support and tap into someone else's knowledge. If you want privacy, co-garden with a friend or relative or try container gardening. There's no excuse for not finding space. In Spring, you can buy seed packets at garden stores, drugstores or grocery stores. There are online sources for specialty seeds like heirloom varieties, GMO-free and organic seeds. Buy anything that sounds tasty.

Most seed packets have directions on how and when to plant your seeds. For more detailed information, go to the library (we still have those, right?) and get some gardening books. The important thing is to avoid overthinking this. "Planting" means sticking seeds in the soil. You can do this. Your seeds will sprout a few days after you've planted them, and you're on your way to eating in a few weeks.

**"When you produce something, you save the cost of paying other people to grow, ship, process, cook and deliver your food."**

#### Your Money or Your Life

In modern America, the poorest in our society eat the worst food. You can make an argument that it has been this way for eons, but the trouble has usually been lack of food, not overabundance of nutrient-deficient calories. The film Food Inc profiled a family who felt that they had no alternative to buying fast food because fresh produce was too expensive. They also had to purchase medication to treat diabetes. But, this family was eating hand-to-mouth. They bought food when they were hungry instead of planning meals. By taking a long-range view, anyone can stretch their food budget and afford to eat fresh produce, picked at the height of ripeness and flavor. Plus, your veggies will have more nutrients than cross-country produce.

Buying food is much more expensive than growing it. When you produce something, you save the cost of paying other people to grow, ship, process, cook and deliver your food. It takes a little time, but it's worth the effort. Trust me. As a farmer, I can tell you there's no better feeling than eating something you've grown yourself.

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**FOOD & Spirits**

The logo for Lama grill &amp; bar features the word "Lama" in a large, stylized, purple script font. A small green silhouette of a person jumping is positioned to the left of the letter 'a'. Below "Lama" is the text "grill &amp; bar" in a simple, black, sans-serif font. The background is a gradient of orange and yellow.

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# The Advent of Social Media and The 'New' Restaurant by Paul Kulik

Gourmet.com, the online wing of the newsstand magazine, acclaims six must go food blogs. And though the slideshow remains, a cursory glance betrays a rather awkward confession. Gourmet will no longer exist as a magazine, online or otherwise. So the website sails on like a ghost ship until the URL expires, and subscribers are advised that their Gourmet will be replaced with Bon Appetit until the end of their subscription. This is not the point of the new media spear; this is its bolster, the fat of the blade having already finished its gruesome handiwork.

like New York and San Francisco. The new media is cheap, easy to maintain, interactive, and of course democratic. A fractal army of writers eagerly staking out new restaurants or meticulously rebaking a Madeleine for a year until it is both light and rich and then writing about it is an overwhelming foe for editors' desks already leaden with other expensive obligations.

**“Farm to table restaurants rely on the internet to communicate... It is as critical that these restaurants communicate their mission on Facebook as it is in the dining room.”**

As a resource, the myriad of food blogs are a thing to behold. They range from the serious forum, like eGullet (an indispensable help desk in many communities) to the whimsical. And trends that would once take years to travel from Northern to Southern California race through online testimonials to the next next. Foodies in Dubuque can read about the pasta at Vetri in Philadelphia or David Chang's steamed buns at Momofuku. Archaic, though gorgeous, tomes like the French Laundry Cookbook are replaced with Google. Position chefs like to blog about what they make at work as well.

Websites like ideasinfood.com, where the sources contribute regularly to food journals, help casual readers navigate the choppy waters of molecular gastronomy. Blogging regularly, they tackle techniques and dishes that seem fit for WD-50, employing the garage full of tools and chemicals. The topics include compressing fruits and vegetables in sous vide, hydrocolloids, and freeze drying. The recipes read like Alinea's cookbook, and that is not a coincidence. The Chicago restaurant, one of the country's most influential, also embraces a technical savvy in the kitchen. Its cookbook, unlike its predecessors, has a continuing online forum to discuss the successes or challenges of the recipes contained in the book.

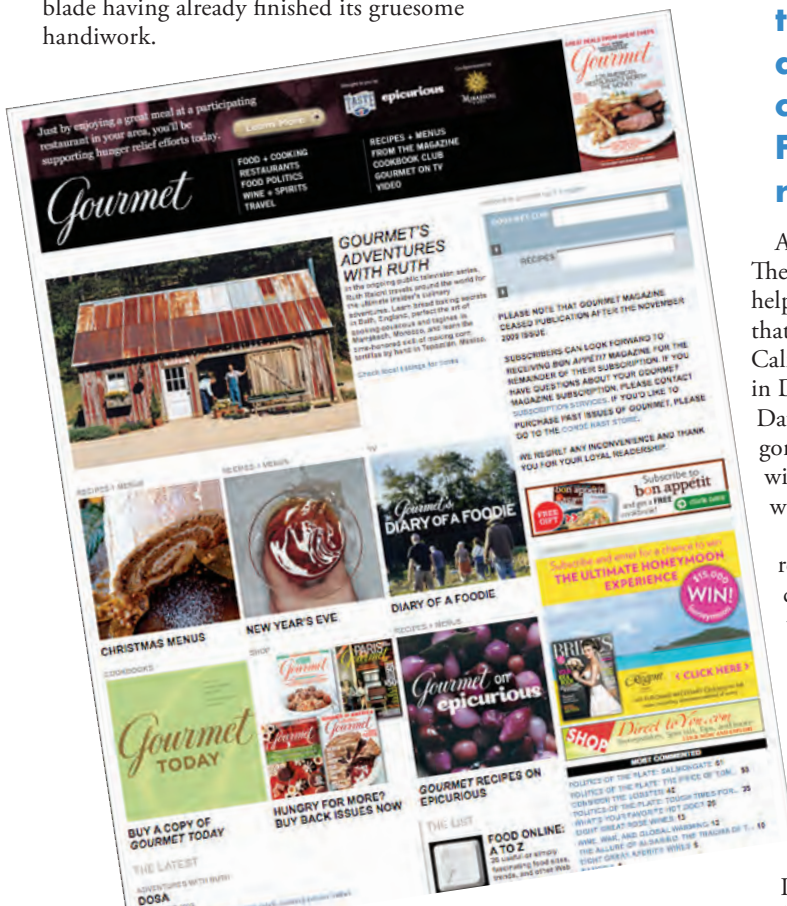
It, too, has become online and interactive, a trait that Alinea chef and owner Grant Achatz says was critical to publishing the book in the first place.

The baseline for online sophistication has clearly moved up, and restaurants don't need an account with Poly-Science to take note. Ironically on the other side of the spectrum, farm to table restaurants rely on the internet to communicate seasonality and innovation with raw products. It is as critical that these restaurants communicate their mission on Facebook as it is in the dining room.

Diners lugging five megapixel cameras into Michelin starred restaurants bring a multimedia experience not only to the Billecart-Salmon they ate with an amuse bouche at Michael Mina - they bring it to Omaha, Nebraska. Though sometimes masked by the narcissism that often accompanies dining frequently on twelve course tasting menus, the images are a permanent recording of the

**“The 'new' media is cheap, easy to maintain, interactive, and of course democratic... an overwhelming foe for editors' desks already leaden with other expensive obligations.”**

Julie Powell is not the first to take fork to bits, but her well known story, filmed as Julie and Julia, is an inspiration for aspiring epicures if not journalism school graduates. New food blogs have exploded in the run up to the film's release, although their presence had already been an essential thread in the media tapestry in cities



event, cementing the plating and displaying it to those who would be curious but unlikely diners. Readers catch a glimpse of a kind of service previously confined to Ruth Reichl books.

Dailies and alternative weeklies have been scrambling to find a way to keep up with these swollen blog rolls. Major papers have online subsections that function like personal blogs but with the gravitas and research behind their printed pages. Serious writers like San Francisco's Michael Bauer, NY Magazine's Gael Greene or The Wall Street Journal's Raymond Sokolov blog, tweet and Facebook.

But opinionated circus is still circus, and talk-backs to controversial posts circle round and round the same tired and irrelevant topics.

On open forum rating networks, intend to differentiate the good and the bad via anonymous feedback. Urbanspoon, Yelp, and Menupages give the pen (or keyboard) to the masses. At its best such rating systems replace the old guides like Guyot, Michelin, or Zagat with a reliable percentage of guests relaying their experiences. Unfortunately, however, bloggers can sabotage unsuspecting restaurants disproportionately replacing one highly motivated opinion for several more reasonable posts. Unaccredited opinions can belie truthfulness as ratings are hijacked by competitors or artificially bolstered by employee incentives.

**“The interconnectedness stretches from what to eat, to how it is prepared, to who ate it and when, to where it is eaten.”**

Online viewers are most often searching for some guidance. Restaurateurs may be looking for a hat tip on a new cocktail or menu item. Entire movements are abetted by the sharing of information difficult to find or even more difficult to distinguish. The cocktail renaissance movement flows from New York to Chicago to Kansas City through prodigious blogs like Artofdrink.com that describe house-made bitters, orgeat, and velvet falernum.

At home it's entirely different. The Food Network has utterly abandoned its attempt to teach how to cook. At home, most families are disconnected from an authority that can soothe what can be rather stressful: cooking itself. Recipe sites are so critical that, according to wine country's *Press Democrat*, blog sites are incomplete without them. Well done photos assuage careful readers through the rough parts of pate a choux or pickling backyard peaches.

The 'new' media is a tool that bears much fruit. Would be epicures are effete without it. Many professionals consider access and familiarity with online colleagues so integral that it would be embarrassing to neglect it. Restaurants are now obligated to move past passive marketing online to social networking. Influential restaurants have such a massive web presence that it can only be missed through willful ignorance. The interconnectedness stretches from what to eat, to how it is prepared, to who ate it and when, to where it is eaten.



Moribund regional papers are left in the unfortunate riptide of low revenue and mounting pressure from 'pajama' writers with a willingness to invest time and money on the subjects these papers can't find the readership to justify. The local critic becomes a relic of dispassionate writing only fit for a Luddite public's distaste for electronic media. The temptation to be 'bloggerly' and informal belies the need to remain authoritative.

**“That there are a lot of bloggers does not mean that there are a lot of good ones. Most blogs are laughably authoritative.”**

That there are a lot of bloggers does not mean that there are a lot of good ones. Most blogs are laughably authoritative. Dilettante diners replace an experienced and informed palette with a voracity of opinion, and readers have no way to differentiate the source. Restaurants must temper any enthusiasm about the meaning of online reviewing. Bloggers inveigh unwanted foods and places with untempered superlatives. Talkbacks and anonymous posts can devolve into hagiographic diatribes. Worse still, standards can be replaced with arbitrary invective. An amateur blogger indulging bad moods or bad habits doesn't care when opinion becomes gratuitous.



# Burgers **or** Bust:

## Five Omaha Favorites Reviewed

by Alexander Lund



**"I will devour five whole, entire burgers in just **one day...** for the sake of you, the readers."**

I am a man who loves a good burger. I'm here to give you a tour of five locations in Omaha that have those delicious beef patties with all the good stuff on top. Now, don't get me wrong, I love me a Big Mac at 2:30 in the morning just like everyone else. However, here I'm talking about grabbing the family or a group of friends, heading off to a burger joint or bar, and having a good time with some good eats.

We're going to use a four 'fork' system (surprisingly similar to a four 'star' system) to grade the burgers, with four forks being the highest score. I will be judging on taste, toppings, presentation, atmosphere and the staff or each place I visit in the course of just one day. That's right; I will devour five whole, entire burgers in just one day. To be honest, the prospect was a bit frightening and intimidating, but I soldiered on for the sake of you, the readers. *Let's do it.*

**"A very quick and tasty burger treat."**

### 1. B&G Tasty Foods

My first stop was *B&G Tasty Foods* (7900 Dodge St.). This is the home of the fabled loose meat sandwich; an art form I thought was lost: Not at B&G's.

They've been around since 1953 and I can see why. This place

was great!, I ordered the classic loose meat burger with cheese and it was delicious. The beef was well-seasoned and so was the staff. They were very friendly, but I was told in no uncertain terms, that they would NOT tell me the secret recipe (I had to try though). The atmosphere at B&G is very cool with a retro 1950's style. The burger itself was a lot of fun to eat too – there was so much meat, it was spilling out of the burger. Overall, I was pleased with the outcome – a very quick and tasty burger treat. The price is right as well with nothing over four bucks. 3 out of 4 forks.

**"The burger is awesome."**

### 2. Stella's

The next stop was *Stella's Hamburgers* (106 S. Galvin Rd.) in Bellevue. Stella's began on Friday the 13th, 1949 and was named after Estelle Francois Sullivan Tobler. No bad luck

here though because the burger is awesome. After a very nice waitress finished my history lesson, she recommended a big time burger. This 6.5 ounce burger was topped with mayo, lettuce, tomatoes, pickles, fried onions, bacon, cheese and oh yeah, a fried egg. Holy burger Batman!, I almost called 911, but made it to the end. Nice! Stella's get 3.5 forks.





**“Just a complete, classic burger.”**

### 3. Dinker’s

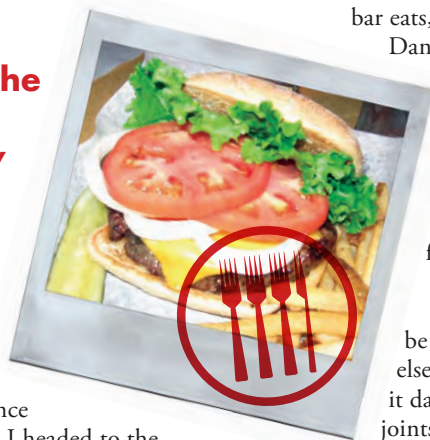
Next up was *Dinker’s* (2368 S. 29th St.), which has been an Omaha landmark since it was opened in 1965 by Frank ‘Dinker’ Synowlecki. The sign out front says ‘Omaha’s Best

Burger’ and I’ve heard the same from various people. Given those qualifications, I knew I had to check it out. Dinker’s has a great atmosphere: when I walked in, I felt immediately like the staff were downright, hard-working people who are not messing around. They serve ice-cold beer and one heck of a burger. This USDA Choice, all-beef patty was excellent. In just the first bite, I got the sensations of juicy, well-seasoned beef, melty, creamy cheese, mayo and a hint of butter on the toasty bun. It was incredible!, Nice and greasy – just a complete, classic burger. Dinker’s gets 4 out of 4 forks from me. Looks like the sign wasn’t lying.

**“Seasoned to perfection with all the toppings on a very tasty ciabatta bun.”**

### 4. Goldberg’s

My next stop was *Goldberg’s*. I’ve been to Goldberg’s a million times in my younger days. After a long absence, I decided to check them out again. There are two locations for Goldberg’s, but since I was in the Dundee neighborhood, I headed to the 5008 Dodge St. location. They’ve always had a good reputation, but I had it in mind that they would be unable to match my great experiences from the first three burger joints. Boy, was I wrong! It was a nice environment with a wonderful staff in a more or less, restaurant vibe. I ordered the trusty old Goldburger with cheese. I was amazed!, This eight ounce beef patty was seasoned to perfection with all the toppings on a very tasty ciabatta bun. Perhaps it was my low expectations, but this one blew me away – it is one excellent burger. Goldberg’s gets 3.5 forks.



