

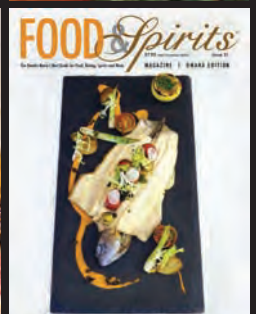
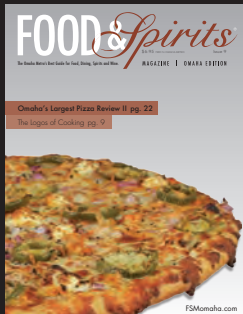
FOOD & Spirits®

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Issue 28

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

MAGAZINE | OMAHA EDITION



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The Sage Student Bistro operates as a customer-focused classroom providing our students an opportunity to refine their skills in a live setting. We are located within the Institute for the Culinary Arts on MCC's Fort Omaha Campus, 32nd Street and Sorensen Parkway.

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FOOD & Spirits

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Take a gander at all of our past issues, from the first to the issue in front of you now.

No. 28

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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



Welcome to the latest issue of **Food & Spirits Magazine**, which marks our 10-year anniversary. When reflecting over that last 10 years, it seems that so much has changed during that time, both for me personally and, of course, for our fine city of Omaha.

Omaha has developed in ways many of us hoped for, but maybe didn't expect. Sections of town have arisen as their own certifiable

neighborhoods and now call themselves **Benson, Blackstone, Little Italy, Midtown Crossing, Aksarben, Capitol District, etc.**, while the venerable neighborhoods like the **Old Market and Dundee** have continued to develop and adapt to the times. These sections of town can now boast of having their own food, dining and entertainment options that pull people from all over the area.

The food, bar and dining scene has also continued to develop at a rapid pace and Omaha can now be proud of the many made-from-scratch restaurants using local ingredients that populate the city. Our local community (like much of the country) has also seen a huge upswing in the amount of craft breweries that are available and the craft cocktail scene also has more than a few fine establishments that are top-notch. It's the presence of these types of places that really helped districts of town define themselves and pull customers from the rest of the city.

Of course, the impressive restaurants, bars and lounges that we have wouldn't be anything without the chefs, bartenders, owners and people that otherwise work at those establishments upping their game. They're a truly impressive group of people and the dining and drinking scene in Omaha couldn't have gotten where it is today without them. They've helped elevate our city in ways we only imagined ten years ago.

It's tempting to wax poetic about all the restaurants and bars and the people that work in them, but perhaps that's an article for another day. For me, when I think about the last ten years of my life in Omaha, the history of Food & Spirits Magazine over that time, and the commendable dining and drinking scene that we have, there really is only one thing I find my mind returning to over and over – our supporters, advertisers and creative contributors that have meant so much to me, the magazine and in turn, our city. There is no doubt that their contributions to many of the things I described above has been present and vast.

Without them, the magazine wouldn't be here, and while the food and drink scene may have continued to evolve at an unchecked pace, you certainly wouldn't have heard as much about it: over FSM's history these people I speak of have created nearly two million words worth of articles and thousands of photos. All about eating and drinking in Omaha. Countless readers have read the magazine or been on our website taking all this in.

My heartfelt gratitude and admiration goes out to them and I hope yours does too. There are two ads in the magazine thanking all of them and, if you would, do me a favor. Look through each one of those ads and see how many names and businesses you recognize (I suspect there will be more than a few). After that, go and tell them thank you. They deserve it for subsidizing and creating this magazine for everyone else in the city. They're a rare bunch that offered up their time and money to create something they believed in for the rest of us. And that's how growth and development happen. You have to have a core group of people that have a vision and want the rest of us to see it. So, while we all should be proud of the many great things our city has to offer in the food and spirits scene, we should also be thankful to those that wanted to make sure you knew about it and experienced it for yourself.

So, enjoy. For those of us that are a part of *Food & Spirits Magazine*, it's important to us that you do so. As always, we love to hear from our readers so let us know what you like, and what you don't. We're always listening, and we hope to be doing the same in another 10 years.

Erik Totten – Publisher
Food & Spirits Magazine

— EXPERTS PANEL —

Food & Spirits Magazine offers our sincere gratitude to all of our past and present writers, photographers, designers and other helpers who have all helped make what you see before you today. Thank you to all!

Matt Ronco, Brent Udron, Ron Samuelson, Paul Urban, Brian O'Malley, John Fischer, Karl Marsh, Stephanie Krysl, Eric Souder, Jim Trebbien, Ann Summers, Judy Gilliard, John Larkin, Monique Huston, Jeremy Hunter, Eric Franz, Dan Crowell, Marq Manner, Paul Kavulak, John Finocchiaro, Christin Merwald, Jessica Joyce, Cullen Gilbreath, Kent Cisar, Kathryn Neuhaus, Bill MacKenzie, Sean and Therese Creswell, Kellie Habeeb, Lisa Tooker, Michael Campbell, Jeremy Katz, Janet Mar, Michael De Smet, Dennis Hatchett, Brian Smith, Ryan Brown, John Uhrich, Jesse Becker, Tami Catron, Moriah Johnson, Matt Stamp, Alex Diimig, Justin Firestone, Tammi Hunter, Steve Andrews, Rocco Caniglia, Jason McLaughlin, Amelia Timms, Jen Valandra, Matt Biggins, Paul Kulik, Alexander Lund, April Christenson, Jordy Clements, Samantha Schrader, Tony Kimble, Sarah Lewis, Oliver Pollack, Amanda Colanino, Robert Reed, John Horvatinovich, Charles Schlusell, Sarah Wengert, Kyle Tonniges, Jill Cockson, Erik Knauss, Miranda McQuillan, Summer Miller, Rachel Mulder, David Adams, Lucas Korth, Jeff King, Keri Davis, Binoy Fernandez, Evie Clercx, Jesse Erickson, Linda Lichtenwalter, Nautica Lloyd, Dylan Thaemert, Scott Zrust, Wayne Brekke, Jamie Danielle Hardy, Mark Daniels, Chip Duden, Pat Ratigan, Rhylee Richardson, Perryanna Thomas, Sydney True, Justine Garman, Jason Volkmer, Natalie Ones, Ryan Miller, Maggie Day, Allan Schleich, Trisha Hunter, Suyapa Tobias, Victoria Casebeer, Christopher Johannes, Tom Patton, Craig Gonzo, John Urzendowski, Sean McCall, Danny Lich, Tina Taylor, Mark Karrer, David Ahlquist, Jerred Zegelis, J. Michael McBride, Brady Hess, Jessica Orth, Jacob Herrman, Chad Ebel, Corey Caughlin, Matt Goddard, Chris Kollars, Matt Linder, Jake Scott, Bob Armbruster, Ben McQuillen, Jessica Clem, Benjamin Doyle, Mallory Finch, Shelby Hoins, Ariel Fried, Jason McLaren, John Shartrand Photography, Patrick Morgans, Bailey Price, John Svatos, Erica Viola, Lila Anderson, Lindsey Clements, Jeremy Estill, Timothy Maides, Brock Miller, Brian Lacey, J&K Photography, Pat Ratigan, Matt Mason, Andy Elliott, Eddie Morin, Angela Thomas, Joni Cat Anderson, Miseon Lee, Admiral District, Brandon Hahn, Eric Price, Angela Nicols, Bailey Price, Brian Hilger, Sheri Potter, Mark Gudgel, Michael Pickell, Ryan Tantillo, Leo Adam Biga, Lisa Dirks, Sonja Gudgel, Leah Parodi, Beverly Nelligan, Cathy Curtis, Thomas Irvan, Allie Schrader, Wyn Wiley, Edward G. Berna, Ross Negrete, Justyna Guziejewska, Jenalyn Amigable Mallari, Rob Ruiz



ANTHONY KUEPER **DOLCE**

dedicated to creating memories at

by Leo Adam Biga

In four-and-a-half years, Anthony Kueper has gone from sous chef to executive chef to chef-owner at fine dining **Dolce** in northwest Omaha.

Dolce is another of the city's new crafted American food spots, but unlike the young, fresh-from-culinary-school phenoms running some of those other kitchens. Kueper is a 43 year-old veteran of the food wars.

From savoring fresh mussels in France at age six to taking cooking classes at 12 to preparing meals at home for his younger siblings and for friends, his life as a gastronome started early.

Born into a military family, he moved with his father's U.S. Air Force assignments and everywhere he went he indulged in the indigenous food culture: street frites in Holland, Tex-Mex in the American southwest and paellas in the Philippines.

His father twice got posted to Offutt Air Force Base in Bellevue and it was that second,

more permanent posting that saw Kueper finish school here and get his first professional training.

"I worked at **Julio's** and **Jones Street Brewery**. It was good food but it was basic stuff."

Then there was fortuitous stint at **The Bistro** in the **Old Market**.

"Two chefs there influenced me a little bit and actually got me to go to culinary school—**Gene Cammarota** and **Kenneth Hughes**," said Kueper.

Being exposed to their high end techniques, he said, "gave me the idea there was more to just cooking."