**“Some of the best bar food ever – including the outstanding double Husker burger.”**

### 5. Danny’s Bar & Grill

Last, but certainly not least is *Danny’s Bar & Grill* (2007 N. 72nd St.).

I’ve eaten here many, many times and let me tell you, this place has some of the best bar food ever – including the outstanding double Husker burger. Had there been a ruler in my pocket, I would have taken it out and measured this beast. We’re talking two, 1/3 pound patties topped with gooey cheese, bacon, lettuce, tomato, mayo and onions... absolutely divine. Danny’s opened in November of 1982 and the menu hasn’t changed since. They offer a solid selection of bar eats, all made fresh daily.

Danny himself filled me in on one of his secrets – his staff.

Some of them have been here over 15 years and his number one guy, Tim, has been at Danny’s for over 20 years. *These guys sling over 160 burgers every day!* So, although this is my fifth burger today, I’m still loving it. Even though I had to take this beautiful creation home with me, it knocked me off my feet. Wow!, Four out of four forks!

After all that, my belly was full enough that I appeared to be pregnant. I have no idea how many calories – or anything else – I consumed during my burger exodus, but it was worth it damnit: it was a day packed full of fun and beef. The burger joints listed here are just a few of my many favorites – I’m sure there must be a ton out there that I have yet to discover. So, send in your suggestions and check out all the places here – there wasn’t a bad burger in the bunch.

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# Mmm... Bellevue

by Marq Manner

When driving through Bellevue, whether going up Cornhusker or heading down Galvin Road to Offutt AFB, one will see a mind-numbing array of fast food chains, followed by national sit down chains, followed by more fast food chains and so on. I really think the area has more bland chain restaurants and fast food joints per capita than any other area in the metro. That being said, when I think of my own personal need for comfort food, I tend to head to Bellevue for some emotional balancing by way of my stomach. There are three restaurants, all within a short distance of each other, that satisfy all of my basic food needs. Call them the three Bs: burgers, BBQ, and breakfast buffet.

## Amarillo BBQ

Amarillo BBQ is the best BBQ I have ever had. Bold statement? Not so much, as I am hardly alone in that opinion. A BBQ debate can be more heated than any political argument or a Beatles vs. The Stones tirade. There are many styles, regions and restaurants that people will claim to be the best, and like any other subject worth conversation, no one is going to change their mind.

Nothing will sway me from my love of Amarillo.

I have done Memphis, Kansas City, and the back road smoke pits of Oklahoma and Texas, and nothing has compared. Amarillo is located at 303 Fort Crook Road North.

Upon entering the establishment, that Texas road house vibe immediately takes hold through the sights, sounds, and smell of the small restaurant. Its décor could be considered kitschy if the restaurant were brand new and in a strip mall. Amarillo opened in 1988 and the old tin beer, gas station and road signs, along with junk-antique-shop-nick knackery feel like they belong in this joint. Country and rock n' roll music from its original hey day don't provide background music, but instead loudly become a part of the experience.

**"Nothing will sway me from my love of Amarillo. I have done Memphis, Kansas City, and the back road smoke pits of Oklahoma and Texas, and nothing has compared."**

It's the perfectly smoked meats – and especially the sauce – that make this a place to go back to often. From their free range chicken to their much talked about brisket, owner Gordon Campbell knows how to smoke some BBQ. I have a hard time deviating from the baby back ribs when I make my trek to Bellevue. This is comfort food for me after all, and not a time to be experimenting. I have never had their raved over homemade sausage or any of their fish features.

The key to Amarillo's amazing sauce is that they use raw local honey rather than corn syrup and this has ruined pretty much every other BBQ sauce for me for life. I have never left that place without an extra mason jar for use at home. It goes good with pretty much

everything you should or shouldn't put sauce on, and I have tried it with pretty much everything. Some say that Amarillo's corn bread is bland and the corn is watery, and it is, but due to that comfort factor I always double up on the cobs and drench that cornbread in the sauce and enjoy anyway.

## Stella's

Like BBQ, the fight over the best burger in town is one that very few will change their mind over. Louie M's Burger Lust, Dinkers, that hole in the wall in your neighborhood - they all claim the best burger and many people will back them up. For me and many others, Stella's at 106 South Galvin Road is that burger. I have been going there for over twenty years, and was really happy with the remodel of the burger spot and tavern a few years back. It has a much more comfortable feel to it now and there is an energy in the place brought on by the staff and the often packed house of enthused customers.

I am a person that likes things to remain original and old school, keeping the charm that made them what they were. The previous incarnation of Stella's was successful because of the food and not really the atmosphere. This remodel is a rare exception where upgrading was for the best, and mainly because the thing that made them famous did not change. The burgers and fries are still the best and most decadent around and still made on the original cast iron griddle.

**"The fight over the best burger in town is one that few will change their mind over... For me and many others, Stella's is that burger."**

The burgers are thick, messy and greasy. They are not topped with chintzy fixings and reside in the middle of two large, fresh, soft and chewy buns. Someone who does not eat meat would enjoy and be filled by a meatless version of this "burger". Then there are the fries: fresh cut and full of grease the way fries were supposed to be before everyone got their "healthy" oils and seasonings all over





them. Despite the fancy new digs, Stella's still serves their burgers on a napkin and the fries come in one of those wax paper lined bowls. They do offer a wider selection of beers than in their previous incarnation, but I am sure you can still find a Schlitz. Open for over 70 years, Stella's is one of the Omaha area's precious pieces of Americana, and one that has only improved in its current run.

## Lum's Diner

Lums Diner at 511 Fort Crook Road North was one of over 400 restaurants at that chains peak. The chain started in 1956 in Miami and eventually went bankrupt in 1983. Many of the franchised restaurants kept going, and the one in Bellevue is the last



one standing to still carry that name. The Lums in Bellevue is an independent restaurant doing its own thing and has been for some time. It is not under any corporate mandates, budgets or rationings. It just carries that classic name and the decades gone style of family restaurant.

Lums is comfort food, pure and simple. This is not where you go when on a diet or looking for heart friendly fare. This is where you go for a massive selection of everything good, not good for you. If you need steak, chicken, liver, burgers, fried shrimp, chicken fried steak and any common type of sandwich in big portions with sides that are hardly skimpy, this is the place to get it. I personally like to go there for the breakfast.

On Saturdays and Sundays, Lums runs an all you can eat breakfast bar and buffet. There is nothing fancy about this affair: it's a medium sized buffet with foods in heated wells right there for the picking. You won't get any fancy crepes, strawberry filled cakes, or spinach pesto scrambled Benedict. You will get everything you need to create the biggest heartiest breakfast you can imagine. Huge thick strips of bacon, fluffy and fresh scrambled eggs, sausage links and patties, hash browns invaded by bacon bits, French toast, pancakes, biscuits, gravy, muffins, massive cinnamon rolls, and much more. I think there might be some fruit in there as well. This is not some stale hotel breakfast bar, but a small slice of quality comfort to start your weekend. The only thing I don't like about the Lums breakfast bar is the biscuits which seem stiff and crumble at the touch, but I think they were meant to be drenched in the delicious sausage gravy and my goal is always to instead slather butter all over them. Otherwise, this is the best and least pretentious weekend belly buster around, if you choose to take it that far.

So, if comfort food is your deal, make your way South and go get yourself some Bellevue.

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# It's Getting *Butter* All The Time

by Ann Summers



“You’re not really from the South, are you?” Was my sister-in-law’s accusation when I once again reminded her that I don’t do butter. Yes, I am from the South, from Arkansas and anyone who has heard Bill Clinton talk (most of us) knows what my family sounds like. But I didn’t grow up in Paula Deen’s butter-tastic-buttermilk-butter-biscuit-with-butter-in-buttery-butter-sauce kind of South. There are different southern cooking traditions – just like you have different pizza crust, barbeque and chili traditions. A vast portion of southern folks use butter and more butter, but not the Appalachian South.

**“Now we know the awful truth: that hydrogenated fats are even worse for the body’s plumbing than good old animal fat... Now, butter is making a comeback.”**

I grew up in the ‘Oleo South’. A dreadful euphemism for margarine, oh-lee-ee-oh, is a mid-south tradition perpetuated by terrified men and women with high-blood pressure, a dubious cardiologist history, and a cultural cuisine soaked in lard and butter. Those things would kill you (never mind cigarettes and fertilizer) so the poor dears slopped ‘healthy’ margarine all over everything and fried the daylights out of their catfish in 10-gallon vats of ‘slimming’ vegetable shortening. Now we know the awful truth: that hydrogenated fats (in oleo, shortening, and over-heated

veg-oil) are even worse for the body’s plumbing than good old animal fat. They would have been better off with lard.

Now, butter is making a comeback, and one can even see chefs (on late-night shows when the kids are in bed) using lard in the pastry. Gack!, You say. How revolting!, Lard is – oh, it’s just gross! And it is, sort of, and so are schmaltz (chicken fat), and beef suet, but they are natural, which is more than you can say for oleo or olestra or whatever chemically engineered nightmares are out there. Of course, not everything natural is good. Take cyanide, for instance, or sarin gaso, so you can see my dilemma.

I finally decided that no matter what my family heritage, it would be all right to eat a little butter. I still don’t love it, and butter cookies to me are a waste of good sugar, but it’s easier to bake with than oleo-right-health-balance-yogurt-enhanced-spread stuff with real milk solids, and it was a done deal when my two children refused to eat any more fake butter. I was happy to feed it to the skinny children, in whose food I slip heavy cream whenever I have the chance: they don’t like French fries, and think McDonald’s is a song about a farmer, but I was still on the fence about eating butter myself. It was only when I started baking all my family’s bread, and finally let myself enjoy a freshly cut, yeasty slice (we’re talking old-school bread here, I don’t have a bread machine: I am the bread machine) layered with a little salty sweet fresh butter. I decided I would live.

I’ve done the nutrition research, and here’s what I think about the whole ‘French Paradox’ thing. For those of you unaware, this does not refer to the fact that the French sound very cool, but are actually incredibly dorky, but to the unsubstantiated fact that French people eat kilos of butter daily, but are thin and chic.

Anyone who watches the Tour De France cycle race as it winds its way through the countryside, bedazzled with over-fed spectators knows this paradox is fiction. They could be riding through the Mall of America. But there is a basis for most myth and this one as well. The French eat real food, they enjoy it with their friends, they eat lots of fresh vegetables, and at least they used to walk, cycle or move around a lot. Put butter into a typical American diet full of processed junk food and trans fats, add an immobility factor and you get a really fat person with high-cholesterol who can blame it on the butter. But if that same person started walking, chopping wood, doing yoga, lifting large rocks, and ate lots and lots of fresh veggies with butter, you would get a normal-looking person – and a paradox. How can you eat butter and not be fat? That's it, and that's what most of France did, until perhaps they quit all that and put a Mickey D's in the Louvre.

**“The more local, the fresher, and pastured cows really do make better butter.”**

Here's what you do: Throw out your fake oil spread. Go to a market that has more than one kind of greens. Pick out some fresh vegetables – the kind you tell yourself are too expensive: greenhouse baby asparagus, organic yellow beets, tightly bundled fresh artichokes, tender baby patty pan squash. Use your nose, touch them, smell them, turn them over. Take them home and cook them as little as possible and put some fresh unsalted butter on them, maybe a squeeze of lemon. Bake some bread. You can do it; it won't hurt a bit, and put a little butter on that first slice. Forget all that stuff that comes out of the door of the fridge or the freezer boxes that is supposed to be dough or rolls or whatever, and mix up a simple butter crust, a pate brisee, (2 c. flour, 1 stick butter, pinch salt, 2 tbsp. water) slap it into a tart pan and fill it with sliced apples, sugar, a little flour, and bake for an hour at 375. Go for a run or swim while your bread and tart are baking, and when you get back, eat some. Now tell me you don't like butter. And biscuits! And simple baked potato. And a boiled egg with a soft center just sliced and topped with a sliver of sweet butter and salt and pepper. And little toasts with butter, smoked salmon and capers with fresh chives.

Local butter is hard to come by. The more local, the fresher, and pastured cows really do make better butter. If you can get it, it freezes well, which is how I store it for baking. If you're going to do what I did and go butter, get the best you can find and savor it. Even if you're struggling to maintain weight or lose it, you can have butter. But spend a lot on it, and then you won't end up scooping it onto your toast in huge slabs with a pie server. Rather, you can spread tiny flakes onto excellent bread or biscuits the way you would treat fine Beluga caviar, or heritage goose liver foie gras with 25 year-old cognac.

I am reformed – my sister-in-law is smug about it. But it wouldn't have happened if my children hadn't turned up their noses at spread. Babies, however, have the finest palette on the planet, and when they said it tasted like chemicals, I realized, 'Hey, you're right!, This is nasty!' So let's get rid of other bad stuff and keep the butter. Let's learn to accompany our luscious farm-fresh veggies and home-made bread with lovely fresh butter, and try to remember what food really tastes like. My grandmothers didn't eat much butter, but I'm sure they could recall why they loved it. If only they'd known, their favorite food was really just fine.