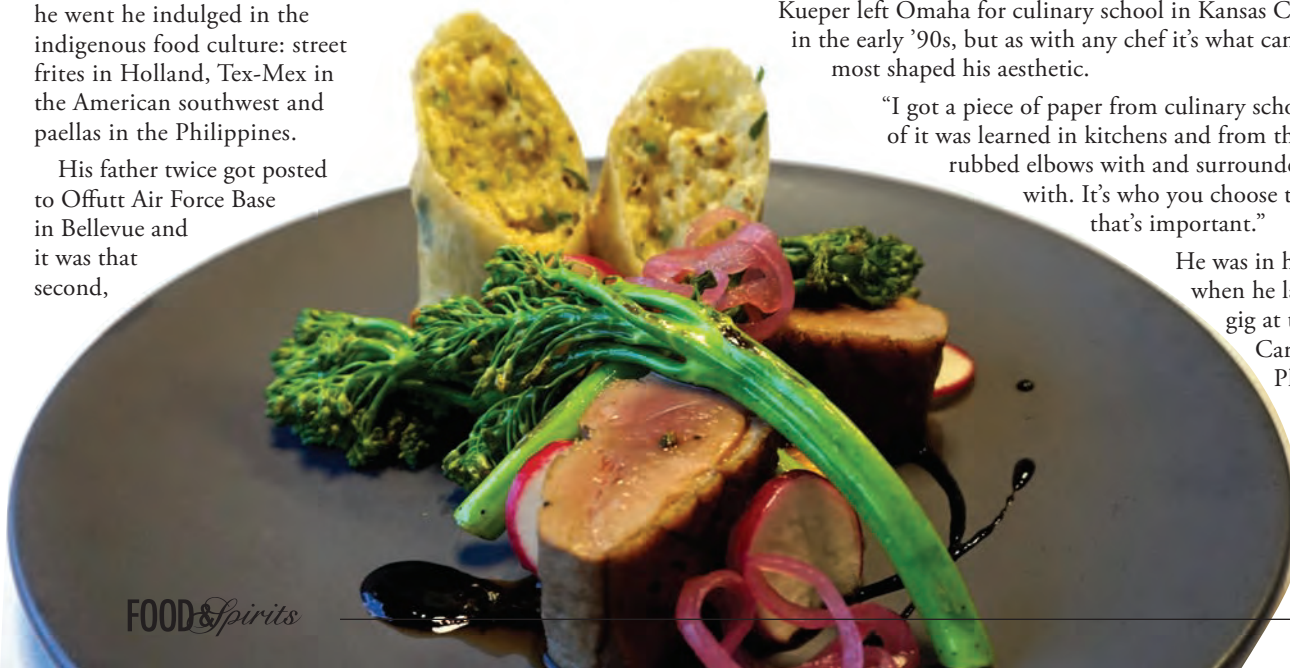
Along the way he bumped into future notables, including **Paul Kulik**.

Kueper left Omaha for culinary school in Kansas City, Missouri in the early '90s, but as with any chef it's what came after that most shaped his aesthetic.

"I got a piece of paper from culinary school – the rest of it was learned in kitchens and from the people I rubbed elbows with and surrounded myself with. It's who you choose to follow that's important."

He was in his early 20s when he landed a chef gig at the Ritz Carlton on the Plaza in K.C.

"My first chef position at the Ritz Carlton hit me



hard. I almost didn't recover. I was very talented at an early age. I had a lot of hype put behind me. I had a lot of powerful people around me."

Under the Ritz Carlton brand he worked in Atlanta for the Olympics and in San Francisco opening a new venue. Then he felt it was time to do something else.

"When I left the Ritz Carlton and went to Colorado to try and do something on my own, it was a big challenge. It wasn't a real niche for fine dining, so I ended up doing a lot of bar and grills—fun food—and tried to throw some of my technique into that. There's only so much you can do."

Colorado is where he grew personally and professionally and where he met his wife, Daniela. They have three children together.

"Yeah, I met a girl from Germany and she put hooks in my heart."

After she returned to Germany, he sold most of his belongings and joined her there.

"I left my restaurant in Aspen and lived in Hamburg for two years."

He joked that if it gets out he's really a romantic at heart, he won't be taken seriously as "a tyrant in the kitchen." The couple returned to the States to start a family. Colorado became their home base.

He worked for some real characters there, including an eccentric Frenchman. Then there was 'The Dude' at a place called Toscanini. That led to Kueper joining VIN 48 in Avon. He was there from the end of 2008 to the beginning of 2012

"It was a good experience."

Meanwhile, Daniela missed the flavors of home.

Fortunately, when they lived in Hamburg he schooled himself on the local cuisine.

"So she wouldn't be homesick I learned how to cook German food. I learned how to make schnitzel at a two star Michelin restaurant."

After all his travels, Kueper finally came back to Omaha. The decision to come here was all about family. One of his boys had respiratory issues in the high altitude of Colorado and Kueper wanted to be closer to his parents. But settling here was not the ultimate plan.

"I planned on spending a little time in Omaha before finding something in Chicago, Minneapolis or Kansas City.

We weren't going to put our roots down in Omaha."

Besides, it was a rough go the first couple years back.

"It was difficult because I'm an older chef with a pedigreed resume. I'm not a 27-year-old kid that ran half the kitchens in town."

Star chefs like **Tim Nicholson** at **The Boiler Room** weren't even old enough to drink when he left here. Things had definitely changed.

To keep his fine dining skills honed he worked at **V. Mertz** for nine months, but making \$11 an hour wasn't cutting it to support a family. That gig though led to Dolce.

"The V. Mertz name alone kicked open doors for me with the resume I had."

Dolce's original owner, **Gina Sterns**, discovered him there and brought him on board in 2013. He admired how she took what began as a pastry shop to a fine dining establishment. Health issues forced her to take a step back. In 2014 Lincoln restaurateurs **Jason Kuhr** and **Tyler Mohr** purchased it.



"We helped elevate this space to what it is because, I mean, it's in a strip mall. You don't know what to expect from the outside. It does surprise a lot of people that they can find this little gem of a place there. We've done a lot to improve the ambience. Jason had the financial strength to do the things that would have taken me a lot longer to do in terms of remodeling, revisiting and reinvigorating the space. My food and what he did made what Dolce's standing on now."

Meanwhile, Kueper helped the Mohrs open **Ollie and Hobbes** in Omaha but found himself overextended.

"I wasn't happy. I was working way too much, even Sundays, not seeing my family. I was pulling down a lot of money, but it wasn't worth it."

That's when he decided to focus his energies on one venue and worked out the purchase of Dolce. He actually tried before, when Sterns still owned it, but he and a partner didn't have the capital.

He had tried the chef-owner hat on in Colorado.

"It was an exciting thing to open a new restaurant, but it turned out to be a bad partnership, so I kind of wash it from my memory."

This time around he's flying solo and loving being his own boss. He's taking the fresh-local upmarket comfort food thing to the next level.

"The whole local food movement—trying to get all your products from within a 120-mile radius—is the greenest way to go about it. I don't want to be buying my pigs from New York. This is where food comes from. This is a huge farming community.

"Where it matters, we do buy organic—in our meat, in our dairy. About 50 percent of our produce is organic."

If Kueper's learned anything, he said, it's "that people have to love what you do and how you do it," adding, "That at the end of the day is what matters."

"The people that come here like our food, they like what we're doing with the food, they like our message."

He's all about providing an experience that touches deep reservoirs.

"Food is a memory. The bread pudding we do is based off my dad's mother's recipe. My dad says it's the closest rendition he's ever had, it's just different. The thing that's different is she saved up all the scrap bread from the bread she used to make. I'm using a different style bread. My dad generally tears through his food, but when he hits that bread pudding, he slows down, so he can savor everything."

True to its comfort concept, Dolce keeps things simple.

"If you look at our menu, they're simple things that people can identify with."

But with that fine dining twist.

"We serve kale with our steak and I swear to God we go through more kale. And we're not doing the kale chips or salads or anything like that, we actually use it as a good vegetable on our proteins and people are like, 'You made me eat kale—and it was wonderful.'"



"For our roast chicken we start with good local chickens that we brine in-house. A seven herb emulsion goes on it—it's oregano, chives, parsley, thyme, rosemary, spinach and we add some roasted garlic. A lot of people can't put their finger on it because it's such a blend. We make a tomato marmalade by cooking tomatoes down with a little bit of sherry vinegar, sugar, salt and pepper. We serve the dish with simple gnocchi and broccolini."

Kueper draws inspiration from

the past.

"I'm really a traditionalist when it comes to the history of things. I cook with historical background. I try to do it the way it was done years ago before there were microwaves and preservatives. We dry-age some of our own meats here. I'd like to do more, but we don't have the facility space."

The day this reporter visited, a Mangalista hybrid hog got delivered. It's an old breed valued for its high fat content that keeps the meat succulent when roasted.

Many myths attend fine dining that Kueper's eager to overturn.

"People think it's unhealthy—it's not. We don't use tons of butter. We use herbs salt, acidity, just the right amount of balance in things."

Flavors are carefully curated.

"We don't try to overpower flavors. There might be one thing that's going to knock your socks off but then everything else is going to be subdued."

Today's Omaha food scene is quite different than the one he left two decades ago.







"Omaha has come a long way. The cooks and the kitchens in Omaha are there. The diners still need to be educated. You constantly have people tell you, 'You know what you should do?' Like put a crab cake on a salad. It's very classic, it's very nice. I'm not saying that's not a good idea, but it's just not my expression. It's not the type of food I look to put forward."

"I like to push people out of their comfort zone just a little. It's all driven by technique. And if I can win you over on one of those things, I will build a customer for life. It's kind of cool that way. I have people that don't like duck who love the duck that we do. I've had people tell me they hate salmon but ours was the best salmon they ever had."

His Margarita Mussels is another example.

"That's one of my signature dishes. I think I'm bringing it back this fall. The tequila is added to a citrus broth. It hits all the right notes."

He said its creation came about "from just being playful."

Experimenting with ingredients is a lifelong process.

"You're never done learning. I'll work with an ingredient until I think I've figured it out. I will try stuff and really shoot from the hip."

A couple years ago he taught himself to make ramen noodles from scratch. "They seem so simple and basic, but when done right," he said, they're oh so delicious.

More recently, he concocted a translucent omelet made from just egg yolks.

Baking is something he's mastered in recent years.

"I wasn't much of a baker, but now I've become quite an advanced baker. I've learned a lot teaching myself."

"It's all time and temperature. It's just basic chemistry and all the laws can be changed in different applications to make things

happen. It's just how you approach it and if you're willing to take a chance. I have a lot of failures, but I have a lot of successes, too. I don't serve my failures—I eat them."

Two things Dolce's known for—"Taste of the Moment" and "Date Night"—continue. Taste of the Moment specials change every day according to his mood and shopping finds. On a late August visit it was herb goat cheese ravioli with red pepper pasta.

"We roast off sweet red peppers, remove the skin, and blend them up with the eggs. It's served with smoked chicken broth with Shiitake mushrooms, spinach and truffle oil."

More than ever, he can follow inspirations as they occur.