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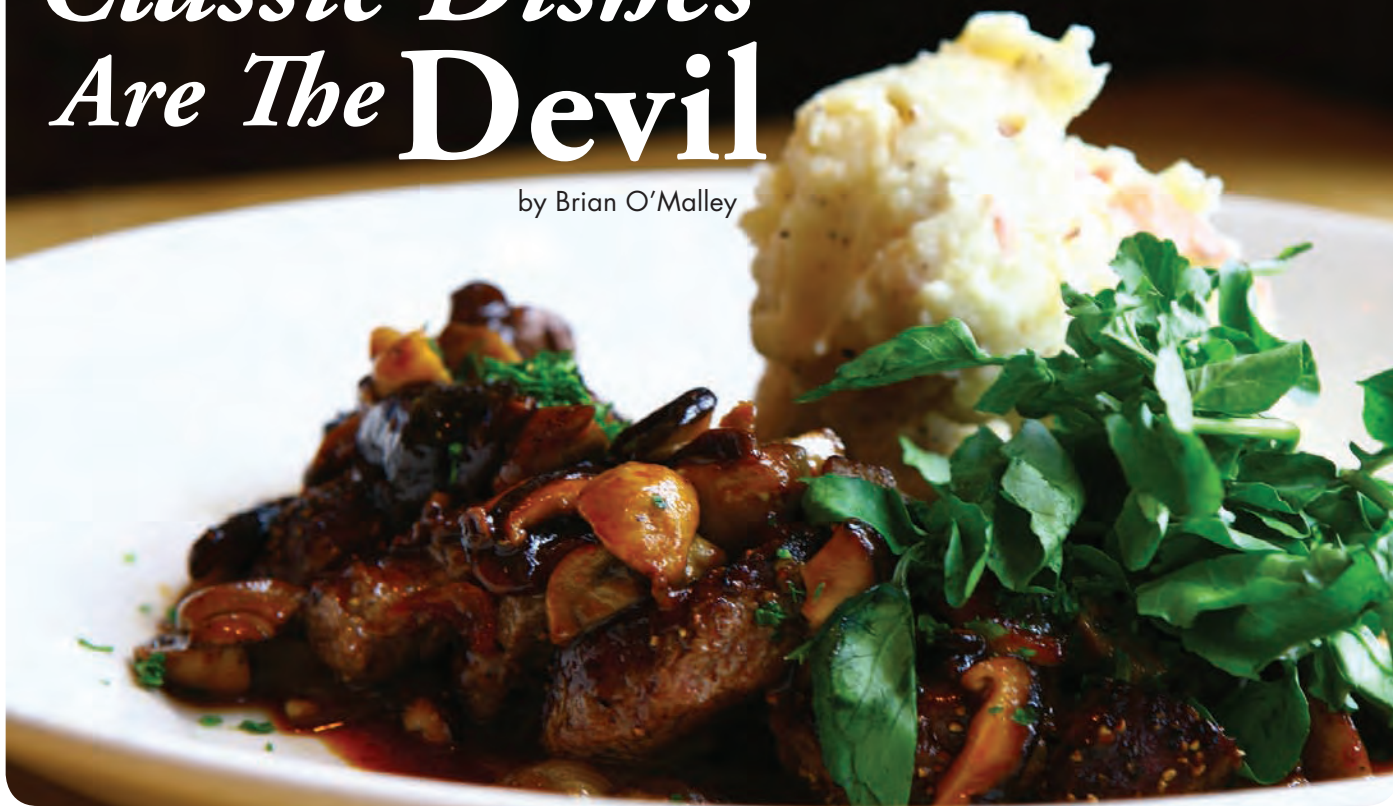
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# Classic Dishes Are The Devil

by Brian O'Malley



As a young(er) chef, I hated the classics. I found that things that had been done before should never be done again. I ran roughshod through the menu writing experiments in those days, putting awkwardly named and rarely tested concoctions into the repertoire at the restaurant<sup>1</sup> with little or no thought given to the origin or effectiveness of the dish. The strangely confident owners always smiled with glee at what they called my inventiveness, creativity, uniqueness, individuality, and passion. Their smiles were a bit tarnished when we closed after just nine glorious months (Not that I really want to take all the blame, but I was pretty clueless in those days. I can hear a current student saying, “those days?”, - *Touché.*).

**“Back then, customers would stride in, introduce themselves, and ask for myriad dishes for their special affairs... I was offended.”**

Back then, customers would stride in, introduce themselves, and ask for myriad dishes for their special affairs: Coq au Vin, Coquilles St. Jacques, Steak Diane, something called Rose Salmon and Lobster Thermador. I was offended. Those were other peoples' dishes. (At least I thought they were other people's dishes as I had barely ever heard of most of them.) They should want my food, I thought.

One lady went so far as to bring me a photocopied recipe for the Lobster Thermador out of her copy of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* by Julia Child. I was ashamed. We did not allow cookbooks in the restaurant, let alone a cookbook by a TV chef that just wrote down stuff that other people before her had “mastered.” I felt as though I was a great fresh artist. I was on the rise and anything that

I cooked would be delicious. What?, I had no palate, no training, and barely any sense of a professional kitchen.

A random customer once schooled me in the midst of Friday night service on the necessity and technique for removing silverskin from pork. That was of course after they had eaten it and found the meat too gristly. I was appreciative of the lesson, but still blinded by what I thought I knew to see the real depth of what I didn't.

## *Falling through the rabbit hole*

Life went on after BOJO. I worked a brief stint at the Aquarium on 72nd in order to make rent—it was a restaurant with aquariums, not an actual aquarium. Then I landed at the Champion's Club under Chef Teresa Kramer. While she claimed to eschew the classics as well, the ownership and membership of the club required her to tow the line on most things: I kept fighting it. The fight got even easier when Chef Michael Rhoades took the reins. He was another avowed lover of the avant-garde in those days and much more up to the struggle against the country club set than Teresa had been. We ballyhooed about cooking sea bass with chipotles and frying potatoes in egg roll wrappers. Life was grand. Then I fell down the rabbit hole.

**“What's with all this funny business? she blurted, “why are you trying to be different rather than delicious?”**

One night after service we, the twenty-something staff, set out for a drink at Office West. I knew “the Office” to be a favorite watering hole of the matron of my first-ever restaurant gig, but I figured her

to be long gone by midnight on a Sunday. *Au contraire, mon ami.* Vivian was up<sup>2</sup>— and up for a scolding.

I sauntered over once I recognized her. It was probably more of a shuffle with a bit of a limp, but I am sure she can't recount the story any differently, so we'll go with saunter. I was expecting to catch her up on my past few sorties and get a couple accolades about "carrying the torch", or "making George proud", or even an "I always thought that you'd contribute somehow." Boy was I wrong: Vivian gazed up at me from her keno ticket, slid down her half-moon glasses, crushed out her Benson and Hedges and shook her head. I tried to give her a hug — she thwarted it. "Vivian?" I said trying to muster a bit of my big brother's charm that she always loved.

"Yes Bull?" she responded with a bit of irritation<sup>3</sup>.

"Have you heard that I am still cooking?"

The ridiculously conceded aroma of this statement was evident to me as soon as I finished the 'ing'. But it was out there now. Her half-moons came clean off as she angrily pushed her non-winning keno ticket from the now-closed game aside.

"Sit down Bull," she huffed.

I did. And she started right in with the tirade.

"What's with all of this funny business?" she blurted, "why are you trying to be different rather than delicious?"

Well into my third Jameson, she was still drilling me. She had such high hopes. She thought I knew so much. She wondered why we don't just follow recipes. She railed on and on for almost an hour, begging me to explain what exactly the Victory Pasta was that she had seen on the menu from BOJO.

"Why don't you just make something delicious like Steak Diane?" she finally queried.

"What!?" I responded half dumbfounded and partially enraged.

"Delicious," she said, "delicious."

"I know you said delicious," I started, "But do you really think that I am gonna..." I trailed off.

"I do," she said with her motherly authority.

"Heard."

I finished my drink, tried to pay her tab, and collected my buddies.

## **"I went home, pulled out all the cookbooks that I had begrudgingly accepted as gifts over the years and started to do what all ambitious students should do: I read."**

I went straight to work. Not literally, as it was pushin' 2:00am by this time and I had yet to earn a key at Champion's. I went home, pulled out all the cookbooks that I had begrudgingly accepted as gifts over the years and started to do what all ambitious students should do: I read. I read and read and read. I may not have slept for the next 24 hours as I poured through everything from the *Mercy High School Alumni Cookbook* to *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. About two-thirds through Julia's opus, I got punched in the face. Steak Diane: how plain I had once thought it to be. I read it with the enthusiasm of a 13 year old with his first *Playboy*<sup>4</sup>. I did then what the thirteen-year-olds only get to fantasize about: I engaged the words on the page and made them come to life.

### *At the stove*

I took great care in procuring each ingredient. I requisitioned some high-end tenderloin from work. I hunted down authentic Dijon mustard at the gourmet grocery. I blew a ton of money on

a nice bottle of Madeira and more brandy than I would consume to this day. I made veal stock from scratch. I bought Plugra butter, Celtic sea salt, Tellicherry peppercorns, fresh thyme and shallots. It seems a little weird to be proud that I bought shallots, but not too awful long ago, they had vanished from the supermarket. I borrowed a "cookbook stand" from a neighbor lady so that I could keep the recipe right there with me the whole time. And then, without fear or folly, I started to cook. I was a half-a-dozen years into my life as a restaurant journeyman and I just discovered the *body gastronome*. I pushed the ingredients through my first Steak Diane like I was mad at them. I forgot to take my steak out when I flamed the pan, I over reduced the sauce, and then, with blatant stupidity, forgot to add about a third of the ingredients. For a fleeting moment in my first taste I thought, "what is all the excitement about, this is not very good." I reread the recipe, discovered why, wiped out my pan and started over. The results from the second pass were mind-blowing. I made it over and over till I ran out of tenderloin... I have not yet run out of brandy.

## **"'What is all the excitement about, this is not very good.' Then I reread the recipe, discovered why, wiped out my pan and started over."**

This dish, and many of the other classics have since been folded into my repertoire so completely that I struggle to remember the particulars of how they got there. I can now pull from the different recipes one piece of technique in order to approach more eloquently an unusual ingredient. I can do so without thinking. I can only do so because I was dared to. Because one day on a bar stool, someone whose opinion I cared about made me feel stupid for ignoring the canon of culinary heritage. Thank you Vivian, if you ever have the chance to get down to Sage<sup>5</sup>, I'll put together a Steak Diane for you... no funny business.

### *Endnotes*

1 "The Restaurant" in this case means BOJO Grill, located at 521 south 13th street (site of the current Nicola's) was open for from about February to October 1996 and was received with some critical acclaim, but mostly was just a bit of good money, from good people, gone a bit awry.

2 Vivian Kokkalas and her husband George were the long-time proprietors of the magnificent continental restaurant in west Omaha called The Blue Fox. I worked there in various capacities from June of 1987 through 1995. Vivian is the first person other than my mother to have told me to do something and meant it.

3 "Bull" was really the name George used to refer to me by 'cause he thought I was huge — "like a bull". Vivian only used it when she wanted to carry the authority of both she and George in a conversation with me. When I worked for her, most of those conversations centered around being on time to work and not pouring water down ladies cleavage. (I was fourteen. C'mon!, Where was I supposed to be looking?)

4 Man those articles are terrible, but the pictures are awesome.

5 Sage Student Bistro is the teaching restaurant at the Institute for the Culinary Arts, where I work now. Open to the public Monday through Thursday night, guests are treated to seasonal menu items of local scratch cookery. The menu is written by myself and Chef de Cuisine Oystein Solberg. Additionally, students themselves craft five course prix fixe menus that are focused around or inspired by one of the books from the essential canon of the *body gastronome*.



## Steak Diane

Recipe adapted from *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* by Julia Child and Simone Beck

**“This recipe exemplifies the flavor building trifecta known as the ‘Sear-Deglaze-Reduce’.”**

This recipe exemplifies the flavor building trifecta known as the Sear-Deglaze-Reduce. The meat is allowed to adhere to a ridiculously hot pan until the brown on the pan and the brown on the meat are about the same—and the meat has “released” from the pan. Then it is flipped to a new, unmarred spot in the pan that is also ridiculously hot. Once you pull the meat out, aromatics are added and once soft, the deglazing occurs. An alcoholic liquid—at least an acidic liquid if not alcoholic—is added. This serves to “lift” the fond, or the crusty brown bits, from the pan. A bit of other flavorful liquid goes in, and the heat calms down so as to allow those flavors a chance to slowly mingle and get comfortable with one another.

### Procedures

- 1) In a stainless steel sauté pan just large enough to hold twice as many steaks as you are cooking, over high heat, add the vegetable oil and heat until shimmering.
- 2) Into the shimmering oil, add 2 ounces of the butter and heat until the foam subsides.
- 3) Into the hot butter, place the seasoned and tempered beef and press gently into the pan, sear over high heat, occasionally pressing gently to insure even contact, until the steak will lift up from the pan without sticking—about 2 minutes.

- 4) Turn the steaks to the space in the pan that has not yet been “soiled” and repeat step two, removing the steaks to a resting rack in a warm place until they are needed.
- 5) Reduce heat under the pan to medium and add the shallots, then garlic, season with salt and pepper, and sweat until softened—about 90 seconds.
- 6) Remove the pan from the heat, pour the brandy into the pan and return to the heat, tilting the pan so as to catch the alcohol on fire.
- 7) Swirl the pan rapidly while vigorously loosing any remaining brown bits from the bottom of the pan by using a wooden spoon.
- 8) Into the deglazed pan, add the Madeira, veal stock, mustard, thyme, and Worcestershire, allow to simmer and reduce by half—about 7 minutes.
- 9) Taste and adjust seasoning as necessary—using the lemon juice to balance the fat or richness present if needed. Strain the sauce through a fine chinois and return to the original pan, reduce heat to low.
- 10) Into the just-barely-simmering sauce, return the seared pieces of meat, and their juices. Allow them to warm just on one side so as to maintain the crust on the other.
- 11) Remove the beef from the sauce to the service plate.
- 12) Remove the pan from the heat, mount the sauce with the remaining cold butter, stir in the finely chopped parsley and serve.

### – Steak Diane –

1 oz	Vegetable Oil
4 oz	Whole Unsalted Butter, cold and cut into small pieces
4 each 4 oz	Beef Tenderloin Medallions 3/4” thick, seasoned liberally and rested at room temperature 15-20 min. before cooking.
1 small	Shallot
1/4 clove	garlic, pasted
1 oz	Brandy or Cognac
2 oz	Madiera
8 oz	Veal Stock, clarified and reduced by half
1 tsp	Dijon Mustard
10 leaves	Fresh Thyme
1/4 tbsp	Worcestershire Sauce
1/2 each	Lemon, to be juiced a la minute
to taste	Sea Salt
to taste	Black Peppercorns
1 tbsp	parsley, finely chopped
<i>Yield: 2 servings</i>	



A Chocolate-Peppermint Ganache and Crème Brûlée  
from the Sage Student Bistro.  
Photo by J. Michael McBride

# FOOD SERVICE WARRIOR

## THE REGULARS

by Jeremy Hunter

“Some times you want to go where everybody knows your name, and they’re always glad you came.”

How many people remember the show *Cheers*? It was a show about a little tavern in Boston that revolved around their regulars. Everyone remembers Norm, owner of the biggest bar tab, the mail carrier Cliff who knew everything, and the troubled psychiatrist, Dr. Frasier Crane.

**“Regulars tend to understand that things don’t always go smoothly.”**

I have worked in bars and taverns and the similarities are frightening. Almost everywhere I have worked you can find a Cliff or a Norm. People walk in and you know where they like to sit and what they are going to drink. It makes everyone a little more comfortable when they know your name and you know theirs. It’s these people who make your job more enjoyable. They are the people who come in often enough that it catches your attention and they like to talk and meet new people. I find the more people you can meet, the more you can understand where people are coming from. What is the definition of a regular? It is someone who visits on a regular basis or one that visits for special reasons.

My experience with regulars is that they usually live in the area or have a common bond with someone in the establishment; this giving them a reason to start visiting your place of employment. There are many reasons for your guests to come back: Maybe you fixed the best Manhattan or the chef comes up with great dinner specials; They might have enjoyed the ambience or the company. Whatever the reason, they are coming back. Once you notice this, you become more attentive of their needs.

Every guest that walks through the door is a potential regular. All it takes is good food, good service and a personality. The only bad part is if you falter in any of those areas, you might lose the interest of your potential regulars.