"Now that I'm not working for somebody else, I can do it my way. I don't have to ask somebody if it's okay to do a 'weird' dish. I'm doing my artichoke creme brulee this fall. It's something I learned how to make in Germany. It's artichoke and parmesan in a creme brulee, so it's savory. It's served with asparagus wrapped in our house-made prosciutto."

Freedom to do your own thing is nice, but not everyone's going to like everything you do. His five-course tasting menu usually has one dish that challenges diners. When he first took over as chef at Dolce four years ago, a local reviewer openly questioned his execution on some dishes. He took exception with the digs though he acknowledges he wasn't at his best then.

"That was a long time ago. At the time, I had a young crew. I was just getting established here under new ownership. I was trying to feel them out. I wasn't cooking to my potential—not like what we're doing now. It was good food, but I wasn't putting it all out there. I was sparing some of myself inside."

The vagaries and demands of his field can drain all but the heartiest souls.

"As a chef you can throw yourself out there and it'll end up burning you up. It's hard to keep stable mental health in this industry, it really is."

With all his experience, he perhaps feels less compelled to prove himself and more inclined to bask in the glow of doing what he loves. It's why on a recent vacation to his old stomping grounds in Colorado he made a point of catching up with buddies from VIN 48 so they could cook together again.

Before leaving for the trip, he said, "I haven't seen them in five years. I'm doing it because I miss them. Two of the guys I trained are running the place."

The trip served as a reminder to keep it simple, stupid.

"I've cooked some of the best meals with no running water. I was an avid backpacker and camper. I had tortillas, Fantastic Foods hummus (a dehydrated product) and fresh caught trout that I smoked over a live fire using a little orange juice and soy sauce."

Food is what you make of it and Kueper's all about giving diners a memorable experience in his warm-toned, intimately-scaled Dolce, where maybe you'll meet your new best friends while dining.

"There are these two couples that come in to dine together at least once a month. They met each other here. Their love and passion was food and our restaurant brought them together, and I think that's cool."

How dolce (sweet) too.

Located at 12317 West Maple Road. Open for lunch Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and for dinner Monday through Saturday, 5 p.m. to close.

For menu and reservations, visit www.dolceomaha.org, or call 402-964-2122.

A New BEGINNING

by Kent Cisar

The Barrett family breaks new ground in a familiar space with the new bar "The B"

Barrett's Barleycorn recently celebrated their 30th Anniversary at 4330 Leavenworth Street. Barrett's has built a very successful enterprise thanks to excellent pub fare and as a gathering place for soccer fans and LSU and other baseball fans during the **College World Series**. You can stop in wearing a suit, sandals, or scrubs and have a good time. One would think that a place with an excellent reputation and consistent clientele would stand pat. **Karen Barrett**, the owner of Barrett's, and her employees don't think that way and it's resulting in an exciting new venture called **The B**.

The B opens on September 29th right across the west parking lot from Barrett's Barleycorn. It will be open from 3 p.m. until 2 a.m. Monday through Saturday and be closed on Sundays.

"Our food at the Barleycorn has become so successful that it feels like we've become a place to eat, with a bar and I wanted a 21 and over bar again," says Karen. Barrett began to look at places to open another bar then decided that with the amount of time and energy being devoted to maintaining her social hall **Castle Barrett**, that it would be better served as the new bar she was after. She wants to stay true to Barrett's roots of family and neighborhood. She hopes it's another spot to be happy year round.

The B has a speakeasy vibe to it. It feels historic yet new. When you walk in, even though you know you're in the heart of Leavenworth Street, you feel like you're in another place and time.

"I want people to come in and be themselves, be comfortable in who they are and be comfortable while they're here," Barrett says.

"Guests that come to The B will notice the care and intent the Barrett family puts into their work from entrance to exit."

Guests that come to The B will notice the care and intent the Barrett family puts into their work from entrance to exit. The bar itself is custom made, wide open and easily accessible for patrons to get a drink. It's also easy for bartenders to serve them as they have two full stations on the length of the bar. Patrons will find comfortable chairs along the bar itself and throughout the





establishment. Those ordering will find a bar whose choices are ample but not overwhelming. Guests can enjoy a shot of whiskey, a beer, order a cocktail even, or share a bottle of wine. The B will also feature a couple of signature cocktails.

The name “The B” pays homage to the family’s roots as Barrett vividly remembers her son’s friends coming over, saying hello and then heading straight to their basement for hours at a time. It made her family happy and kept his friends happy. She hopes that everyone who walks through the B’s front door comes in expecting to have a good time and leaves satisfied that they did.

The B will be versatile, both for what the bar itself can do, but also what the patrons can do in it. Barrett hopes the bar will create its own atmosphere. A stage in the northwest corner of the bar is available for a variety of uses. The stage is sizeable enough for a multi-piece band to play a rousing set, yet the bar is small enough for an acoustic guitarist to connect with their audience. If you want to watch the big game you’ll be able to do so with ease. There’s a brand new shuffleboard table with ample room to play and a dart board. The B also has a games table where patrons can grab a deck of cards, chess board, and other activities.

Barrett envisions a place that can be seen as destination, a stopover before and after events, or as a change of pace from the usual routine. The B will be able to handle a post game rush of fans or people swinging by for a drink after a show. **Jack Barrett Jeffrey**, her son, will be instrumental in the success of the bar. He plays in a band and will look to create interest in local musicians playing at the bar.







“I’d love for someone who plays in a band to come in here for a drink, enjoy it, then ask if their band can play here,” Jack said.

“ Keep an eye on The B’s social media presence on Facebook or Twitter as they’ll post their upcoming events that could include music, game nights and other plans. ”

Keep an eye on The B’s social media presence on Facebook or Twitter as they’ll post their upcoming events that could include music, game nights and other plans.

“We will be opportunistic and flexible with our programming,” says Barrett.

The B is an example of a bar and family that has built an extremely successful enterprise, but is not content with staying where they are at. Barrett emphasized the cooperation of the community as another key to their success.

“The people around us have been very good to us here, both our corporate partners such as the Med Center and residents of the local neighborhoods,” she said.

They also acknowledge the landscape of evening entertainment is different now with the **Blackstone District** nearby. She sees more people in the area as a good thing, and by creating The B, it allows them the chance to offer something different, not just for Leavenworth Street, but the surrounding area. This venture excites the owners, but also the employees.

“We wouldn’t be able to embark on this new venture without the quality and commitment of our employees,” said Barrett.

Whether it’s a quiet night with a good cocktail and great conversation, a place to unwind with a quality drink after a hard day’s work, or a chance to cut loose and dance to a high energy band on a Friday night, The B is a spot you’ll want to frequent often.



TOUR DE FORK OMAHA

by Kent Cisar

A journey around Omaha for those who've been away during the duration of our publication

Hello my good friend. Welcome back to Omaha. You're going to be quite impressed with the flavors, sights, aromas and vibe of the Omaha food scene now. I've accepted your challenge of showing you as many of my favorite spots as I can in Omaha this week. I assure you we'll be responsible with our beverages but not with our calories, so whatever workout regimen you're on should probably be doubled. By Sunday night, you'll be re-acclimated to what you've missed since you've been away from our culinary scene for the last ten years.

Let's start this week out easy with a morning beverage and a chance to catch up. I'm good with any of the **Crane Coffee** locations so take your pick. Each place feels comfortable for coffee and conversation. If you'd like a smoothie or a tea they can do that, too. If it's cold enough I may just grab a hot cocoa.

Our first lunch spot is **Foodies** just north of Dodge St. on 78th St. Foodies' menu is diverse for a lunch spot. Their preparation for each day is what sets this place apart. I recommend the paratha wraps. It's a crunchy, flaky canvas for whatever they choose to fill it with. I'm partial to the dill chicken salad and

their homemade side salad. Yes that vinaigrette is homemade, and they toast the almonds to add just that much more depth to an already stellar salad.

“You're going to be quite impressed with the flavors, sights, aromas and vibe of the Omaha food scene now”

If you decide to live in Northwest Omaha one of the benefits you'll have is being close to our evening dining location at **Railcar** at 144th and Blondo. I rarely order ribs anywhere but a great barbecue joint, but Railcar's cherry barbecue ribs are divine. I order the half rack so I can order their truffle fries and save room for dessert. If ribs aren't your thing then their pork chop, jambalaya paella, and asiago chicken schnitzel are excellent choices.





I'm not sure when you left if you thought **Florence** was a dining destination, but it is now so we'll start our Tuesday up at **Harold's Koffee House** at 8327 N. 30th St. There's a lot of excellent fare in a small radius up there and Harold's has been an anchor for almost 60 years. I didn't know much about it until recently, but they've got an old school diner feel with comfort food and very reasonable prices. Check out their chorizo hash for a spicy start to your day, and good luck passing on one of their homemade cinnamon or pecan rolls.

“Check out their chorizo hash for a spicy start to your day, and good luck passing on one of their homemade cinnamon or pecan rolls”

For Tuesday's lunch I'm taking you to another spot that I was late to the party with, **El Basha** on 76th and Pacific. I'm making up for lost time. We've gone in at lunch, in the afternoon, or the early/mid evening and it's always busy. It's pretty easy to see why. El Basha has affordable food, large portions, and fantastic flavor. I've enjoyed many gyros and falafel sandwiches here. Eventually,

I'll need to try one of their salads which turn my head every time I see one come out of the kitchen.

We're not going too far for dinner on Tuesday at **Rivera's** at 120th and Blondo. I know you have a high spice tolerance and that will come in handy here. We'll need to start with their shrimp alambres. The shrimp are perfectly cooked. The bacon, peppers, cheese and spices add depth and the sauce seals the deal on this perfect table setting starter for their main menu. What impresses me the most about Rivera's is that they provide heat but also nuanced flavors within each plate. Whether it's on any one of their incredible selection of enchiladas, their chile rellenos, mole poblano or one of their mahi mahi entrees you'll taste purpose from the first bite to the last.