Through the years, I have noticed that certain people like to be treated in certain ways. When they walk in, some might like to be talked to as a friend and some might like to be treated as a customer. You have to learn this over time. You might be able to call them by their first name, by Mr. & Mrs., or maybe Dr. – all are acceptable. You just have to be cordial. You should always be observant of all your guest’s needs, but be able to tell if something is wrong. If you neglect the fact that you poured a drink 20 minutes ago and the person is not drinking it, there might be something

**“Just because you don’t see them every week doesn’t mean they are not a regular.”**

wrong. Regulars tend to understand that things don’t always go smoothly, but are not as harsh as people who expect everything to be 100% perfect. You should also realize what is appropriate. Your regulars are going to bring in their friends, sometimes it’s for a business meeting or for a night on the town. These are two reasons to be either casual or in a reserved, more professional mind frame. You don’t want a bartender to remind you of how drunk you got the night before if you are meeting for a job evaluation or promotion.

Likewise, as a bartender you expect to be treated a certain way. It’s nice to be treated with respect. You know who your priority guests are. They are the first people there. If you walk into a place and think you have seniority over people that are still waiting

then you obviously haven’t been out much. As a regular, you know that we know you are there. They have patience and don’t try to get your attention over other people. They usually tell you to help other people first because they know that you will get to them. They know your name and often have concerns and questions about your personal life outside of being a bartender or server.

**“If you walk into a place and think you have seniority... then you obviously haven’t been out much.”**

What about the people you only see 3-4 times a year? Just because you don’t see them every week doesn’t mean they are not a regular. I am talking about the travelers: guests that do a lot of traveling tend to find a place that they like and return every time they are in town. It is good to know that people from all over the world choose to come and see you when they have some free time in your hometown. Personally, I like to hear where they are from or where they are going.

I don’t think I could do my job without the regulars. The day-to-day repetitiveness of doing the same thing over and over would drive me nuts. I like the break from meeting strangers every time I go to work. I like having conversations that last more than ten minutes. I like to know how you are doing, and like it when you ask how I’m doing. The personal interaction with the regulars is one of the few things that I can say I really enjoy. I have a good knowledge of my regular customers and know about their lives, loves, marriages, jobs, deaths and graduations – all of their happenings in life – and sometimes this all happens in a bar and grill.

How fulfilling it is to be a part of “the circle of a life”? Cheers!





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# Staying Cool

by Ron Samuelson

**“Change is inevitable ~ growth is an option...”** *Anonymous*

No one seems to like change, unless it involves someone else changing. And no one likes to see the things that they have grown accustomed to change. But no one likes to be bored either, it seems, and in business there is a fine line between what has been, what is, and what needs to be.

With that in mind, my editor recently asked me to put some thoughts to the question of how a restaurant, or any business for that matter, stays relevant and progressive for a prolonged period of time without losing its soul and its base. It is a hard question to answer, and one I struggle with on a daily basis. But over the three plus decades that I have been in the restaurant business, I have come to see and learn a lot about what works, what doesn't and what I have absolutely no answer for.

**“In business there is a fine line between what has been, what is, and what needs to be.”**

We live in an interesting time, where change and modernity are as constant as winds on the prairie. Competition is fierce, and the “new shiny thing” is always on the horizon with million dollar advertising budgets poised to swoop in on your customer base. So how does a business stay up to date (let alone be progressive) without alienating its current base, in an effort to attract a new and expanding clientele? It is a delicate balance to say the least, but for those who do not try, who stay entrenched in the ideas that worked for them “yesterday” there is a dire consequence awaiting them. Boredom. Boredom by their clientele, their staff, and even their own minds. And in my experience, any of these can spell disaster for a business.

Creativity is at the heart of all entrepreneurship, and essential to the ongoing relevance of any concern. But like all things, too much of a good thing is really just a bad thing in disguise. The overly tinkered with menu becomes a lesson in futility for the customer, just as neglected new trends send the tried and true clientele to the newest venture on the block out of sheer

curiosity. Again, the question, how does the small business continue to grow, but not out grow itself or its clientele?

The answer is complicated, but can be simplified by none other than Einstein's theory that no problem can be solved by the same thinking that caused the problem in the first place. So the real issue is in identifying what is or is not a problem to begin with. Many people complicate their mission when the answer is really right in front of them. (I speak from experience!) Over the years I have learned to listen to many different concerned opinions, valuable insights and negative comments alike. In the end I have grown to trust my instincts, not my critics. It boils down to balance. If you have too many voices pulling you in too many directions, there is no focus, no clear direction. On the other hand, stubborn defiance gets met with no voices left in the building at all. Leadership is about making tough decisions at the hard time, and only instinct and experience can cushion the pain of experimenting.

That being said, there are times that any owner must go outside the comfort zone of staff, friends and loyal customer base to identify solutions to problems known and unknown. The easiest problems to solve are the ones you know about. Then comes the ones you don't know about, but can see once they have been revealed. Harder yet are the issues people are trying to get you to see, but you can't...yet. Fatal are the problems everyone but you can see, but you refuse to address. It has been very crucial to me and my staff to listen to the right balance of trusted observers, through well timed comment cards, hand picked focus groups, follow-up phone calls with yesterday's guests and keenly honed radar for the well intentioned critique. But through it all, the staff and the owner really must be the ones to use their collective instincts to make a plan, and then work the plan.

It may be even harder to keep innovation and motivation at their peak when sales are strong. Yogi Berra's famous line “Nobody goes there any more...it's too crowded” kind of sums it up. There can be a collective complacency that occurs when it appears that the line at the door is always going to be there, and it is the worst kind of trap. I have found it to be easier to identify why people aren't coming through the doors than why they are, crazy as that sounds. Tying to keep a staff in humility when the phones are ringing off the hook can be a chore, but the alternative is unspeakable ~

photo by J. Michael McBride

arrogance and aloofness. And usually the tone is set from the top down, so it is always important that the owners and managers have someone trusted to keep egos in check. No one should be in the position to "grade their own test"...that is just bad policy.

In the interest of brevity, I will try to break down the things I have seen work, those that don't and then leave you with some things I haven't a clue about, which may end up being the longest list.

**"Fatal are the problems everyone but you can see, but you refuse to address."**

I am sure of one thing. That is, that in order to be successful it is imperative that there be passion and a drive for excellence in the leadership of any going concern. Complacency kills even the oldest and most established business, and no amount of advertising and public relations can make up for a neglected business plan, whether it be menu, training or new and updated products or services. Another assuredness is flexibility. Things change. It's a law of nature. (See the opening sentence...). A business that is agile in the face of rapid movement in their respective industry shows foresight, bravado and willingness to persevere. The alternative is arrogance and defiance, whereby the customer base sees an unwilling partner in the business owner to compete in the ever changing stage of new ideas. This is an attitude that will bring any business to its knees swiftly and must be avoided at all costs.

More subtle is the idea that you must get good professional advice, and have a way to keep learning and studying yourself.

When managers are less informed than the workers they supervise, there is a lack of trust and respect from the most important people in the business...the ones who talk to the customers directly. Whether this takes shape in the form of continuing education in a formal setting or a looser knit group of like-minded professionals who meet regularly to discuss problem solving precepts, I find it invaluable to continue to find ways to practice self study and be updated regularly in my field of endeavor.

I'll conclude this installment with some thoughts I have about some things I have no answer for. Like how do you predict who your clientele will be? It seems to me that your clientele almost picks you. It is then up to you to decide to keep them as they are, or to try to mold them into something different, but that can be a tricky business. People today are rather fickle, and want the ability to buy the newest and best, but at the same time long for the comfortable and certain. Again, we are back to the concept of balance.

Another mystery is why a business that has no visible plan makes it when another who seems to have so much going for it just simply goes under is beyond me. The first has poor to little training, an overpriced product and a "bad" location, while the other is armed with an educated sales force, competitive pricing, innovative products and killer visibility, to no avail. There is such a thing as bad timing, and just as unfortunate is being ahead of one's time. These make it is very hard to predict why a concept that is working in neighboring communities isn't working in yours, despite all of your best efforts.

Being in business is life's ultimate "craps" table after all, and who ever knows if you'll roll sevens or snake eyes? As my favorite funk band Tower of Power so eloquently stated: "What's hip today might become passé..."

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# ACF NEWSLETTER WINTER 2010

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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##### Treasurer

Lindsay Phelan

#### Publication Staff

Publishing  
Erik Totten

### 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

## AWARDS & CERTIFICATIONS

### JOHN JOYCE INVITATIONAL 11-20 AND 21 2009

Johnson County Community College (Overland Park, Kansas)

Brian Sullivan

Category K  
Bronze Medal

Culinary Team Nebraska  
Student Hot Food Competition  
Bronze Medal

### IRON CHEF BAR-B-CUE SEPTEMBER 2009

Harvest Moon Festival (Blair, Nebraska)

Team Chicken  
Kerry Williams, captain

Team Pork  
Dawn Cisney, captain

Tie for First Place

# Letter to the Chapter

*Greetings fellow ACF members:*

You're newly appointed ACF board members have been busy working on a variety of upcoming events for you, our members. The board has a renewed energy in creating educational opportunities, practical exams, refresher courses, fundraising and building membership. In the upcoming year we have many of these activities planned and more in the works to provide worthy opportunities for the ACF to give back to you. One of our goals is to make our local ACF chapter member friendly. By doing this we plan to build a financially solid, well educated and practically sound chapter, who has abundantly active members.

The board will be unveiling a monthly education seminar calendar for 2010 in the upcoming weeks. We have compiled an excellent list of seminars to upscale the learning aspect of what the chapter has to offer. Some of these will include seminars on chauterie, chocolate, beef, pork, local food and ice carving. We will soon be offering a sanitation refresher course for any members who want to brush up on their sanitation knowledge or meet the requirement for certification.

**"In the upcoming year we have many activities planned and more in the works."**

The chapter has scheduled its second official practical exam for Sunday January 17 at the new building for

the Institute for the Culinary Arts at Metropolitan Community College. We will be using local practical exam evaluators for the first time for this exam. We know have three official certified ACE evaluators. Chef Davis Updike received his certification last year. Myself and Chef Brandon Harpster received our certification in October at the practical exam in Des Moines. This is a huge step in building a solid chapter as we can now hold our own practical exams. The reasons for not becoming certified are greatly depreciating as we have now have this process in place.

**"The energy of the board is new and alive with activity."**

We also have a unique fundraising event planned for Sunday, January 24 at the field club of Omaha. We are calling it the Polar Bear Cook Out. The idea is to have the outdoor BBQ set up at the club. Then inside we will have some food stations set up. A raw beef station will be the highlight which the guest will choose their cut of beef. They will then receive some education from where the cut of beef came from. Then they will either have the chefs cook it or partake in the cooking themselves. We would hope the latter. They will then return to the buffet and enjoy a few chef manned bars to include a potato, salad and dessert. There will also be a silent auction and for the bravest of us, attempting to sled down the 10th hole of the Field Club golf course.

The energy of the board is new and alive with activity. I have outlined

a complete plan to start the New Year out right and make a definite impact on the way the chapter will serve you as members. Our biggest goal as I stated above is to offer our members a chance to get involved in education, certification, socials, and in culinary fellowship. We plan on concentrating our focus on creating a strong ACF Chapter with emphasis on these items. Your help and attendance is needed at our meetings, to maintain our purpose. YOU need to be a part of brainstorming, creating and implementing fresh and new ideas to build our chapter.

Our ACF board meetings are usually held on the second Tuesday of the month @4:00 p.m. The meetings are now being held at the The Salvation Army Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center located at 2825 "Y" St. We do not have a general meeting due to lack of attendance. We as the board hope to change that. We look forward to seeing you, or perhaps meeting you for the first time, as we begin to work with all of you to build a strong ACF Professional Chefs and Culinarians of the Heartland

Please feel free to contact me with any questions that you might have. My number is 515-4876 and my e-mail is [HYPERLINK "mailto:kevin\\_newlin@usc.salvationarmy.org"](mailto:kevin_newlin@usc.salvationarmy.org) kevin\_newlin@usc.salvationarmy.org. Thank You for Your Support

*Sincerely,  
Kevin Newlin CEC*

## 2010 Culinary Team Nebraska – Update

In a preliminary Hot Food Competition November 20th at Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, Kansas, the student members of 2010 Culinary Team Nebraska earned a Silver Medal from the 5-member panel of American Culinary Federation Judges. The team also presented a cold food platter for review and critique, and although no medals were awarded as a matter of course, the garde manger presentation received accolades in

excess of any work heretofore delivered by Culinary Team Nebraska. In addition to the time spent turning carrots, sautéing vegetables, and painting aspic, the team members also indulged in some ground-shaking BBQ at Oklahoma Joe's as well as an awe-inducing sortie of Contemporary American Cuisine and the award-winning Bluestem in Westport.

### **HOT FOOD**

Jennifer Godfrey–*Tournante*,  
Dave Kinney–*Poissonier*, Austin  
Frees–*Garde Manger*, Jon Ahrens–*Rotisseur*, Lauren Melhus–*Patissiere*,  
José Cardenas–*Commis*.

### **COLD PLATTER**

Dawn Cisney, Cassie Jacobs, Kerry  
Williams, Dave Cambell, Kendahl  
Messner, Lindsay Phelan, Jessica  
Smolinski, Rory Franco.

# Omaha Standard: The Drover's Whiskey Ribeye

by Brian O'Malley



The Drover's 14oz. Whiskey Ribeye \$32.95

In the list of required knowledge and competencies for culinary programs established by the *American Culinary Federation Educational Foundation*, meat cookery receives lots of attention. However, one specific line item in the thirty-six page listing seems a bit broad:

21.) *Students will be able to grill and broil foods to the proper doneness.*

How this standard gets accomplished in culinary schools across the country and here at the Institute for the Culinary Arts is always a bit suspect. Missing from ACF skill competency #21 is an Indicator of Consistency. Each time that a professional cook sets out to hit Medium Rare, it should happen. I would recommend adding, "Students will be able to do so consistently, when there are multiple demands placed on their time, and when the definition of 'proper' is determined by a guest." There are very few educational institutions that can provide the required recipe for continued success at the grill: repetition. Should I say that again?

In order to get good at grilling and broiling, repetition is required.

My best guess says it should take about thirty times. That is thirty times per item: each cut of beef; each of the different preparations of chicken; each

vegetable suitable for the grill; each fish, and each variety of cutting that fish; and each of the various seafood items. Then there are breads; other poultry species; toss in the marinated, brined, rubbed,

**"In order to get good at grilling and broiling, repetition is required."**

or pre-smoked versions of all of the things already on the list, and even the seasoned veterans start to get the spins.

To become a proficient *grillardine* requires at least 1500 hours of work dedicated to learning all of the products and how they interact with the grill during the cooking process. Those 1500 hours of work are on one grill. A new grill means new hot spots. A new bag of lava rocks means the same. Changing the ceramic in the broiler...new speed of radiant transfer. In short, each change requires about 50% of the time originally dedicated to fully master a particular ingredient again. We are talking about a grand total of five to seven thousand hours as a dedicated grill-dog before you could consider yourself fully prepared. That is three years full-time work. Nationwide, culinary school programs allocate anywhere from 10-

200 hours at the grill. There is simply not enough time at school.

Q: So what is a young cook to do?

A: *Get a job at an Omaha landmark steakhouse – the Drover.*

At the Drover, the grill cooks stand steadfast at their posts awaiting the onslaught of dupes. Ticket after ticket will pour into the kitchen, almost everyone containing an item that needs to see time on the grill. The lineage of young culinarians that have stood ready at the grill is long and distinguished. Every one of those brave cooks gets the chance to gain incredible proficiency at the grill—at least when it comes to protein items. The Drover's kitchen is unique amongst the iconic Omaha Steakhouses in that the grilling happens right there in front of the patrons. Well, I guess it is shielded a bit by the sneeze guard on the salad bar, but whatever...you can SEE them cook'n.

I have visited the Drover countless times in my life. Never once has my steak, or any steak delivered to anyone at my table, been less than spot-on perfect temperature. That is an unbelievable accomplishment. Forget flavor, portion size, grading, cut, etc. Each steak comes out cooked properly. Sure they're delicious. Sure the whiskey marinade is an umami explosion. Sure the baked potato is the size of a football and as fluffy as bunny ears. But the steak, the steak is transcendental.

If there was one mark to set, one expectation to establish, one standard to be held up in this era of decline, it is that when you come to Omaha, and you sit down in a steak house, and order a whiskey-marinated ribeye "medium rare", then you should get what you asked for. Dark, crusty, char-grilled exterior. Just warm, deep red, juicy center. Laced through with the sweet and smoky touch of whiskey. Delicious.

The Drover's grill, and the cooks that jockey it, remain well-polished gems in the long-worn toques of the *soldats royaux* of steakhouses currently bearing Omaha Standards.

Definitions

*Grillardine*: (French) In the brigade of a classical kitchen the *grillardine* was responsible for all grilled and broiled items. A grill cook.

*Soldats Royaux*: (French) lit. "Royal Soldiers"

# The Dirt on Beets

by Stephanie Slyter

**“Beets – you either love them or hate them, there is no in between.”**

Beets – you either love them or hate them, there is no in between. For those of us who love them, only the simplest of preparations is required to enjoy them. However, for those of you who hate the red root maybe the following dishes may change your mind.

**Lugano’s Restaurant** in Salt Lake City, UT serves an Heirloom tomato –beet gazpacho with shrimp and avocado tapenade. <http://www.luganorestaurant.com/>

**Lobby at Hotel Twelve** in Atlanta, GA serves their beet with pistachios, simple but delicious. [http://starchefs.com/features/hotel\\_cuisine/comfort/html/index.shtm](http://starchefs.com/features/hotel_cuisine/comfort/html/index.shtm)



The WD-50 Restaurant in New York, NY uses beets in an appetizer. Aerated foie, pickled beet, mashad plum, brioche.

**The Lumiere Restaurant** in Vancouver, BC makes vodka and beet cured hamachi with Champagne Sabayon. [www.foodvancouver.com/recipe.php?recipe=beet-hamachi](http://www.foodvancouver.com/recipe.php?recipe=beet-hamachi)

The **Union Square Cookbook** has a wonderful pasta recipe including beets. [www.maureenclancy.com/.../beets-for-barack-culinary-advice-for-our-new-president.html](http://www.maureenclancy.com/.../beets-for-barack-culinary-advice-for-our-new-president.html)

**Jose Andres** in Washington, DC stirs up a red beet mojito with a beet tumbleweed. [www.yelp.com/biz/minibar-by-jose-andres-washington](http://www.yelp.com/biz/minibar-by-jose-andres-washington)

And for desert( sort of): **Etoile Restaurant** in Yountville, CA caters a pink gala each year at Domaine Chandon to help breast cancer research and one of the dishes they serve is beet panna cotta with orange and cucumber. <https://club-chandon.com/>

If these recipes are not reason enough to change your mind about beets maybe knowing that since Roman times, beetroot juice has been considered an aphrodisiac; this may be because beets are rich and boron and supposedly have a role in the production of human sex hormones. Now, ‘beet’ that.

## Baking Convenience Products: An Overlooked Resource

by John Updike

**“To produce a variety of from-scratch bakery products can be a very expensive and time consuming endeavor.”**

Baking, in general, is the nemesis of many chefs. Although you understand and appreciate how fresh baked goods and desserts enhance your menu and provide for additional sales, achieving this can pose a real dilemma.

The space, equipment, and trained staff required to produce a variety of from-scratch bakery products can be a very expensive and time consuming endeavor. Most restaurants simply don’t have the resources available to commit to an additional department dedicated to baking.

In today’s wonderful world of easy, you can now have it all. Attend a food show and talk to your suppliers and



you will quickly discover almost endless possibilities that will provide you great returns on minimal investment.

Convenience products, as they are generally referred to, come in a variety of forms. Croissants, for example, can be purchased as bulk dough and then processed into various forms, proofed, and baked, on site, to provide the ultimate in freshly-baked. They are also available in any stage in between, from pre-formed unbaked to completely baked, frozen croissants that require only thawing and serving.

The same is true for almost any baked good, whether it be breakfast-type items like Danish and scones, freshly baked breads and rolls to be used in sandwiches or served in the bread basket at table or something as simple as unbaked pizza crusts to use as a base for your very own, one-of-a-kind pizza.

Desserts offer even more variety. There are top-of-the-line desserts now available for purchase, either as whole desserts, pre-sliced, or in individual servings. Combining a slice of cake with one of the many high-quality dessert sauces available and adding a finishing touch like a chocolate curl or tuille, also purchased pre-made, and you have a beautiful and tasty plated dessert that will garner you appreciation from your customers and your accountant.

Explore the world of bakery convenience products, both savory and sweet, and you can expand and upgrade your menu items and increase your customer base and sales with little effort.

# 19 Questions with Chef Gary Hoffman

by Maybell Galusha



Chef Gary Hoffman (CCA, CEC)  
Upstream Brewing Company

*MG: Chef, could you share a little about your background with us?*

GH: I'm from Miami, and have been working in restaurants since I was 14. I've moved around a lot, the longest that I've lived in one place was 5 years, until I came to Omaha.

*MG: What culinary training did you receive?*

GH: I earned my associate degree at the Culinary Institute of America, New York.

*MG: Did you have a mentor when you started out in the culinary field?*

GH: Most of the chefs that I worked with were CIA grads, and when I was 23, as a secondary thought, I decided to go to culinary school.

*MG: How has membership in the American Culinary Federation influenced you as a professional?*

GH: The ACF is a strong organization, and needs to be understood by young culinarians today; what the organization can do for you, also what you can gain and give back in the sharing of knowledge with fellow professionals.

**“Certification is very important: it sets a professional standard and allows you to judge yourself.”**

*MG: What is your opinion on the importance of ACF certification in the restaurant industry today?*

GH: Certification is very important: it sets a professional standard and allows you to judge yourself. It also sets a benchmark which aids employers in finding quality staff.



MG: What is your favorite culinary book?

GH: I have two: Escoffier and Larousse Gastronomique. One for technique and one for history.

**“We are always looking for new challenges, ways to expand and where we can fill a niche.”**

MG: What career experiences have you had in addition to UpStream Brewing Company?

GH: You name it and I've had it: Resort destination in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, 4-star hotels, private clubs, chains, catering companies, union and non-union houses... I've worked in everything but an institutional facility.

MG: What is your current job position at the UpStream?

GH: Corporate executive chef, Vice President and operating partner.

**“The focus should be on learning and not salary...you have to put in your time and pay your dues.”**

MG: What are some of the highlights of your current position?

GH: I was disenchanted with the corporate scene; with all of it's rules and lack of adaptability. At UpStream, my partner Brian and I both have hotel backgrounds, and understand the hospitality industry. When we opened our second location at Legacy, it was the right move to make. We are always looking for new challenges, ways to expand and where we can fill a niche. UpStream is a good fit for me.

MG: What should graduating culinary students expect as far as salaries and positions as they enter the workforce?

GH: Students should truly want to go anywhere. The focus should be on learning and not salary. This industry is similar to the way that it

is for graduating doctors: you have to put in your time and pay your dues. Students shouldn't believe that after graduation from culinary school, they are the next Emeril!

MG: When you are interviewing prospective employees, what qualities do you look for?

GH: We screen all employees with a Predictive Index. I look for passion and drive first and foremost. I'm not always interested in whether they have experience – that is something that I can teach them.

**“Learn to be successful working in someone else's operation before trying it on your own.”**

MG: How is the economy changing the way that you do business at UpStream?

GH: It really hasn't changed anything. We are looking more into what we can do to go green. This hasn't been a strong consideration in the past, but this is not a trend – it is here to stay – and it is something that we plan to work on.

MG: What do you think is the best strategy for building and keeping a strong customer base?

GH: The longevity of our employees. Some of our kitchen staff have been with us over 10 years; over half of our 38 member crew have been with us over 3 years, and 10 have been with us over 5 years. I teach my staff what I learned from a former Cornell professor of mine: A quality product, served in a timely fashion for a perceived value by smiling soldiers = a win.

**“Ask many questions, read, watch and replicate – learn all that you can.”**

MG: What advice would you give to aspiring culinary professionals still in training?

GH: Ask many questions, read, watch and replicate – learn all that you can.

MG: What is your role in mentoring young professionals?

GH: This is different for college students, high school students, or employees. It is most important to be honest about the industry. There is so much more to the job than cooking...

**“It is most important to be honest about the industry. There is so much more to the job than cooking...”**

MG: What advice would you give to a chef wanting to start their own restaurant?

GH: DON'T. Learn to be successful working in someone else's operation first, before trying it on your own. If you do start your own restaurant, learn the Master Uniform System of Accounts for Restaurants & Hotels. Learn all that you can about everything else that is involved in running a restaurant besides cooking; from plumbing to managing staff.

MG: What is your favorite place to dine in the Omaha area?

GH: My house on Sunday nights.

**“My wife and all of my children are good bakers: there is lots of baking at home.”**

MG: What is your favorite meal to cook?

GH: Anything with seafood.

MG: Have you passed on your love of cooking to family members?

GH: I tell my children if they want to go into this business, they first need to earn a degree in a non-related field. Then, if they still want to, I will be happy to teach them whatever they need to know. My wife and all of my children are good bakers: there is lots of baking at home. My oldest son is a monster on the grill. Everyone at home loves to eat.



# Honey Creek Farms

by Paul Kulik

photo by J. Michael McBride

Beth and Roger Matson began selling as Honey Creek farms some 14 years ago. Well, not selling really. In the beginning, they gave their wares away, but when the couple left the San Joaquin Valley for the Midwest, Beth left more than the sunshine behind.

The natural food movement has taken a lot of turns since the beginning of Alice Waters' watershed restaurant Chez Panisse. Luminaries like Nora Pouillon at Nora in Washington DC, Jesse Cool from Flea Street Café, and countless others began weaving together the many influences that is now modern dining. Organics, domestic wine production, Slow Food, vegetarianism, environmentalism, new urbanism, European gourmandized celebrity chefs, nose-to-tail, farm-to-table are the culmination of a 30 year American gastro love affair that Beth and Roger left in their rear view mirror.

**“With most of the growing season winding down in the torpor or winter, Honey Creek marches forward.”**

I met Beth at the Boiler Room in February. We had been open barely a month and were in dire need of producers for the restaurant. The seedling community of growers can be rather repetitive and few dare challenge the winter months. She arrived with a stack of seed catalogues, and we sat for hours combing through every conceivable heirloom variety. To a gardener, seed catalogues must be an elixir, coaxing an intoxicating promise of colorful bounty. To a chef, it is torture: nothing would be out of the ground for another three months at the earliest.

The experience solidified the lynchpin of our operation. The Boiler Room relies solely upon local producers and buying for a restaurant is quite different from buying for a family. Though Honey Creek Farms understands that now, their approach was more conventional in the beginning.

Beth explains that their first “customers” were in fact elderly donees that helped rid Beth and Roger of their excess produce. Though organic farming had begun to catch on, few people shared Beth's conviction for Asian greens and full calendar growing, and the techniques that she and Roger were familiar with weren't always suited to the harsher climate. Those seniors paid for their weekly baskets sharing valuable information to help these novice farmers. They had unwittingly established a barter based CSA!

Things did not come easily in this part of the country for them. Once they had outgrown the donations they made as most natural growers, they began by selling at farmers markets. Feeling that others did not share their same devotion to the highest standards, Honey Creek began looking elsewhere. By going door to door at Old Market restaurants, they found a consistent buyer in Upstream.

The farm, now situated in Hancock, Iowa, still maintains a tight relationship with the pension farmers so important to its beginning. The things she learned sound more like a manifesto from a cutting edge farm to table restaurant like Blue Hill in New York, rather than the banalities of prairie living two generations ago. Beth forages for choke cherries, wild raspberries, rosehips and elderflowers. She and Roger till, burn and under-till twice a year for three years before planting, and they will forgo harvesting from soil errantly sprayed by neighboring farmers. From the beginning, Beth was committed to growing as close to year round as possible. Now, as Michael Braunstein from the Reader says, she is famous for it.

We speak with Beth three times a week to get updates on the ever-changing catalogue of available produce. She is tireless and headstrong. As each of the many things we spoke about in February came to our table, she demonstrated her commitment to quality as well. As a restaurant with the flexibility of amending the menu every day, these very talks become inspiration. The ability to explain to a farmer exactly how large you prefer your onion, potatoes, and carrots is priceless.

When the Boiler Room opened in January last year, the only local product on our menu was prairie honey. Nancy O'Connor makes some of the most peppery complex honey around, and it was an ideal compliment to our cheese board. But starting a ‘locavore’ restaurant in the middle of a Great Plains winter limits most of our options.

Meanwhile, many other producers have come forward, and we are proud to say that we surpassed our wildest expectations with the quality and abundance of local foods. As the incipient farm to table restaurant in the Omaha area, our challenge was to find the diversity of product that could keep our daily changing menu interesting. It also requires a kind of grower not satisfied with the status quo.

With most of the growing season winding down into the torpor of winter, Honey Creek marches forward. Beth says that her next mission is to teach others how to grow and they have a lot to teach. She and Roger have also only added to their hothouse production, even dedicating one for our restaurant. Her determination is invigorating and a welcome ally in a difficult task.

# *Wine and Food – 101*

## *A Comprehensive Guide to Wine and the Art of Matching Wine to Food.*

The purpose of this book is *twofold*: to supply the reader with a basic knowledge about wine, and to develop the expertise necessary to successfully match wine with food. The concepts are simple, logical, and easy to understand. After reading this book, matching wine with food will be a snap. The pleasure you derive in pairing wine with food will be greatly enhanced by your newly acquired knowledge of the culinary arts. I think that you will find this book to be enlightening, enjoyable, and easy to read.

- *John R. Fischer*

“Extremely readable – I especially like the organization, which makes it a great educational tool for novices, as well as connoisseurs.”

- *David Rosengarten, former host of the Food Network television show Taste. Author of the book, Red wine with Fish.*

“Fischer has redefined the concept of matching wine and food. Scientific, though easy to understand, this book is a must-read for wine aficionados and professionals.”

- *José R. Garrigó, Chairman of the International Wine and Food Society Board of Governors of the Americas.*

“A simple and logical approach to matching wine to food. It is easy to understand and enjoyable to read. We have thoroughly enjoyed using it at the Institute for the Culinary Arts, and have received many compliments from students.”