Wednesday morning I'm happy to reintroduce you to **Dixie Quick's**. It was downtown when you left and I know it feels like more of a drive to get there now, but it's 100% worth it. Located at 157 Broadway Street in Council Bluffs, it's eating incredible food in an art gallery atmosphere. I have a hard time ordering anything but the French toast, but I think you'd also enjoy one of their scrambles, omelettes or benedicts. They'll give you a few things you don't see often here so if you're feeling curious the prickly pear cactus scramble is tasty, and if you want dessert for breakfast try their oatmeal and ice cream. Think of it as yogurt and oatmeal, just colder, sweeter, and better.

Wednesday's lunch spot takes you to another familiar face. Last time I saw you my affinity for **Barrett's Barleycorn** on 44th and Leavenworth was just beginning. I play volleyball there but I enjoy it for any occasion. You'll get friendly staff, a great mix of clientele, and for a small kitchen some of the best pub fare around. I think you'd enjoy their Philly or any of their burgers. Their patty melt within the last year surpassed their Maverick Burger as my favorite menu item.

We can walk to our dinner locale right up Leavenworth to **J. Coco** on 52nd Street. We should bring a couple friends with us. The starters and sides are diverse and extremely difficult to choose just one so a few more appetites at the table can help us share in the culinary wealth. If you're not enthusiastic about things like octopus, cauliflower, or Brussels sprouts, J.Coco's renditions will change your mind. For the main course the Wagyu burger with a bevy of add on choices is a contender for my favorite burger in the city. Their Cubano is also excellent. If you're feeling a need for an entrée you'll find seafood, chicken, pork, steaks, and lamb on the menu right now.

Our Thursday will commence in **Aksarben**. I spend a lot of time there now and for good reason. I love UNO hockey, farmers markets, and live music. You'll be impressed at what Aksarben has become and we're excited about where it's going. **Amato's** at 6405 Center St. has been a staple for a while and I hope it will be there for many years to come. Please take a look at everything on their menu, but I'm going to get the ricotta pancakes triple berry



style with their homemade sausage. Ricotta cheese nestled into a pancake and infused with a triple berry blast and drizzled with syrup is magnificent by itself. Add the best breakfast sausage I've ever had and this plate is worth waking up for.

For lunch we'll saunter a little way south but when you walk into the doors of **Gusto Cuban Café** at 7910 Harrison Street it will transport you to a tropical cabana. I always get the #21, a Cuban sandwich adding in chorizo. The bread is perfectly toasted. The meats have subtle yet lasting flavor and the Swiss cheese ties it all together. I'm up for any of their appetizers but especially their sweet plantains. That little bottle of sauce you'll see on the table is their homemade mojo sauce. Give it a shake and put it on their bread or anything you can find. It's rich with herbs and packs a citrus punch. Buy a large bottle to take home with you. It will give your cooking a lot of versatility when you don't have time to marinate.

You're going to like what you see and taste when you head south on 10th Street. The **Blue Barn Theater** has moved and **Via Farina** has become an epicenter for culinary happiness. We should bring a few friends with us too so we can order more of their pastas and pizzas to share. On our last visit, my girlfriend and I ordered the egg yolk ravioli. It appears simple but the sage, brown butter and ricotta are packaged with exquisite homemade pasta. Our server encouraged us to keep the remaining brown butter and dip our pizza crust in it. We did and it gave our second course, the already excellent pizza fritti, another dimension.

Friday morning starts close to home. I know before you left town we didn't do the bagel scene that much. The **Bagel Bin** at 1215 S. 119th St. was around for us to start our day back then but we didn't ever think about it. It's in the regular rotation for me on both workdays and weekends now. You'll walk in and find friendly service. The Bin has a fine array of New York style bagels and top notch cream cheese choices. I frequently order an everything bagel to go for an afternoon snack but it rarely makes it that far. Even though the title of their places says bagel, don't sleep on their pastries. Their cinnamon and pecan rolls are spectacular, and nearly impossible to resist if they are warm. Keep an eye on what is on top of the counter too, you can often find authentic Jewish pastries or cookies that are worth spending an extra dollar to snack on later.

Follow **Block 16** on Twitter on Monday and if you ask me to re-arrange the order up here I understand. Their daily specials are as phenomenally tasty as they are innovative and visually appealing. I'll warn you though we have to get here early for lunch. You can get the daily special. I'll order a burger, the crab rangoon fries and a couple chicken thighs and we can divide and conquer fresh, farm to table food at a remarkably reasonable price.



The Boiler Room's arrival in Omaha elevated our thinking about what is possible for our city's cuisine. The atmosphere may take you to another place, but it will excite you knowing you're still in Omaha. Boiler Room's courses harmonize food that is brought fresh from a thousand miles away or more with the best local ingredients. Take a look at the menu and be open to challenging your taste profile. Ask questions if you need to. The staff here is passionate and intelligent. When our food arrives the presentation is inviting, but take your time and savor the precision with which Boiler Room's cuisine is created.

Saturday mornings and **Gerda's** bakery are a routine for me. If I'm coming from a farmers market, a fishing trip, a workout, or sleeping in a bit after a good snow, a stop at Gerda's always makes me happy. I have my favorites (peanut butter roll and the maple roll) but you can't go wrong with anything in that bakery counter. If you want your top choices though, we'll have to get there early. I was there recently and did get my top two, but it was a struggle to pass up the monstrous bear claws staring me down.

When you boarded that plane out of Omaha you couldn't drive on both sides of the street east of 40th and Farnam. There wasn't really much to eat there either. My friend, a whole lot has changed in that area since then and I'm stoked to take you here on Saturday night. I'll leave the exact order and appetite up to you. In a 3 block stretch of Farnam Street you can get fantastic New York style pizza at Noli's, a top shelf salsa flight at **Mula**, real crab rangoons and a tater tot selection that you'll rave about at **Nite Owl**, along with meatballs in many ways at the **Blackstone Meatball**. If you want global innovation with local inspiration we'll have a fine sit down dinner at **Stirnella**. We can go to any or all of these places if you'd like during the night. The only requirement I have is that we get dessert at **Coneflower Creamery**. I don't care how long the line is it's worth it. Pick a couple flavors and get them in a waffle made onsite.

The Sunday stop for breakfast is **Duggar's** at 4950 Dodge St. Duggar's has become a favorite no matter what time of year we go. Their omelettes are terrific. Breakfast casseroles are also a fine choice. Randy's lemon pancakes are a difficult dish to pass on, and we'll need to ask what their seasonal pancake is. Yes they change their pancakes throughout the season and yes they are magnificent. I've had the pumpkin and gingerbread. I know there are others out there. Maybe we can share a lemon one and the seasonal one on this visit.

I know you're thinking that a city that's about as far away from a coast can't offer good seafood but **Plank Seafood Provisions** at 1205 Harney St. will prove you wrong. Grouper is my favorite fish to eat and it's not offered much here locally. Plank's interpretation is of prime coastal quality. You'll also find tuna, salmon, cod, calamari, oysters, and even alligator on the menu. Alligator is not an easy protein to prepare, and it's our favorite appetizer there.

I also must tell you that we hope to be dining at a couple of my longtime favorites again. **M's Pub** in the **Old Market** and **Mouth**



of the South in Florence are both in their rebuilding stages. I hope you'll join me at each place when they re-open.

How about that for a week? I know there's a lot more for you here to rediscover and I'm sure you'll enjoy what you find. Welcome back home.



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A "Pizza" Omaha

by Margaret Davenport

The Omaha ever-changing Some restaurants are like visitors of eating there since bringing pizza unlike any that Omaha has because of this, we comprised a list of 15 pizzerias in

pizza scene is an carousel of wonderment. long-lost friends that remind childhood. Others are brand new, seen before. All pizza is good pizza, and Omaha that should meet all your pie cravings.

DANTE RISTORANTE PIZZERIA

After studying at The Italian Culinary institute in the Piedmont region of Italy and working at esteemed restaurants, owner **Nick Strawhecker** opened Dante in 2009. Specializing in authentic, wood-fired Neapolitan pizza, the restaurant uses local ingredients to guarantee an authentic Italian experience. This drive for the best of the best can be seen by the oven's certification by the Associazione Vera Pizza Napoletana, an international organization whose goal is to cultivate the art that is Neapolitan Pizza.

FRANK'S PIZZERIA

Home to the 30" **Big Joe Pizza Challenge**, where two guests have one hour to eat a 12-pound pizza loaded with meaty toppings, Frank's Pizzeria has been open since September 2003. The star of the restaurant is the New York pizza, though it could be argued that the scene-stealer is the meatballs, they're founder Joe D'Elia's grandmother's recipe, or the traditional Italian cannoli. In addition, City Style and Living Magazine named the restaurant one of the 35 reasons you should visit Nebraska. Could there be more reasons to visit?

JOHNNY SORTINO'S PIZZA

Beginning as a fruit and vegetable market in 1965, **Sheri Taylor's** father, Johnny, wouldn't have predicted the business would take off once they switched to slinging pies a few years later. Johnny Sortino's prides itself on the quantity and quality of the pizza toppings, pasta dishes and homemade onion rings to maintain the standard that Johnny started. Nothing is frozen or pre-made, with everything made to order from scratch. Try out the famous Hockey Players Special with sausage, mushrooms, pepperoni and extra cheese, a special that has become popular with fans and players from the **UNO Mavericks, Omaha Knights and Lancers** hockey teams.

LA CASA PIZZERIA

You know a restaurant is destined for success when it runs out of food halfway through the first night of it being opened. Founded by a pair of married Sicilian immigrants, **Joe and Sebastiana Patane**, in 1953, La Casa was the first dedicated pizzeria in Omaha. The business has moved from generation to generation since then, and added a food truck that serves up pizza by-the-slice and sandwiches. Key products are packaged for grocery stores, and pizzas can be shipped across the



contiguous United States. In 2015 La Casa was inducted into the Pizza Hall of Fame, which celebrates the oldest and most established pizza restaurants in the country.

MANGIA ITALIANA

Private schools don't come cheap, so **Tony and Dana Constantino** began a pizza food truck business in 2003 to fund their children's private education. The recipes for the pizzas had been in Tony's family for decades, adding only slight modifications to accommodate large batches. What began as a food truck now is now a full-fledged restaurant and a long-term career for the Constantinos, thanks to many of the ingredients being prepared from scratch daily. The menu features hearty sandwiches, fresh fish, scrumptious soups and house-made pasta alongside the pizza.