- *James E. Trebbien, Dean, The Institute for the Culinary Arts, Omaha Nebraska.*

“Well organized, clearly written, light without being lightweight and enlightening without being self-important”.

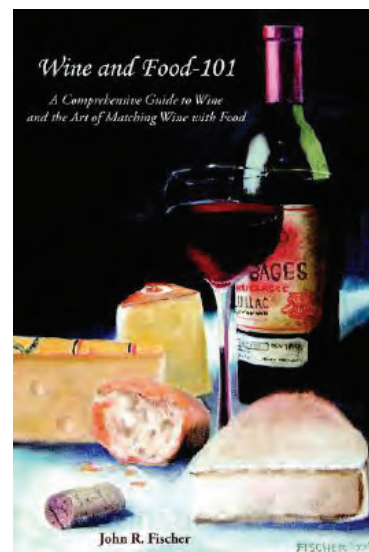
- *Mike Scott, winemaker and vice president of Lone Canary Winery (Spokane, Washington).*

*Wine and Food - 101* is available or can be ordered at most book stores and online at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

Available in hardcover (\$26.00) and paperback (\$20.00).

For an autographed copy, mail the inscription that you wish to be written along with your check to John Fischer, 12504 V St., Omaha, NE 68137. Include an additional \$2.75 for postage & handling.

Send any inquiries to [jrudyf@cox.net](mailto:jrudyf@cox.net).



# The Cigar Bar is Back

by John Larkin

You might have heard recently that a crack in the armor of the mighty Nebraska state government has been achieved. No, they didn't legalize medical marijuana, they decided to let us smoke indoors again! Not so fast, my cancer stick and pool cue wielding brethren: only cigars and pipes will be allowed. I'll begrudgingly yield that this was a fair compromise, given the impassioned and drawn out debate to get the Nebraska state smoking ban pushed through the Unicameral a couple years ago. No levies can stop the tidal wave of anti-smoking legislation, and so with that, the government has given adults back the privilege of choosing to use a legal product in a private business once again - kind of.

What does this mean to you, the regular old non-smoking drunk who's really begun to enjoy the smokeless, yet somehow still stale, air of your favorite karaoke bar? Without further ado, I'd like to explain what a Cigar bar is and how it won't ruin everyone's lives: especially the tender lives of our children.

The actual law that was passed this spring by Senator Scott Lautenbaugh created an additional classification, that of a cigar bar, which can be added to a class C on and off premise liquor license. After much red tape and a strict qualification process, the holder of this cigar bar endorsement is legally allowed to permit the indoor smoking of cigars and pipes only. Why no delicious cigs you might ask? Well, 'cigarette' is a despicable word in politics. You couldn't possibly vote to allow cigarette smoking in a very limited setting among consenting adults whom all know that this simple act of pleasure could one day kill them; you'd never get re-elected. Most people don't smoke right? Less than 25% of the population, and they'll be god-damned if they can't have their clean air everywhere their self-righteous feet might grace this earth.

When I mentioned strict qualifications regarding obtaining the cigar bar license, I meant it. This law was not crafted to be a loophole in the clean air act, but a reprieve to a small segment of businesses that catered almost exclusively to smokers. Sorry Big Johns, you can play pool without burning one down, but it's a little harder to enjoy a cigar in a cigar bar when you can't smoke in a cigar bar. At least one ex-president may beg to differ on that point, but I digress. To obtain this license, you must first have a walk in humidor stocked with cigars: no counter tops or cabinet humidors. This is not an easy or cheap task for a small business, contrary to the opinion of one Senator during the debate who didn't feel that \$8,000-15,000 would be much of an obstacle to most bars (apparently he's never owned his own business). In fact, the real numbers to build and stock a humidor are at least triple that. Secondly, you cannot serve food - excluding unprepared bar snacks like peanuts.

Did I mention there is a non-refundable, \$1,000 application fee just to apply for the license? And the most important tenet of all is the requirement that at least 10% of your revenue comes from the sale of cigars or tobacco related accessories such as pipes, humidors, and lighters. I know from experience at Jake's is that this number is hard to hit and we've been selling cigars for over 11 years!

All these stipulations were put in place to prevent every gin joint on the block from becoming a cigar bar: good looking out Senators. Fact is, there are only so many cigar smokers in this state, and while I hope we can attract new customers to this wonderful pastime, the market will dictate how many cigar bars it will support. As of now,

there are only three locations in Omaha and one in Lincoln that have obtained this license. In Lincoln, there is the recently moved and remodeled Jake's Cigars & Spirits (14th & P St.). They've added a bigger cooler with more craft beer, a bigger humidor, amazing restrooms (I spent 3 straight weeks working on them), as well as the addition of an intimate, 60 seat bar. Jake's has 18 rotating tap beers and not one of them will ever say "Lite". 50+ bourbons and 50+ single malts along with a large gin, vodka, rum, tequila, and cordial selection round out your beverage opportunities. Jake's also employs state of the art smoke eaters to obtain the highest comfort level possible for both smoking and non-smoking customers.

In Omaha, there is the old stand-by: Cigarros, just off of 132nd and Maple, was nearly wiped out by the smoking ban. They've recently remodeled and reopened to cigar

smokers with their beautiful and well stocked humidor, as well as an upscale atmosphere complete with dark woods and plush chairs: a real, classic cigar bar.

The Old Market in Omaha is now home to the Havana Garage. It had not yet opened at the time of this writing, but having spoken to the owner, who has years of experience in the field, I expect a top notch place.

Last but not least is Jake's Cigars & Spirits in Benson. Jake's Omaha is unique in that they have two bars: one smoking and one non-smoking to cater to all of their customers. Similar to Jake's in Lincoln, they boast an amazing beer and liquor selection to go along with their relaxed social atmosphere.

I and many others are ecstatic to get the right to smoke cigars indoors back. Just as many can't believe that we're allowed to take our lives into our own hands by doing this, I've always taken the stance that our nanny government just needs to back the hell off. Free speech, a free market, and freedom of choice - whether healthy or not - should continue to be our right in America. So, if you enjoy a good cigar and a good drink, then go out and support a local small business. And if you can't stand the smoke, then stay out of the cigar bar: you've got that right after all.



**"When I mentioned strict qualifications regarding obtaining the cigar bar license, I meant it."**

**JAKE'S CIGARS**  
**JUST BECAUSE WE CAN**  
**BLOCK PARTY**

**SATURDAY MAY 15**  
A BENEFIT FOR "FOUND IN BENSON" ZINE  
LIVE MUSIC / FOOD / GREAT BEERS  
62ND AND MAPLE STREET  
[JAKESCIGARS.COM](http://JAKESCIGARS.COM)

# YEAST INSPECTION:

## *Imperial Stout* by Jason McLaughlin

Far from humble, the Russian Imperial Stout's history dates back to the 18th century when it was produced in Britain for export to the Czarist courts. Today it has turned into an American powerhouse stout, and certainly my favorite of all styles (for now at least). Always high in alcohol, it is known for its complex marriage of roasted malts and rich fermentation characteristics. Many examples are aged in Bourbon barrels, where the oak lends the flavors and aromas of vanilla and sweet bourbon to the beer. If you do not have a beer cellar already, the time is now as this style pops up everywhere during the winter, and age will develop the flavors for years to come.



### **Goose Island Bourbon County Stout (Chicago, IL)**

**13.0 % ABV**

**Appearance 2/3**

Pours black as night – no highlights to speak of. Deep tan head is somewhat creamy in texture, but quickly dissipates due to the high alcohol content. Faint lacing.

**Aroma 11/12**

Heavy bourbon sweetness powers the nose, and is backed up by intense molasses and burnt brown sugar. Dark stone fruits are detected (plumbs), as well as vanilla.

**Flavor/Mouthfeel 23/25**

Like a shot of oaky bourbon. Massive malt complexity: lush caramel, dark roasted coffee, vanilla bean and plumb candy. High hop bitterness balances and gives a spicy tobacco character. Finishes moderately sweet with molasses lasting long into the aftertaste. Huge creamy viscosity with alcohol warming. Very light carbonation and slight astringency seems appropriate for this offering.

**Overall 9/10**

Flavor packed powerhouse of a beer. This is something to look forward to the release of every November. A true sipper that leaves your tongue numb from the incredible complexity. Top class bourbon barrel aged beer, and a must try.

**Total Score 45/50 A+**

### **North Coast Brewing Co Old Rasputin XII (Fort Bragg, CA)**

**11.2% ABV**

**Appearance 3/3**

Pours pitch black – completely impervious to light. Creamy, dark tan colored head is lasting and leaves a foam blanket through the last sip. Light lacing.

**Aroma 9/12**

Deep chocolate with a backing of sweet bourbon and vanilla. An aroma of molasses and powdered cocoa stand out. Rich roasted malts and a light alcohol note round out the bouquet.

**Flavor/Mouthfeel 17/25**

Roasted coffee, molasses and a bourbon flavor is almost overpowering. Chocolate, vanilla bean and raisins add to profile. Hop bitterness lends a peppery quality. Dry, almost tequila-like flavor lasts into the aftertaste. Medium body with moderate carbonation. Abundant alcohol warmth and a slight astringency from the roast malts.

**Overall 7/10**

This Russian Imperial Stout is filled with great qualities. Overwhelming bourbon barrel flavors should mellow with time. Some time in the cellar should produce a softer, more complex beer. This limited bottling is a delicious twist on a widely available standby.

**Total Score 36/50 B+**



**Odell Brewing Co.**  
**Bourbon Barrel Stout (Fort Collins, CO)**

**10.5% ABV**

**Appearance 3/3**

Pours opaque jet black with a huge frothy tan head of large bubbles. Foam stand shows great retention, leaving creamy lacing blanketing the entire glass.

**Aroma 8/12**

Toasted caramel and poached pear accents the rather mild roast character. Vanilla bean and sweet bourbon come through, but do not dominate the nose. A hint of lactic acid only adds to complexity.

**Flavor/Mouthfeel 20/25**

Caramel and chocolate flavors are in the forefront. A vanilla and bourbon sweetness is balanced wonderfully by a light acidity and moderate hop bitterness. Pear and red apple lends to overall complexity. Dry finish with a delicate vanilla flavor lasting into the aftertaste. Medium-full in body with a creamy carbonation feel. Only the slightest of astringency can be detected.

**Overall 8/10**

A good recommendation for those looking for a lighter flavored imperial stout. The light lactic acidity makes the flavor profile complex and delicious. Lie one down in the beer cella and revisit again in a few years.

**Total Score 39/50 A-**

**Boulevard Brewing Co.**  
**Imperial Stout (Kansas City, MO)**

**11% ABV**

**Appearance 3/3**

Pour is violent upon popping the cork. An inky, black beer with a beautiful mocha colored head leaving a web of lacing around the circumference of the glass.

**Aroma 9/12**

Roasted chocolate and black strap molasses mingle with a hint of lactic acidity. Espresso, plum, and toasted bread notes come to life as the beer warms. Light spices add an exotic complexity.

**Flavor/Mouthfeel 21/25**

Bittersweet chocolate and toasted marshmallow with a touch of lactic acidity. Vibrant espresso, plum, black currant, molasses, and cherry flavors make for a luscious, desert-like treat. Notes of Amaretto as it warms. A moderately dry finish with a vanilla and chocolate-like aftertaste. Full-bodied and chewy with low astringency and moderate carbonation.

**Overall 9/10**

Complexity truly makes this gem shine. The rich chocolate profile makes it seem appropriate to pour over vanilla ice-cream. As with all great imperial stouts, this offering should continue to change for years to come.

**Total Score 42/50 A**



## *Back Labels: A Guide to Buying European Wines*

by Jesse Becker

There are thousands of individual wine producers imported into the United States each year. For the professional wine buyer, there's always a rising star producer emerging from an up-and-coming European wine region, making the task of knowing all of them a near impossibility. You might be surprised to learn then that as a professional wine buyer, I buy a lot of imported wine based on its label. *Shallow you say? Is this sommelier so superficial that all he cares about is the packaging?* Well not exactly.

**“Importers, like the producers they represent, have identities, their own tastes and principles.”**

The information I'm looking for tends to be in small print somewhere on the back label. Not the part that says “tastes like wild bilberries” and “perfect with Sunday roasts” although that may very well be true. If you look closely, somewhere on the back label you'll see the words “imported by:” followed by the name of the person or company who imported it. For the consumer and the professional wine buyer alike, these words can give you a good idea of what that producer is all about. Why? Because importers, like the producers they represent, have identities, their own tastes and principles—and to a reliable extent—offer wines that share a remarkable, familial, identity.

Here, in no particular order, is a sampling of back labels (importers) available here in Omaha but keep in mind that there are many, many more and almost all of America's importers bring in wines of note. As always, ask your wine merchant for help!

### ***Kermit Lynch***

In 1972, Kermit opened a retail wine shop on San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley, California and later began importing and distributing nationally. He lives part of the year in Berkeley, and part in Provence and maintains an impressive roster of French and Italian wines. He is an exceptional source of White Burgundy and certain Rhône producers but all of Kermit's selections can be considered classic examples of their respective appellations.

*Focus:* Burgundy, Rhône, Provence, Southwest France, Jura, Savoie, and Northern Italy.

*Notable Producers:* Vieux Télégraphe (Châteauneuf-du-Pape), Auguste Clape (Cornas), François Raveneau (Chablis).

*Learn more:* [www.kermitlynch.com](http://www.kermitlynch.com), *Adventures on the Wine Route* by Kermit Lynch, blog

### ***Winebow***

Winebow's import group includes Leonardo LoCascio Selections (Italy), Winebow Brands International (Spain, Chile, Argentina, Portugal, Scotland, Brazil and Japan), and Emerald Wines Division (Austria, and Chile): Winebow is really all about the 75 or so Italian producers selected by Leonardo LoCascio with 16 out of Italy's 20 regions represented from Molise in the south to the Veneto in the north. There are a handful of iconic estates represented but mostly, this is a good place to look for approachable examples of Italian wines with wide availability.

*Focus:* Tuscany, Piedmont, Umbria, Veneto, Austria

*Notable Producers:* Bruno Giacosa (Piedmont), Fausto Maculan (Veneto), Rudi Pichler (Wachau)

*Learn more:* [www.winebow.com](http://www.winebow.com)



**Michael Skurnik (Terry Theise Selections)**

Terry Theise represents the most comprehensive collection of Grower/Producer Champagne, German Riesling, and Austrian Wines in the U.S. and is almost a cult figure amongst sommeliers. His portfolio reads like a who's who of Grower-Producer Champagne, and iconic estates in Germany and Austria.

*Focus:* Champagne, Germany, Austria

*Notable Producers:* Pierre Gimonnet (Champagne), Helmut Dönnhoff (Nahe), Nikolaihof (Wachau)

*Learn more:* Theise Catalogs

**Domaine Select Wine Estates**

This book has gone from strong to stronger in recent months with the addition cult-status Brunello producer Gianfranco Soldera and the amphora-aged wines of Josko Gravner to their already strong portfolio of infamous producers like Aleš Kristančič of Movia in Slovenia. This New York-based company focuses on cutting edge producers, especially those who fall into their MMI (Moon and Minimal Intervention) category. These "MMI" producers represent the forefront of biodynamic farming and natural wine making techniques, and should definitely be in your drinking queue.