NOLI'S PIZZERIA

It could be argued that no pizzeria in Omaha desires to bring the New York slice to the Midwest more than Noli's does. As any good New Yorker knows, the secret to good New York pizza is in the water, and more specifically, the chemicals in the water. Noli's partnered with an Omaha filtration company to create a filter for their water to get it as close to New York water as possible. Add locally-sourced seasonal ingredients, and cook it in an oven that uses both gas and wood, and you get a perfect pizza slice to fold. It may very well be these secrets that have spurred the growth of the only two-year-old restaurant: The pizzeria just moved into the old **Black Squirrel** tattoo location last fall, just a few doors down from the original location.

ORSI'S ITALIAN BAKERY & PIZZERIA

Founded by World War I Veteran, Alfonso Orsi in 1919, Orsi's Bakery & Pizzeria is a staple of **Little Italy**. So much so that when a fire completely gutted the restaurant in 1997, the community came together to help pick up and rebuild in the same location. With no permanent seating aside from a few benches, Orsi's specialty is serving their thick rectangular pizzas to-go. Old photographs line the walls of generations, and an Italian deli serving only the finest meats sits across the aisle from a market of imported goods that may be hard to find elsewhere.

PITCH PIZZERIA

The coal-fired pizzeria was named one of the "Top 100 Hot Spot Restaurants in America" by OpenTable in 2014. Pitch is the brainchild of **Willy Theisen**, an Omaha restaurateur. Since opening in Dundee in 2009, the concept has expanded to a second location in Omaha, and one set to open in Scottsdale, Arizona this coming fall. In addition to pizza, the



dinner menu boasts coal-fired burgers, hand-rolled meatballs, pasta and a selection of entrees, such as the candied walnut encrusted salad.

PIZZA PIE GUYS

Beginning with two mobile pizza ovens, two generators and a rented U-Haul, **Dan Reid** had his work cut out for him when he began the Pizza Pie Guys. He began catering events using a "build-your-own" pizza concept. Now, instead of build-your-own, the pizzeria offers more unique pizzas such as the green chili enchilada pizza, with green chili, rotisserie chicken, pepperjack cheese, cilantro and sour cream. But Reid hasn't stopped with just a pizzeria; the concept still caters events and now includes the **Flapjack Guys**, which specialize in pancakes, and the Grill Guys, who specialize in hot dogs and hamburgers.



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SAM & LOUIE'S

Starting as a family-run pizzeria, Sam & Louie's has been bringing thin crust New York-style pizzas since 1994. With over 35 toppings to choose from, it's no secret that this restaurant keeps growing and opening more locations year after year. The company began franchising in 2000, and now offers calzones, salads pastas and hoagies alongside the famous pizza.

VARSITY SPORTS CAFE & ROMAN COIN PIZZA

Hand tossed or deep dish? Whichever style of pizza is preferred, Varsity Sports Cafe & Roman Coin Pizza has it for



you! Try out the Chicago Delight deep dish, stuffed with sausage, beef, pepperoni, onions, mushrooms, black olives and green peppers. Wraps, salads, subs and burgers can be found on the menu, additionally, all with the freshest ingredients. With four locations now in the Omaha metro: Dundee, Ralston, Bellevue and Millard, this restaurant has grown over the 22 years of being in business.

VIA FARINA

Located just south of the **Old Market**, this collaboration between local industry entrepreneurs **Ethan Bondelid and Paul Kulik** is producing wood-fired pizzas out of a large, orange-tiled oven. They have put their own stamp on pizza with the "fritti", a fried pizza topped with pancetta, mozzarella, olives, tomato and arugula. Pastas, sauces and appetizers are available in addition, all adorned with locally-sourced ingredients.

VILLAGIO PIZZERIA

On Tuesdays at Villagio, kids ten and under eat free with the purchase of an adult entree. Reopening in March 2013 in Cherry Hills Village after being purchased by a local family, Tim and Deb Stuart, the restaurant is using a combination of recipes from the previous owners, with favorites from the family cookbook. Customers are the number one priority at Villagio's and they aim to provide great food, service and a relaxed family-friendly atmosphere.

VIRTUOSO PIZZERIA

Located where **Benson's** famed pizza joint, the **Pizza Shoppe Collective**, was located, Virtuoso is currently serving up New York-style pies for lunch and dinner. Run by certified "pizzaioli" **David Lasole**, the restaurant opened in May and features a "Quick Slice" window, where passersby can grab a slice while on-the-go.

ZIO'S PIZZA

Boasting three large locations since opening in 1985 with the original 50-seat store, Zio's continues to impress newcomers and regulars alike with its New York-style pizza and calzones. The chain came under new ownership last year, after being purchased by Omaha-native **Steve Johnson**. Johnson insists that the iconic menu will not change, but hopes to expand the chain across the Omaha metro and Lincoln in the future.



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The Magic of RISOTTO

AND WHERE TO FIND IT

by Michael Pickell

Risotto is an easy to make meal that will impress everyone that you cook for. It originates from northern Italy and the word riso is the word for rice. There is a series of stock ingredients that combined with other items makes this dish incredibly versatile. So, if you want a great idea for what to cook that special someone, risotto is the way to go.

Due to the length of time that it will take prepare this meal, it's recommended that you only prepare enough for two. For this tasty meal you will need: Arborio rice uncooked - 1 1/2 cups, butter - roughly two tablespoons, one small onion is optional and you may use one cup of shallots instead, one pound cremini mushrooms, 1/3 cup of dry white wine, five cups broth and some parmesan cheese.

In a medium size pot, bring the five cups of broth to a boil and then simmer. You can use any kind of broth, depending on the recipe you find. I like to use either chicken broth or shrimp stock.

Shrimp stock is a simple thing to make. Basically you buy a couple pounds of whole shrimp, peel and devein the flesh and throw the heads and tails into a pot of water. Throw in some vegetables and spices to taste, bring to boil and then simmer for about 45 minutes to an hour. After that, just strain and pour and you have simple shrimp stock.

In a medium sized pan, melt a tablespoon of butter. If you make a mistake by putting in too much of one ingredient, butter would be the best. It enhances the flavor of just about everything and makes food more addicting. Then add your onion or shallots and cook them until they caramelize. If you or the person you're cooking for doesn't like onions, you can omit the onions or use shallots or green onions instead. Then add the mushrooms and cook them until they start releasing moisture or about five minutes. After that, add the dry white wine and bring to a boil and then simmer for five minutes. Remove the vegetables to a plate for later.

In the pan with the remaining butter/wine, melt another tablespoon of butter and add the Arborio rice. Bring the heat to medium. Make sure all of the rice gets coated with the mixture. Stir around so that the rice doesn't stick to the pan. After that, add a half cup of the broth that you have simmering. Stir the rice so it doesn't stick until the broth is absorbed and

then pour another cup of broth. Repeat the process until you have used up all of the stock.

Here is where you need to know your rice. Different types of rice cook differently. Generic full grain rice, jasmine and basmati are drier types of rice, which make them perfect for stir fry, or what people normally think of as Chinese food. They cook in a short time and are easy to burn. Sushi rice is sticky, which makes it easier to clump and wad into a ball or roll or whatever form of sushi you are trying to prepare.

“Risotto is an easy to make meal that will impress everyone that you cook for. It originates from northern Italy and the word riso is the word for rice”

There are several types of Italian short grain rice that can be used for risotto. For this dish, the varieties of rice that can be used are carnaroli, vialone, nano, baldo and Arborio. Of all the rice types mentioned, the most common and the easiest find at a supermarket near you is Arborio. It's a short grain; it releases a lot of starch and is sticky. This is the perfect rice for risotto.

When you first start adding the broth, the rice will be hard and shiny, like little pearls. But halfway through, it will change before you. What is happening is that the rice is releasing its starches. This will make the dish creamy. After the broth is being absorbed and you are pouring in more broth, continue to stir so that it doesn't stick to the pan. From time to time pick out a grain of rice

and eat it. This will tell you when the rice is done. If the sample is crunchy, you'll need to continue repeating the process. If the rice is chewy but mushy, then it's ready. Most recipes out there say that it only takes an hour, but I have found that the whole process can take up to two hours.

After the rice is finished, you add the vegetables and cheese. When the cheese melts, this makes the whole dish that much creamier. And then you are ready to serve. If you would like to add meat or shrimp, calculate how much cooking time is needed and subtract from the estimated time needed for the rice. Add the meat or shrimp after the cheese.



In my life of cooking, I always found that going to a restaurant that serves the dish I want to cook is a good method of research. And going to restaurants that serve risotto can make a good date night. If you are Googling the top best restaurants for risotto, it's a good idea to call ahead of time. Some places only serve risotto during a season. It may be on the online menu, but call ahead anyway to make sure.

Here are three restaurants I found that serve this creamy dish.

Shucks Fish House and Oyster Bar has excellent shrimp risotto. They serve an assortment of seafood ranging from oysters to soup to sandwiches. They have a Deep South Risotto which has shrimp and Andouille sausage and comes with a grilled baguette. With a variety of different types of seafood dishes, it's worth going there for your seafood cravings. Their three locations are on Pacific Street, Wright Plaza and Downtown near the Old Market.

Au Courant Regional Kitchen, a European bistro located in Benson, serves an excellent risotto that is rich and creamy. This green risotto is all covered in cheese. They're known for a multitude of plants and ferns and have a large wood table bar. On their menu is a variety of European fusion food and a farm to table style of preparation where they use locally grown ingredients.

Spezia is an Italian Restaurant off of 72nd and Spring, near Center, that offers Italian dishes, wood-grilled entrees and Angus steaks. For risotto, they offer a seafood risotto and a tomato risotto. The tomato risotto comes with a fried chicken breast and is bursting with different types of tomatoes. They have a romantic setting and serve an assortment of different Italian foods.

Risotto is a dish that is easy to make, albeit time consuming. But the end result is sure to impress.



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FILMSTREAM
AN ART FORM - DEV

by Eddie Morin

Well, I better get to the meat of this thing. If you don't know, I own **B & G Tasty Foods**. It is a restaurant and we do serve food, so it's okay that I write for this magazine. I don't do anything special besides B & G. It is the only thing I am qualified to write about, so that's what you're going to get. Let's take a look together at the major changes B & G has gone through in the last tenth of a century.

Eric has a proper mullet now. Eric is our cook and he has kind of always had a mullet, but now it is really going strong. He keeps it tucked in pretty hard at work and dresses pretty normal when he is cooking, but you should see him outside of work. That hair flows. One time, a scary man with face tattoos called him "Cool Breeze." He has really started to wear a lot of tank tops, too, I think. Or jerseys. Or both. Maybe. It's like how your cat gets old but you don't notice it because you see her every day. He wears something where you get to see a large amount of his arms and it seems to work for him. He is still alive and people mostly like him, so it must be working. B & G Tasty Foods is better for having Eric. Customers don't get to talk to him usually, unless you catch him when he is filling up his water cup. If that happens, he'll probably try to help you, but it'll just be awkward for both of you. I give Eric's bodily changes this decade a B+.

Next up, is our partnership with **Film Streams Theater**. It is super funny. Over there at the theater, they have this awesome program for high school kids where they get to leave school and come watch a movie and have a discussion about it. These are mostly educational films, but come on, what movie is so bad that the kids would rather stay at school? I get to work with people named Dené, Dana, and Patrick and other people, too, and they are the nicest people I have ever met. They work super hard and are really passionate about what they do and I wonder if they are all on some kind of uppers. It is great.

Where does B & G come in? You don't see how we could possibly fit into this situation? Well, the kids have to eat, you know. You are a monster. So, loose meat for the kids in the dark theater then, right? Ha-ha, what a terrible idea. You aren't good at this at all. That would be a huge mess and everyone would hate it.

We make up turkey sandwiches with carrots and hummus and chips. We don't even have that stuff in our restaurant. I told you

it was super funny. The lunches are okay. I'm going to try to spice them up a bit this year. Maybe I'll trick a bakery into donating cookies or something. I want the kids to be happy, but getting an entire lunch together for a couple of bucks doesn't get you very far. These kids are lucky, but they are also in kind of a limbo

"Over there at the theater, they have this awesome program for high school kids where they get to leave school and come watch a movie and have a discussion about it."



existence that isn't quite prison, but isn't really freedom either. We do give them napkins. I did almost have a heart attack trying to sort out the logistics of making this work for the first showing. We've got it sorted out now. So kids are treated as subhuman but we all try hard. My rating for our relationship with Film Streams? A+

Alright, the change I have been dreading discussing, the Hulk Hogan poster in the kitchen. At first there was no Hulk poster. They do not naturally occur. Things were tough the first few years of ownership. I had to do some serious thinking and at the time, putting up the Hulk poster was the right thing to do. It worked for a long time. Things got better. Recently though, with Mr. Hogan's new show, 'Hogan Knows Best', he has really turned out to be a nasty dude.

Back when he was wrestling the Sheik or whatever that guy was, or Sergeant Slaughter, he was someone to look up to. He was all the best things about America. Well, as it turns out, America was fooled. He isn't everything that is great. He probably isn't anything that is great. You either die a hero or live long enough to see

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yourself become the villain. There I said it. The Hulk poster had to come down. It was getting pretty greasy, too. The B & G/Hulk Hogan partnership = F+

Now that that is over, I want to discuss my favorite change at B & G Tasty Foods from the past decade. His name is Richard. Richard works for **Cintas**, the laundry and uniform service. For a long time, we had this kid named Mark and while he was good, his heart wasn't in it. We got our rags and mop heads, but you could just tell Mark was ready to move on. He would make mistakes. Mark ended up leaving Cintas to start his own clothing line or something. It was crazy! He was like 19 years old or something. He told me his plans, and I told him that he was going to die. But he left and I never saw him again.

and more. So you get it, he does his job well. You don't even know the half of it. He always comes in with a stellar attitude and just raises the whole vibe. He always has some awesome story about his trip to Jamaica or about his kids growing up, or about how he accidentally became a golf enthusiast.

I don't want you to think I am being silly here – talking about how this lowly service technician is going above and beyond his station. It isn't like that. Richard was a Marine! He has an awesome family that loves him! He can do anything and he will be good at it. He is better than me and quite frankly, probably better than you. Plus, I think he is way older than me, but he looks ten years younger. I think Richard might be one of those people that is just a higher caliber person than regular people. I think I might hate



“If you get sad thinking about your restaurant's history, stop writing the article”

So, I'm left wondering who will be our next rag/mop head/apron delivery dude when in comes Richard. I never knew we could have it so good. We even get our toilet paper from Richard now. He never makes a mistake. He answers calls from me on his personal phone on Sunday nights. He gets me everything I ask for

him if I didn't enjoy his company and service so much. My advice to any business trying to make it – get Richard. Having Richard is the biggest and best change that has happened at B & G Tasty Foods this decade. A+

Well, there you go. Sure, there have been other changes in the last ten years. We have a new point-of sale-system, employees have come and gone, new menu items, discontinued items, and a dining room expansion. We even got an employee bicycle shed! There are just too many to list and it would be boring, and I would be sad writing it. And as the saying goes, “If you get sad thinking about your restaurant's history, stop writing the article.”

The Good OLD DAYS

story by Charles Schlusell

photos by Patrick Wright



Once again friends we're getting ready to enter into that mystical time of the year, between summer and fall, where the weather changes from one day to the next. A strong gust of wind and bright chromatic yellow, red and fiery orange leaves swirl around us chaotically and we hear the brittle crunch of leaves under foot. All the while, the marvelously musty aromas of fall enter our nostrils. For me, these smells and sounds conjure up distant childhood memories so real we can hear our childhood friends laughing as we careen through mountainous piles of leaves.

Scents and aromas have an innate power to trigger long forgotten memories and food is a portal through which we can metaphorically travel back in time to visit with loved ones long gone and treasured past events. Who hasn't taken that first succulent bite of a dish and had their eyes close in ethereal bliss as we find ourselves in our beloved grandmother's kitchen with her smiling countenance urging us to have another bite of our favorite

meal? Although the term "comfort food" has been co-opted by the mass marketed food machines there is a deep truth buried within. One forkful of a childhood meal can fill us, not just with food, but with tangible, joyful memories of times past.

Well, friends, I believe the recipe for this issue will have many of you traveling back with me as I recreate one of my mother's dishes. I believe we used a DeLorean last time, but I think this time we best use the good doctor's Tardis for our food adventure.

As I step out of the phone box, I find myself in small town Nebraska, there's a chill in the air, leaves tumbling by as I walk home from school. I meander, slowly relishing each of the varied emotions that are triggered with every scent of the season the wind carries past me. As I arrive home, dusk has settled in and the magic of twilight is upon us. Porch lights begin flickering to life and I hear locusts beginning to sing their last songs of the year. I walk through the doorway and see the soft glow of my mother's caring

smile welcoming me home and, even though she's had a full day at work, she always makes the time to gather the family together. She asks how my day was as she sets down a large pot of goulash on the dining room table.

My mom has been gone for many years now and unfortunately this was one recipe I hadn't had her write out for me. However, as I was laboring to recreate this dish I swear I could feel her watchful loving presence guiding me until I finally got it just right. And yes, I may have updated the recipe slightly with some modern twists, but I know Mom would approve.

After several evenings and numerous tries, I sat down again at the table and lifted a fork to my mouth, closed my eyes and found my fourteen-year-old self sitting at the table with Mom and Dad, another bite of goulash, a slice of thickly buttered bread and not a care in the world. If you grew up in Nebraska, I'm sure you have fond memories of the classic American Midwestern style "goulash" as well. So, why not jump in the Tardis with me as we set the console controls for a comforting visit and leave our stressed-out selves far behind for a few minutes to visit the good old days? I also want to challenge us all to participate in the lost art of dining. To have memories to travel back to, we first have to consciously craft a place for this to happen. Let's dust off the dining room table, turn off the electronics, light a candle and in between savoring bites of delicious food, let's fill our hearts and minds with thoughtful conversations of life's events. Drink in long draughts of not only wine, but also drinking deeply of the intoxicating joy of being with those we love and cherish.

Special thanks to **Patrick Wright** for the wonderful photography for this article and his willingness to join me in traveling down the corridors of fall memories during the photo shoot.



American Style Goulash

Serves 6

- 2 pounds ground beef 80/20
- 2 cups yellow onions, chopped
- 1 cup green pepper, chopped
- 1/2 tsp kosher salt
- 4 medium garlic cloves, finely minced
- 2 Tbsp sweet Hungarian paprika (I like Penzey's best)
- 2 Tbsp tamari soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp Worcestershire
- 2 bay leaves (fresh if available)
- 2 14.5 oz. cans diced tomatoes with juice
- 2 15 oz. cans tomato sauce
- 2 cups water
- Salt and fresh ground pepper to taste
- 2 cups uncooked macaroni (elbow is classic or feel free to use whatever shape you fancy, I promise Mario won't yell at you)

DIRECTIONS:

Simmer beef in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Stir to break up any large chunks, until there is no pink left in the beef. Add 1/2 tsp kosher salt, several grinds of black pepper, onions and green peppers. Stir occasionally until the onions are translucent. Drain excess fat. Add the garlic and paprika and stir for 30 seconds and then add the next six ingredients. Bring to a boil and then turn the burner to low and simmer covered for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. At this point uncover and cook down to desired thickness (I prefer it fairly soupy, but whatever you like is best). Add salt and freshly ground pepper to taste.

While the sauce is simmering, cook the pasta a couple minutes less than the package directions, being sure to use plenty of salt in the water. Test the pasta; it should be a little less than al dente (Italian for 'to the tooth', or pasta that still has a little bite left at the center). You want the pasta to be slightly underdone so that when added to the sauce it absorbs the flavors as it finishes cooking in the sauce. Add the cooked pasta to the sauce, turn up the heat to medium and cook for a couple minutes till the pasta is al dente. Serve with a bread with a crust and with lots of butter.

Enjoy the memories!