*Focus:* Italy, Slovenia, Austria, France, Spain

*Notable Producers:* Gianfranco Soldera (Tuscany), Josko Gravner (Friuli), Nicolas Joly (Loire)

*Learn more:* www.domaineselect.com

**"MMI producers represent the forefront of biodynamic farming and should definitely be in your drinking queue."**

**Wilson Daniels**

Wilson Daniels based in St. Helena, California represents blue chip French wine at the highest level. The wines are luxury brands that people in the know will spring for like the highly collectable wines of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti in Burgundy and the somewhat rare Salon Champagnes. Many of the wines from this portfolio are worth cellaring.

*Focus:* Burgundy, Alsace, Champagne, Hungary

*Notable Producers:* Salon (Champagne), Domaine Leflaive (Burgundy), Royal Tokaji (Hungary)

*Learn more:* www.wilsondaniels.com

**Château and Estates**

Once an important source of Bordeaux, the US importer Diageo Chateau & Estate Wines (DC&E), a subsidiary of the British drinks giant Diageo, recently announced that is has abandoned Bordeaux wine after 35 years. This announcement came aggressively liquidating its warehouse stock on an already shaky market. A source within DC&E, who asked to remain anonymous, blamed "enormous stocks" of unsold Bordeaux for their exodus. "It's all about making money. The margins are getting thinner each year and Americans are trading down." What will become of DC&E remains to be seen but as of this writing, they continue to hold the importing rights to some classic Burgundy and Alsatian producers.

*Focus:* Bordeaux, Burgundy, Alsace

*Notable Producers:* Trimbach (Alsace)

*Learn more:* www.diageowines.com

**Ex-Cellars Wine Agencies.**

Ex-Cellars is based in Solvang, California and bases its business off of three blue chip French producers, Domaine

des Baumard in the Loire Valley, E. Guigal in the Rhône, and Philipponnat in Champagne. Additionally, they're a national supplier to a lot of Bordeaux and Burgundy and can be an excellent source of older wines.

*Focus:* France

*Notable Producers:* Domaine des Baumard (Loire Valley), E. Guigal (Rhône), Philipponnat

*Learn more:* www.excellars.com

**Jorge Ordoñez**

Jorge Ordoñez has been a darling of the wine critic Robert Parker and a majority of the wines in this portfolio seem geared towards his palate. For the most part, these are high-extract, slick wines that have little to do with tradition. Strangely, the very traditional Muga estate in Rioja is also represented here.

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# Great Wines

— With —

# Great Meals

by John Fischer



Eating meals with friends and family is a time for tradition; however, let's try jumping out of the box and explore some new and different wine-food matches. We will look at wine pairings for three classical meals: a traditional turkey dinner, a baked glazed ham dinner, and a crown roast of beef.

**“Sweet foods call for sweet wines, and preferably wines with sweetness greater than that of the food.”**

Let us start with a traditional turkey dinner accompanied by all of the classical fixings. Picture in your mind's eye a golden brown turkey stuffed with raisin-nut dressing, cranberry sauce, candied yams, sweet corn casserole, buttered sweet peas, sliced glazed carrots and a big bowl of creamy mashed potatoes. Finish this off with your mother's celebrated apple pie. Is your mouth watering?

Does any particular taste sensation predominate? It should be glaringly clear that it is sweetness. If you don't remember anything else from this article, tuck this rule away in your memory bank: sweet foods call for sweet wines, and preferably wines with sweetness greater than that of the food! We're not looking for super sweet dessert styled wines the likes of Sauternes, but wines with a moderate degree of sweetness. One wine should immediately come to mind, and that wine is German Riesling.

Sweet wine for a turkey dinner? Are you kidding? What's wrong with the classical duo of Cabernet Sauvignon or Chardonnay? The answer is simple: They are not sweet enough. Granted, alcohol and ripe fruit flavors furnish a dry wine (a wine with no residual sugar) with a bit of sweetness but often not enough to match with

our traditional turkey dinner. If you serve wines lacking sweetness with sweet foods, the foods will rob the full modicum of sweetness from the wine, and the wine will taste unduly tart. The wine will appear unbalanced.

I know what you are thinking; why doesn't the sweetness in the food carry over into the wine? The simple fact is that it doesn't. The reason is that your brain sets up a comparison between wine and food, and the wine loses out. When you sample the food, and then go back to the wine, your brain detects a wide variation between the sweetness in the wine when compared to the food. The end result is that the wine will appear unduly tart.

**“Sweetness and tartness are dominant flavor-supporting taste sensations: both of which are found in abundance in German Rieslings.”**

Without doubt, Germany makes the best Rieslings in the world. Moreover, they come in gradations of sweetness. Wines labeled Kabinett generally have the least amount of sweetness, Spätlese has a little more, and Auslese has the greatest amount of sweetness of the three. Wines labeled Trockenbeerenauslese, Beerenauslese, and Eiswein are dessert wines and would be unsuitable for our purposes.

Either Kabinett or Spätlese would be suitable for a traditional turkey dinner; furthermore, the Auslese would work wonderfully with the apple pie. If you have a mindset for a red wine, I would suggest a Pinot Noir, as it has more apparent sweetness and less tartness than a Cabernet or Shiraz; however, Pinot Noir would not be my first choice.



**“Big, hearty dishes call for similar styled wines, and in the case of beef, it is red wine.”**

Sweetness and tartness are dominant flavor-supporting taste sensations; both of which are found in abundance in German Rieslings. This is especially the case for the style of Rieslings from the Mosel valleys. These are light and have a classic sweet and tart taste. Typically these are sold in green bottles (as opposed to brown). Although it is best to match the weight of the food to that of the wine, light-bodied wines, the likes of German Rieslings, can

be paired to foods of any weight. In contrast, full-bodied wines such as Cabernet Sauvignon should only be matched to big, rich, full-bodied dishes.

Let’s look at a traditional baked ham dinner. Baked ham topped with a fruity brown sugar glaze is often served with such accompaniments as butternut squash, boiled potatoes, and sweet and sour cabbage. My mother decorated her ham with cherries and pineapple slices, each affixed to the surface of the ham with toothpicks. I think that you can see the same domination of the sweet taste sensation in this meal as with the turkey dinner. In addition, the salty nature of ham calls for a tart wine. Salt has an aggressive nature and acts in a fashion similar to acidity. This leads us to another rule to remember: always keep the tartness of the wine greater than that of the food. The sweetness and refreshing tartness of a German Riesling is also the perfect match for our holiday ham dinner.

Bring on the beef! A crown roast of beef served with Yorkshire pudding would be a classic dinner. This dish calls for a rich and sophisticated red wine such as a California Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah or Bordeaux. White wines do not work with beef dishes, regardless of their weight: There is no going out of the box here. Big, hearty dishes call for similar styled wines, and in the case of beef, it is red wine. My choice would be a rich, full-bodied California Cabernet Sauvignon.

Do serve a quality wine with your traditional meals. Remember, a great wine-food match can turn an ordinary meal into a festive occasion.



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Downtown Old Market in Omaha, Nebraska

# BAR CHAT: THE BOILER ROOM

by Dan Crowell



**"We strive to be unique...  
to show people possibilities and  
execute them as well as possible."**

I recently had an opportunity to sit down with Chris Engles, lead bartender at The Boiler Room in the Old Market. Chris' dedication to the craft of bartending and the art of creating truly amazing cocktails is remarkable and must be experienced first-hand in order to be fully appreciated. Here are the results of that interview.

**FSM: Describe the restaurant.**

CE: One of my favorite things about the restaurant is that instead of semi-trucks pulling up and unloading frozen goods, we have pickup trucks driven by farmers from the surrounding area delivering their products, their vegetables. Risosphere Farms is one: they have excellent produce. Their tomatoes are the best I've ever had. TD Niche is where we get our pork. We use Red Wattle pork which is closer to red meat than normal pork, and it's local and it's organic.

We have Bluff Valley Lamb, which is located in southeastern Nebraska. They're very particular about their lambs' surroundings. They talk to their neighbors to make sure their lambs aren't inhaling any chemicals. Our chef, Paul Kulik, has many contacts in the local, small farm community like the Farmers Market in the Old Market. He reaches out to many of them and tries to establish business relationships with them.

The menu changes every day. It's all about freshness. We're local and organic, but we serve a lot of seafood, which is obviously not local. We have the freshest seafood in town. We serve whole fish as a

dinner for two. I just think it's a unique way to eat. We strive to be unique. We strive to show people possibilities and execute them as well as possible. We're on the fine dining side, and we give the best service we can give, but the most important thing is the product. We take a lot of pride in the food and drink that we serve. Jesse Becker is our Master Sommelier. He's the only Master Sommelier in the state. Looking at the wine cellar, you can see he takes a lot of pride in his list.

**"When you're making a cocktail,  
it's all about technique and  
good ingredients."**

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

CE: It's craft bartending. When you're making a cocktail, it's all about technique and good ingredients. So we have fresh juice. I juice every day, and I make my own syrups. I make my own grenadine. But then it comes to technique, how long to shake and how to stir. Steven Cole from the Violet Hour in Chicago, which is a great cocktail place, is friends with Chef Paul. He came in, and just one night of mentoring from him really opened my eyes to what it takes. One thing he stressed was uninterrupted stirring, being able to do that. So that was one of the first things I really worked on.

**FSM: Ice selection is an often overlooked element of cocktail creation. How important is ice selection to a cocktail?**

CE: Our machine produces pure ice. Instead of using an ice machine where the water gathers in a tray, with this one the water shoots up, all the impurities are stripped away and you get nice big solid cubes. (NOTE: the machine Chris refers to is a Kold-Draft ice machine, which employs a very unique upside-down horizontal evaporator ice-making system. Based on observing the cocktails Chris constructed for me, the ice looks great and performs just the way he describes). They get colder, they stay colder and they don't melt as fast.

It's more about making the drink cold as opposed to watery. So stirring and shaking, when you do that, water absorption into the cocktail is important. You want it to be just right. You don't want it too strong or too thick, and conversely you don't want it watery. Nobody likes that.

**FSM: Describe the response you've received from customers? Have you gotten the response you're looking for?**

CE: Yes and no. We still have people coming in and asking for Budweiser. I personally enjoy Budweiser, but that's not what we have. And we don't serve Jack Daniels here, which to some people is some sort of a sin, but we go for small-batch bourbons. If you like Jack Daniels, come and check out our bourbons. We have excellent bourbons!

It would be great if people were just willing to try something new. Simply walking through the door here is trying something new, so when you sit down, I'll make you a great cocktail and every dish here is excellent. There's no reason not to try it. For instance, Lamb Brain Ravioli is something we've been featuring lately. It's gone over very, very well. Even the timid eaters have really enjoyed it.

Chef Paul: So that's the negative and the positive: The negative is that people come in, I think, with a very strong prejudice about what a restaurant should be, regardless of setting and atmosphere, and we buck that a little. But the plus side is that when people leave, the overwhelming response, 95% of the time, maybe 97% of the time is that they're not just satisfied, they're extremely excited about what they've just had.

Maybe Chris has made them a gin cocktail and they normally don't like gin, they like Grey Goose or something, and then they try gin and, "Well, that doesn't...that's nothing like..." and these moments of awakening happen, and they happen when you try lamb brain. Not that everyone is going to try lamb brain or drink gin, but the bottom line is we're not trying to feed you bad stuff. We're not trying to make you drink bad stuff. That's not our goal. There was initially some pushback about what we were doing, and I think now people are very enthusiastic about us and I think that's because people have been, not warned, but forewarned that you should leave your prejudices at the door."

**FSM: You're making your own bitters. Can you describe that process?**

CE: You [can] infuse your alcohol with many different things: botanicals and herbs that I'd never even heard of. Infuse each one separately from the other ones and then the final bitters is a ratio of those liquids combined. It gives you greater control when you're pairing different things together that way.

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

CE: Well, I just beat Chef Paul at chess for the first time, so that's exciting!



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# LIBATION CONVERSATION: Maurice Hennessy

by Dan Crowell



Maurice Hennessy

Maurice Hennessy, eighth-generation descendent of Hennessy Cognac founder Richard Hennessy, paid a visit to Omaha recently. I was fortunate enough to spend some time with Maurice learning more about his family and about Hennessy Cognac, and he was kind enough to grant me an interview.

.....

**FSM: How did Cognac come into being?**

MH: Cognac came to be because of the success of the wine made in the region. This wine was low in alcohol and very acidic. In the 17th century Dutch people started to distill it (the word Brandy is Dutch). The success of the distilled wine grew ever since. The name cognac came as the main source for this spirit was the town of Cognac. In fact at the beginning it was called 'eau de vie de Cognac', i.e. 'spirit from Cognac'.

**"From the land where the grapes are grown, to the wood of the barrels, and the time of aging, everything is precisely monitored."**

**FSM: How does Cognac differ from brandy?**

MH: Most spirits can be called brandy. There are no precise laws to determine what is brandy, what it is made of (it can be made out of any alcohol), or how it is made.

Cognac is made according to rules and regulations determined by law and monitored by the French government. From the land where the grapes are grown, to the wood of the barrels, and the time of aging, everything is precisely monitored.

**FSM: Hennessy has been producing Cognac for nearly 250 years. Can you give us some insights into your family's history?**

MH: Richard Hennessy was an Irish gentleman who, after a period in the Irish regiment of the King of France, started a firm in the town of Cognac in 1765. I am now the eighth generation of Hennessy working in the firm.

**"The Fillioux family has been working for us for more than 200 years... Hennessy is the only firm with such a long family tradition of blending."**

**FSM: Hennessy has retained the same family of master blenders for over 200 years. Can you explain the blending aspect of creating Hennessy Cognac?**

MH: The Hennessy cognac quality must be high and constant. Only a large reserve of good, aging cognac and the talent of the blenders can insure this. The Fillioux family has been working for us for more than 200 years. This family has a gift for tasting, and also an amazing tradition for knowing not just the cognac, but everything and everyone behind it. Hennessy is the only firm with such a long family tradition of blending.



**FSM: Cognac is aged in oak barrels. Does Hennessy have specific requirements regarding the design & management of the barrels?**

MH: The law is very precise about it and we follow it. Hennessy is certainly the largest buyer of traditional hand made barrels in the world.

**FSM: Are there any recommendations you can make to people who are interested in cooking with Hennessy Cognac?**

MH: Do use cognac, and a good brand of it too. The quality of the cognac in your food must match the level of the other ingredients. Poor quality cognac does not add anything in your dish. Better a small quantity of the right stuff!

**FSM: As long as we're on the subject of food, are there any Cognac and food pairings you particularly enjoy?**

MH: Hennessy and chocolate, Hennessy and Asian food, Hennessy and Foie Gras... there are a lot of great pairings.