PARADIGM SHIFTS: Connecting Communities and Local Food

by Edward G. Berna

I'm constantly drawn to ways to engage in my life-learning quest of food and its relationship to our community. This comes natural to me and is my passion. I enjoy attending, supporting and continuing to educate myself about all the relationship avenues between food and our community. I encourage EVERYONE to reconnect!

When sharing my passion about food, I strive to learn more about others relationship with food as well. It seems that I have surrounded myself with individuals, groups and businesses, somehow related to food or its process. I draw and learn from these extensive relationships that I have created along this journey. Ultimately, this is how I was presented with the opportunity to write in this publication.

This passion has magnetized a whole new level of individuals, businesses and groups to support the effort of the local foods movement and continue to cross-educate everyone about its' magnitude. I have met many stakeholders in this effort and *we ALL struggle* on how to continue to develop relationships and ultimately develop more traction in our areas of interest.

Most people take access to food for granted, however once we scratch that surface, we know that this is not the case.

My article in the last issue demonstrated how EVERYONE could make an impact locally with small actions in their daily food purchasing behavior that supports the local foods movement and its extensive economic multiplier reach. I also encouraged the need for our community to re-imagine what the

local food system should look like and how each of us could tap into the ability to make a difference in the world, by *starting LOCALLY*. We vote three times a day with our food dollars!

I recently read in a publication that small businesses are the backbone of rural communities, that small-scale entrepreneurship is a proven strategy to revitalize rural communities. I believe everyone understands this in theory, but what does it mean?

Meditating further on these statements, I began to ask myself, what is so different between our rural and urban communities, in relationship to entrepreneurship? Nothing, *it all boils down to geography*. The need for entrepreneurial stimulus is all the same.

As I extrapolated that out further, the local foods movement is nothing more than a health, wellness, economic, job-creation incubator, etc. for our urban and rural areas alike.

What is the relationship of our rural neighbors to the perceived urban local foods movement? I have spent a fair number of hours debating and defining, *what is local?*



This focus on entrepreneurship is essential, considering that most rural areas are located in a food desert. *What is a food desert?* The USDA defines a food desert as where the population is located more than a mile (Urban Areas), 10 miles (Rural Areas) from a supermarket or large grocery store. Shockingly, many urban areas in America are located in defined food deserts. So now all of a sudden it became clear! This clarity has presented itself to a sense of critical urgency.

This urgency is not only in the sense of entrepreneurship, but also in health, wellness, economic and job creation considerations. Is this not what we use as metrics to define a healthy community? We need to get our rural and urban communities working together to bridge the gap of geography related to entrepreneurship within the local food movement.

Rural entrepreneurship can use their resources to produce a product that can then be bridged into larger urban markets and vice-versa. By using local food production as the catalyst, I would hope that over time the market would dictate more support for the local “clean” food movement to transform the physical and economic health of our communities.

“We need to get our rural and urban communities working together to bridge the gap of geography related to entrepreneurship within the local food movement”

This is not a single person, group or a community’s effort or duty. The local food movement is *EVERY MEMBER of our community’s responsibility to cultivate and support*. We start here by first presenting awareness! Obviously, everyone may not agree with this statement or even care.

Those that are not considering this elaborate community impact only seem to begin to pay attention when things begin to affect their pocketbooks, both positively and negatively. The time will present itself through economics or environmental demands, weather and pollution.

Please tap into the ability to make a difference in the world around us.

We need to re-imagine what the food system should look like. Collectively, we must use the potential of food to transform our communities.





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Sodas in Which You May Not Be Entirely Aware of: ROYAL CROWN COLA

by Eddie Morin

“God is going to get you.” That is just one of the crazy remarks I have received from customers at B & G Tasty Foods when I told them that we do not have Coca-Cola. Admittedly, that is probably the craziest of them all, but I have had to listen to quite a few people’s shocked utterances when explaining that we have RC as our cola choice. RC has a really interesting history. Try Googling “The Tragic History of RC Cola” and you’ll find a great article by Jeff Wells. I usually choose to discuss much more obscure sodas in these pieces, but my coverage of RC is long overdue. Coca-Cola and Pepsi are both excellent beverages, but RC is the right choice for us. Let me tell you why.

At B & G, we try to offer unique items that aren’t just the same as everywhere else. We are never going to beat the big fast-food guys in marketing, prices, or number of convenient locations so we need to be different. We work very hard in providing well thought out choices that reflect the eras we have lived through and also that taste and look right. We make almost everything from scratch and cook it all to order. You aren’t getting old fries and you aren’t getting a hot dog that was simply the easiest to obtain from our suppliers. People that love B & G tend to love that we aren’t like everybody else. Our customers are brave. The number of people that have expressed delight in the fact that we have RC far outweighs the people that are disappointed by RC. So having RC fits with the whole, “Wow, you have that? Cool!” aspect of B & G Tasty Foods.

Another reason I chose to stock RC over Coke or Pepsi – I just like it. I think it has a brighter, sweeter taste than the other two. I grew up liking it, and have always been excited to see it on tap anywhere that has it. Like most people, cola is my favorite flavor of soda, and I’ve never been tied down to just one. I can’t think of any cola I have ever tried that is disappointing to me. I have no problem drinking Coca-Cola, but it is kind of boring. I don’t think of myself as adventurous, but to me, the people who refuse anything besides Coke must be very nervous about change.

The most important reason we switched from Coke to RC is the most concrete. If I ever have time to properly explain our decision to a customer, this usually satisfies them. When we did have Coke, the service was okay, but we were definitely small potatoes to them, and I understand that. We had to be one of their smallest accounts. Because of this, things were a little difficult. We got a scheduled delivery, but if there were any changes needed or restocking between deliveries, we were out of luck. Coke wasn’t going to make a special trip just for us. If we needed service on our equipment, it had to be scheduled and it was usually a few days

out. That doesn’t sound long, but three days with no soda is a real bummer for everyone. So things were okay, but not great. Coke was too big and we were too small.

One night, we were hosting a private party for one of our longest and most loyal customers when our Coke machine stopped working. I really wanted this party to go right for our customer and their guests, so this was stressful. We immediately sent someone to the grocery store to grab two liter bottles of all our sodas to keep the party running smoothly. As soon as I sent them, I called Coke to see if they could get a technician out right away. This was a Friday night at about 7:00, so I knew my chances of that happening were not great. They, of course, told me it was not going to happen and that they would have someone there Monday morning. I find this acceptable. It wasn’t what I wanted to hear, but it was completely reasonable.

On a whim, I decided to call D & J Beverage Service to see if they could help me, even though we did not purchase soda from them. I told them I could pay whatever was necessary – after-hours charges, emergency fees, anything. D & J told me not to worry about it, they would send someone over. I couldn’t believe it. I wasn’t even a customer of theirs. About 30 minutes later, one of their technicians was at our restaurant, and fixed Coca-Cola’s machine. Remember – we weren’t buying any products from

D & J and this wasn’t even their equipment. But they got it up and running anyway and the rest of the party went just fine.

I called D & J Beverage on Monday morning, and thanked them profusely for their speedy help. They understood that I was in a bind and they were happy to help out. I couldn’t believe how nice they were to me. I asked them if they would be interested in taking me on as a customer. Of course, they said sure and sent a man named Jeff over right away to discuss the change-over. Jeff informed me that their favorite product to sell is RC Cola and that he thought it would be a perfect fit for B & G. Well, I thought this was a great idea. We have had RC Cola, and have been enjoying service from D & J Beverage Service ever since. I couldn’t be happier with our partnership.

The last time I checked, we had 28 flavors of soda. Still, we do occasionally have customers that just can’t get over the fact that we don’t have Coke. If you find yourself in B & G, and are having a difficult time choosing a soda that isn’t Coke, please, summon all your courage and try RC. While it does taste different, it is not an inferior product. There is nothing you can take out of any soda to make it cheaper to produce. RC isn’t cutting corners. It is just different, and that’s good!





HOCKENBERGS:

Doing what they promise

by Tamsen Butler

Though the story of foodservice equipment and supply company Hockenbergs began in 1908 when it originally opened in Des Moines by Max Hockenberg, and though the recent sale to Trimark altered the trajectory of the story a bit, the real story behind Hockenbergs rests upon Tom Schrack, Sr. The venerable patriarch of this family business fostered a company culture that boasts impressive profits, myriad industry awards, and employee retention rates that reveal a happy, positive work atmosphere.

When I was first introduced to Tom Schrack, Sr. he was crouched down, sopping up a juice spill in the employee kitchen area. Never mind that he has multiple employees at his disposal that probably wouldn't balk at cleaning a spill, particularly for a leader who demonstrates such care for the people in his employ.

He glanced over his shoulder and apologized for making me wait. When the spill was cleaned he greeted me with a warm smile and invited me to chat with him in his office, which is decorated with family photos from bottom to top. He looked wistfully at the photographs and said in a soft voice, "We've been so fortunate. It's been a long time; it started too long ago." When asked if

this is how he envisioned his life, he smiled and replied, "Not this big. It's been an exciting ride."

It's big indeed. When Schrack, Sr. started working in the foodservice equipment and supply industry in the 1950s, he couldn't have envisioned his eventual success of owning the eighth largest foodservice equipment and supply company in the United States. Little did he know back then that he would build a company that would employ his children – who he affectionately refers to now as "the kids" – and allow them all the opportunity to be successful as adults. "My dad built a good foundation," said daughter Mary Parr. "We all learned from the bottom up. I respect him very, very much. I'm lucky."

Son-in-law Paul Parr agrees. Now vice president of the company,

he remembers working in the warehouse and helping with installations and deliveries. "Dad's built an excellent company with great people," he said. Tim Schrack, vice president and Schrack Sr.'s son, added, "I started in the early '80s, working in the warehouse and sweeping floors." Hockenbergs president Tom Schrack Jr. said the siblings all wound up working in different aspects of the company. "The





pieces kind of fit where they did,” he said, wondering aloud if his father ushered each child into a separate niche on purpose.

Shrack Jr. said that his father has been working in the foodservice equipment and supply industry since his early adult years. “He’s been doing this since he was 18,” said Schrack Jr. “He’s always had Midwestern values. He always shoots straight with everyone.”