**FSM: Over the past 250 years, there must have been technological advances in the production of Cognac. How does Hennessy balance tradition and technology in producing and marketing Hennessy Cognac?**

MH: The base has not changed. For example we used to use coal to heat the pot still at the beginning of the last century. Now we use natural gas, a cleaner, more manageable energy source. But the pot still is exactly the same, and the cognac has not changed.



**“Richard Hennessy is an homage to our founder. It contains cognacs made by members of all eight generations... We’ve managed to put the whole family in a bottle.”**

**FSM: What is it that makes the Cognac district so favorable for producing the world’s finest brandy?**

MH: In the region of Cognac you have about 75,000 hectares of vineyards producing white wine, mostly Ugni Blanc, and the region is divided into 6 growth areas, more or less. Grande & Petite Champagne are regions that are very chalky and produce a very elegant cognac that takes a long time to age. The earth is white because there is no earth, only rock. Just chalk. Then you have Borderies which is between the Champagne and the Bois regions. The soil there is more limey and flinty. Borderies makes cognac that is very flowery, very delicate.

Then you have Fins Bois, which is more flint stone, more lime, richer earth, hence the name ‘Fins Bois’. ‘Bois’ means ‘forest’. ‘Champagne’ basically means ‘field’. Nothing grows because there is not enough soil. Only vineyards can grow. They are happier when they suffer, and they suffer correctly there. Bons Bois and Bois Ordinaire have plenty of soil and beautiful vineyards but do not produce such elegant cognacs. We don’t buy Bois Ordinaire or Bons Bois cognacs.

**“Hennessy XO is a blend of about 100 different cognacs aged up to 30 years and beyond... it is the original XO.”**

**FSM: Hennessy offers several expressions or ‘marques’ of Cognac beyond Hennessy VS. Can you tell us what they are and what makes them unique?**

MH: Hennessy Privilege (VSOP) is a very light, elegant cognac aged up to 15 years. It is often consumed alone, but a lot of it is consumed the way I do it, which is with Pellegrino water and ice made with non-chlorinated water. This is a very refreshing drink for the summer.

Hennessy XO is a very robust and spicy cognac. It is a blend of about 100 different cognacs aged up to 30 years and beyond, coming from the four best growing regions of Cognac. It was created in 1870 for my great-great grandfather, who was also called Maurice Hennessy, by his master blender. It was initially created for him and his family, not for sale, but by 1872 it was being sold all over, including places like Shanghai. It is the original XO and for 100 years it was the only XO cognac made.

Hennessy Paradis Extra is made from stocks of cognac from our Founders Cellar. In this cellar we have our finest cognacs. All of them are over 50 years old and some date back to 1800. The cognacs, 100 or so of them, that are used for Paradis are up to 130 years old. Very old.

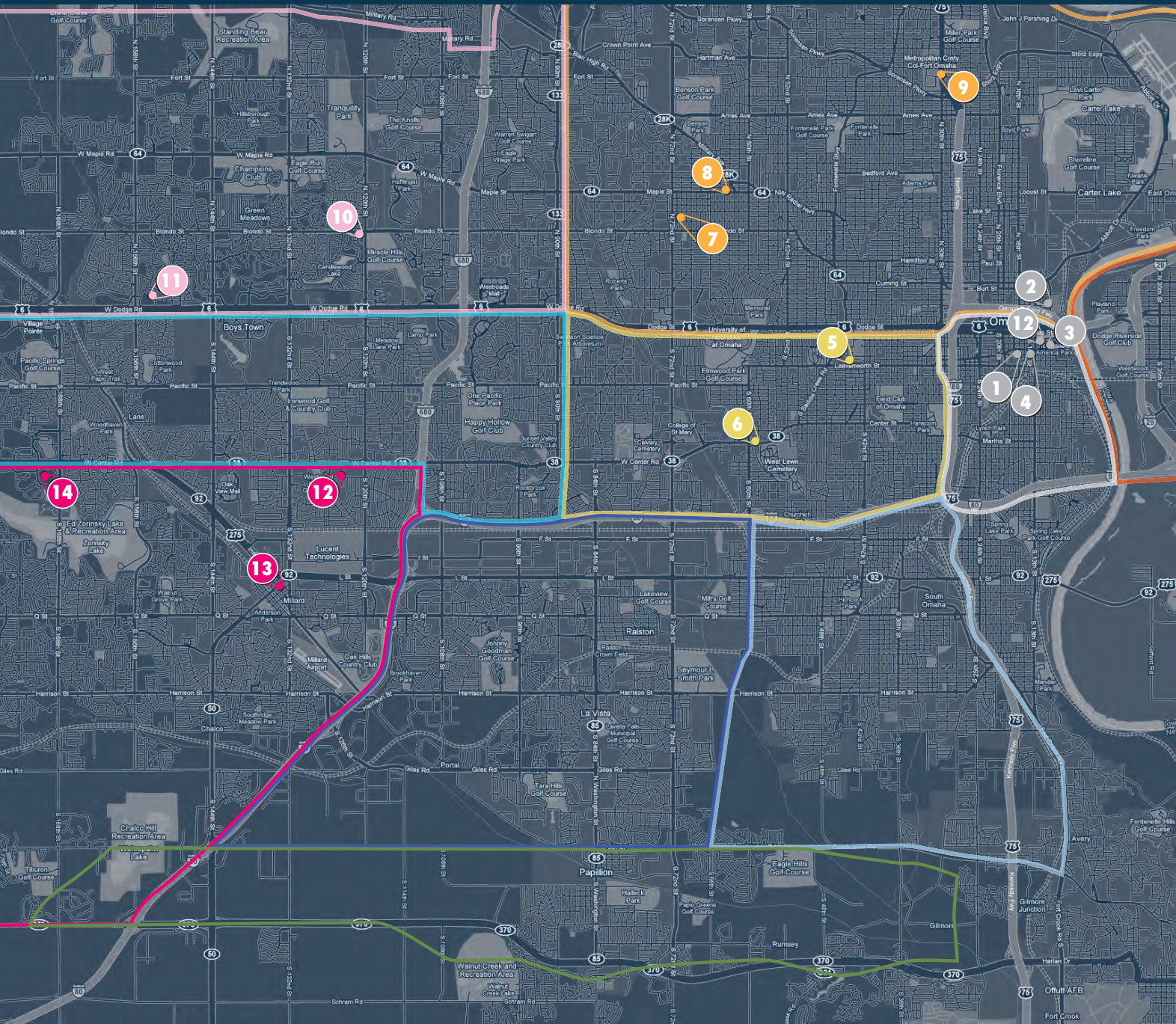
Richard Hennessy is an homage to our founder. It contains cognacs made by members of all eight generations of the Hennessy family and blended by members of all seven generations of the Fillioux family. I think no one else in the world can make that claim. We’ve managed to put a whole family in a bottle.

**FSM: What’s next for Hennessy Cognac?**

MH: Hennessy Black, which will be released in Nebraska this coming summer.

# 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

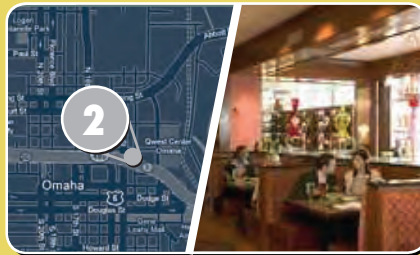
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## 2 Liberty Tavern

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## 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

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## 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

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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
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### Central - BARS & RESTAURANTS

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THE ELBOW ROOM	402-556-0867
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GERDA'S BAKERY	402-553-6774
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GORAT'S STEAK HOUSE	402-551-3733
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JONESY'S TACO HOUSE	402-551-6088
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MCKENNA'S	402-393-7427
SPEZIA	402-391-2950

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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 Danny's Bar & Grill

402-554-5821  
2007 N 72nd St



For over 25 years, Danny's Bar & Grill has been providing Midtown Omaha with excellent food and exceptional service. Consistently on the Best Grill lists in Omaha. Philly Sandwiches, Turkey Burgers, Great Steaks and our famous Hamburgers made fresh daily. Join us for our great daily specials, "all you can eat" nights and watch games on one of our HD Televisions. 2007 North 72nd Street in Omaha.

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## 9 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](http://www.mccneb.edu/bistro)  
Bistro Hours - Mon. - Thurs. 6 - 8:30 p.m.

## 10 Taxi's

402-898-1882  
1822 North 120th St.



Taxi's Grille is a neighborhood spot. Developed by Mac Thompsen and Bill Johnette, owners of The Neon Goose, the atmosphere and menu are contemporary casual. The large menu features soups, specialty salads, sandwiches, comfort foods, fresh seafood and steaks. 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.

## 11 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. Fichépain 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.

## 12 Julio's Restaurant

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



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

### Northwest - BARS & RESTAURANTS

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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
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HOWARD'S CHARRO CAFE	402-731-3776
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KAHN'S MONGOLIAN BBQ	402-731-4800
TAQUERIA TIAJUANA	402-731-1281
THAI KITCHEN	402-733-0579
ZESTO'S	402-932-4420

### Bellevue - BARS & RESTAURANTS

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HAM'S BELLEVUE BAR	402-291-9941
JAMMER'S PUB	402-291-8282
PHARAOH'S	402-991-9000
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AMARILLO	402-571-2333
CHANDLER INN PIZZA	402-734-0663
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STELLA'S HAMBURGERS	402-291-6088
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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

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NO WHERE BAR	402-502-5656
OBSERVATORY LOUNGE	402-334-9996
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THE DRAFT HOUSE	402-884-2845
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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: Loyal to the Bone

by Michael Campbell



I bought a bag of Newman's Own Organic Second Generation Premium Dog Treats.

There were about as many little snacks in the bag as there were adjectives in the title. The treats were for Phooley, a Shih Tzu, who had been getting a Milk Bone reward every time he went outside and dumped his previous reward.

I thought he might appreciate a little variety. Besides, it bothered me that they are called Milk Bones even though there is no such thing as a milk bone—the closest thing is an udder—and the biscuits probably contain neither milk nor bones.

**“Just as Phooley and I disagree on the merits of licking one’s own behind, I’m yelling you: hands down, Milk Bones taste better.”**

“So sweet of you to buy Phooley treats!” my girlfriend purred. Phooley is her dog. That’s partly why I did it, and wholly why I made sure she saw me do it. “It’s nice that you take such good care of—hey! You did not just eat that dog biscuit!”

I didn’t eat it. It was just a nibble. “They’re not bad,” I replied. “Try one.” I tossed her a dog treat. “I didn’t eat the whole thing.”

Not to be outdone, she tossed the dog biscuit into her mouth just as she heard me say I didn’t eat mine. Her tongue instinctively batted the pass away, and it dropped into her hand. “Oh,” she said. She nibbled a tiny bite. “It tastes like—nothing.”

I shrugged. “Little Friskies taste like Rye Crisps.” She looked at me blankly. As a kid, sitting on the back porch, I had occasionally eaten some of the hard little kibble we set out for cats who weren’t allowed in the house. “I didn’t eat a lot of them.” Her stare began to make me uncomfortable. “They’re filling.”

Before you get judgmental, remember that at some point in your childhood you ate your own booger. I know at some point you went sledding and got cold, and snot ran down your lip and you licked it off. At least cat food is food.

I decided to be a dog food critic. I googled Newman’s Treats, and it returned photos of a groomed Paul and his two groomed dogs. I entered Milk Bone and saw two smiling border collies, a scottie and a chihuahua. When I typed Little Friskies, I was startled by a dozen photos of young boys more or less in their underpants.

Newman’s Own Organic Premium Dog Treats are hard, grainy biscuits molded into little hearts, a cute touch probably wasted on a dog. The cookies are made of organic barley, ground chicken, carrots,

apples, rolled oats and rosemary. You would expect it to taste like Thanksgiving dinner.

I took a bite. Prepared al dente, it tasted of cardboard and raw oatmeal.

A Milk Bone is made from wheat, fat—and what do you know—milk and bones, glued together with an epic list of choline chlorides, ethylenediamines and twenty other polysyllabic additives. It has the grainy consistency of wheat bread run over by a garbage truck. It tastes like milk and bones.

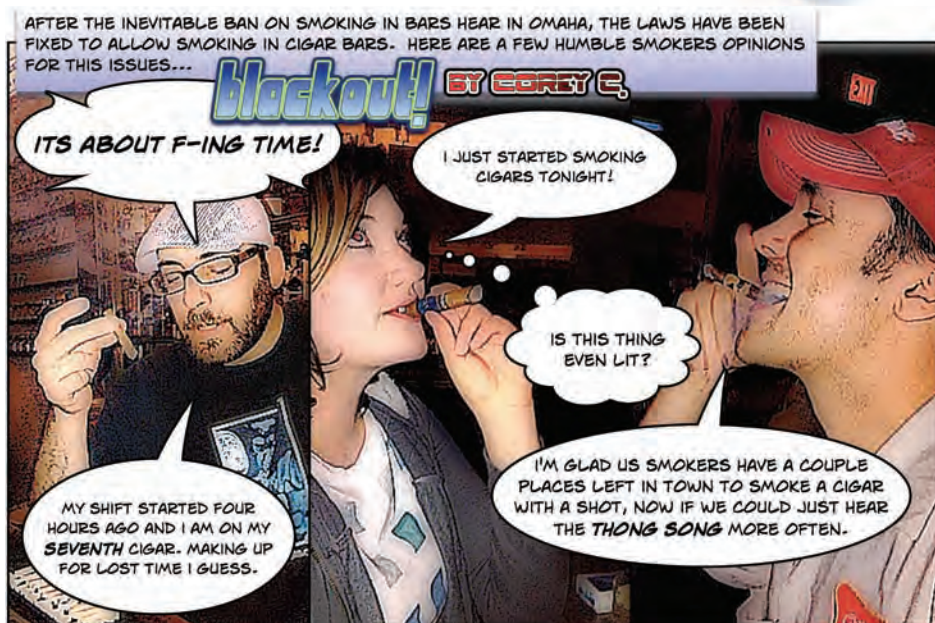
I noticed Phooley, on his tip-toes and gasping bug-eyed through my glass desktop, his belly wet with drool. I broke a fat Milk Bone to a size equal to Newman’s Own dainty heart, and held one in each hand.

“This one? Or this one?” I let Phoo sniff each treat, even have a little lick. As I went back and forth, Phooley’s eyes locked on the Newman’s. They did not waver. They did not blink. “This one, or . . .” He began to quiver and squeak, his eyeballs drying out.

I gave him the Newman’s biscuit, which he swallowed whole. He began begging again. I ignored him until his eyes began to cross and I realized he needed to go out.

He emptied himself, making room for more treats, and we repeated the test. Again, he stared down the Newman’s.

But just as Phooley and I disagree on the merits of licking one’s own behind, I’m telling you: hands down, Milk Bones taste better.





## BEYOND

a key drop, he dropped everything for us.

Obviously, a fire in the kitchen is bad. But when we had a fire hours after closing, well, that was something else. Lucky for me, Eric, my U.S. Foodservice driver, was on the job. He was doing his nightly drop when he saw flames—and my business in trouble. He dropped everything, put out the fire and called for help. I guess that's just another night's work for someone who's used to going beyond.

- George Perrella, On the Border Restaurant, Georgia



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