It’s not just “the kids” who have accolades for Schrack Sr.’s integrity as a businessman. He was honored in 2000 with induction into the Omaha Restaurant Association Hall of Fame and again in 2011 when he was designated as a hall of fame winner for industry magazine *Foodservice Equipment and Supplies*.

Nowadays Schrack Sr. appears in the office throughout the week for brief periods of time. “We love to have him around,” said Tim Schrack. “It’s good to have him here.” Daughter Mary added, “People like that he’s around; he’s the foundation. He’s well-known in the industry and respected, not just in Omaha, but nationwide.”

Schrack Sr. is a humble man, and therefore attributes the success of his company not to himself, but to the cumulative values of everyone working for Hockenbergs. “We take care of our customers,” he said. “We have good people.”

The recent sale of Hockenbergs to industry giant Trimark was not a shock to anyone involved. Schrack Jr. said that Trimark first approached Hockenbergs back in 1999 in an attempt to buy the company. Trimark is the largest foodservice equipment and supply provider in the United States. “It makes sense for Hockenbergs to be aligned with Trimark,” said Schrack Jr. Or, as Schrack Sr. put it, “Instead of being shoved under the rug, we will be on top of the rug. We thought we had to do that instead of getting trampled.”

“Nothing forced us to do it,” said Paul Parr. “It was a good strategic move.” He explained that Hockenbergs grew so rapidly that they had a difficult time keeping up and then added with a smile, “Join ‘em or fight ‘em.”



Mary Parr insists that the Trimark sale won't change the way things are run around Hockenberg's. "The family will still be around. Being sold puts our employees in a better position. We have better backing. It opens a lot of doors to be part of a larger group."

Hockenberg's is expected to continue to thrive under Trimark. "We'll spend the next year or two integrating with Trimark," said Schrack Jr. "We'll gain some advantages by joining them, and so will our customers and employees."

Schrack Sr. envisions a future where he'll be "slowly stepping away. The tough part will be not talking to everyone every day. It's like a family here." Chances are good that Schrack Sr. won't have to worry about not talking to his co-workers anymore since he'll see a good number of them at family gatherings. "He won't ever not come," predicted Mary Parr. Schrack Sr. seems to have stopped considering Hockenberg's as a place of work a long time ago; instead, it's where he goes to see his family.





DEFINING SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

by Jill Cockson

The failure rate of entrepreneurship in hospitality is daunting. It is so daunting that it prevents many from realizing the opportunities that exist, as a result of both simple psychological deterrence, and the refusal of financial backing based on the perception of risk. In order to better understand the failure rate, and perhaps begin the process of correcting it, it is important to define 'success' with realistic parameters. There are many reasons for failure in hospitality, but an extremely prevalent one is entering the industry with unrealistic expectations.

Food and beverage, as an industry, suffers from a particular vulnerability of familiarity. We all eat and drink, so there is a misnomer that, on some level, everyone has the skill set to own and operate a bar or restaurant. "I cook at home...how hard can it be?" No one would say that about opening a cardiology center, or an automotive repair shop. So, the first problem is that the careless are undeterred. When they fail, they then create a deterrence for those who might have actually succeeded, precisely because they are more cautious.

Next, our industry is lumped in with entertainment, and venues are often rated accordingly. It's not just the food, drinks and service; it's the atmosphere, decor, vibe, trendy location, etc. We have been tainted with unrealistic expectations as a result of award-winning (which create award-seeking) venues that are often propped up with private endowments, or supplemented by other venues as part of a larger investment group. These business models aren't real, but unfortunately impact the real business models as a result of psychologically infiltrating guest expectations. Hiring top chefs, top architects, top designers, etc. creates a start-up expense that is not justifiable on any pro forma developed to show a profit. As success is not necessarily defined by financial profit, defining success for the needs of your model becomes imperative.

Success can only be achieved if it is defined, as the definition will begin to carve out the path to it. For example, if your primary goal is to win awards, be featured in magazines, and to be known for the fanciest experience, etc., the means to your ends will



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be different than if your primary goal is to create a sustainable business, capable of producing a reliable, long-term profit. Success simply means accomplishing a goal.

The problem is that most F&B entrepreneurs define success with profitability, while trying to compete with those not concerned about it. Is it possible to create/own/operate a sustainable F&B business model? Yes. Will it be recognized for its extravagance? Probably not. The sustainable business model is far less glamorous, and far less concerned with chasing superficial notions of success.

That mom and pop diner that has been there forever, that little ice cream shop, that family owned pizza place, that divey (but delicious) breakfast stop... that is the face of sustainability. The owner is probably somewhere in the back, fixing a small appliance, cleaning, or doing inventory. Chances are, you don't even know the owner's name, because every waking hour is spent at his/her business involved in an integral part of the operation, and not at press conferences. But that business is paying their bills, helping a kid out with college, and putting smiles on the faces of regular clientele that can only be cultivated with time, energy, and true love for hospitality.

The very nature of venues that seek recognition vs. independent profitability is that they attract a superficial, non-loyal consumer base. You are only going to be the newest for so long. The luster of extravagant design wears off as soon as the next one opens. Not to mention, design for aesthetics typically results in a lack of ergonomic and efficient function that further impedes the prospect of financial gain. In a time when the word 'sustainable' is so trendy, it is sad to see it so rarely applied to businesses as a whole. Every year, we see bars and restaurants come and go because of one thing: the lack of sustainability. The bubble is bursting for those false models, but not for those models focused on returning to a more natural course of hospitality, and on defining success with long-term, sustainable profitability. Cheers!

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BARTENDER PORTRAIT:

Alex Jochim

This issue of Food & Spirits Magazine's bartender portrait article spotlights someone that most of the bar-going crowd in Omaha has encountered at one time or another. Either as a bartender, one of the faces constantly attending to details at **Benson First Friday** or at local art gallery **Petshop**, **Alex Jochim** is a familiar face to most of us. He's a top-notch bartender and has served thousands of cocktails, beers and shots throughout the Metro area.

Food & Spirits Magazine: Where do you work and how long have you worked there?

Alex: **Jakes Cigars & Spirits** in **Benson** for over 8 years.

FSM: How long have you been bartending and what are some of the past places you bartended at?

Alex: I've been bartending for 12 years and besides Jakes I've worked at **Yia Yia's** in Lincoln, **Marz Bar** in Lincoln, **Pianos** in New York City, and **House of Loom** in Omaha.

FSM: When did you know you wanted to be behind the bar?

Alex: Since I was a kid – ha! Growing up, my family watched "Cheers" regularly and I fell in love with that social community that the show projected, and the idea of the bar as a second home and family. I still watch Cheers all the time – and especially times when I'm feeling a bit burnt out behind the bar, a little Sam Malone goes a long way to make me appreciate it again. But it was only until I was offered a bar gig out of the blue that I realized I could fill Malone's shoes as a social barman.

FSM: Have you had any people along the way who have helped you be the bartender you are today?

Alex: 100%. Everyone I've worked with, even to this day, has taught me things. Obviously my senior bartending crew at Yia Yia's and Marz shaped me the most, coming to them as a beginner. But it was the high paced nights and eclectic crowd and coworkers in New York that polished me up.

FSM: Where do you find inspiration?

Alex: Behind the bar, I find inspiration in my regulars, which at Jakes is really a second family. It truly is a home for me and knowing I can count on those people for any kind of support inspires me. I'm also inspired by images and ideas of the past: knowing that these second homes and social families have existed and flourished for ages makes me want to honor that in my bartending.

FSM: What is the best part of your job? And the worst?

Alex: The best is the social aspect. I love being able to socialize, do business, partake, etc while I work. The worst is that bartending

is a very transparent position to be in. You're often expected to be the "life of the party" and/or the rock that people can bring their own problems to. But sometimes after a hard or long day, it can be hard to project that. You really have to turn a switch. The upside is that a beer usually helps :)

FSM: Do you think bartending will be any different in 20 years?

Alex: I'm sure it will. Drinking trends continue to change, evolve, and also reflect back on past trends. I don't think this will change.

FSM: What makes a good bartender?

Alex: There are three parts to bartending:

- 1). You have to have some degree of knowledge and skill over cocktails, spirits, beer, and wine.
- 2). You have to have speed, be attentive, and be aware.
- 3). You have to have a personality or be somebody that customers want to sit in front of for a given period of time (good looks might fit into this one).

FSM: What is your favorite drink to make?

Alex: If I'm slow, I like to get creative and make specialty drinks on a whim. Some of the best cocktails come from the moment. If I'm busy, a Highlife bottle.

FSM: What do you drink?

Alex: A single tall Fernet and Coke, Pilsners, IPAs, Busch Light, whiskey and The "Turnt Up" (Deep Eddy Grapefruit vodka press).

FSM: What's something you wished people knew about being a bartender?

Alex: In Omaha, most people go to bed at a reasonable time due to a daytime work schedule. Bartenders don't. So, please don't schedule a meeting, phone call, lunch date, anything really, before noon. We appreciate it.

FSM: Describe the perfect cocktail?

Alex: Strong, smooth and tasty. Preferably whiskey or gin and served by a babe. Oh, and free.

FSM: What do you think some of the current trends are with bartending?

Alex: Everyone's into Amaros and Mezcal.

FSM: Where in Omaha are some of your favorite places to go out for drinks?

Alex: I'm one for atmosphere, dark bars, and classics. Anywhere in Benson or **Mai Tai Lounge** (yes it's still there), **Green Onion**, **O'Leaver's**, **The Underwood**, **Heron Bay**, **The Nifty**, **River City Saloon**, **VIP Lounge**, **Rose & Crown**, and I live two blocks from **The Sydney** so there's that too.





by Mark Gudge

WELCOME TO VivinOmaha!

I wouldn't have thought anything could get much better than a vertical of high-end Napa Cabernet dating back to 2006, seemingly endless trays of beautiful charcuterie, cheeses, and breads, and discounts on bottles of wine with waived corkage, but somehow I was wrong. By itself, that would have been amazing, but pairing all of that with forty other wine enthusiasts and **Vivino** users made the afternoon something truly exciting and noteworthy.

If you're not familiar, Vivino is an app that I, along with many other wine lovers, frequently engage with. When I first got into wine, it quickly became one of my go-to resources for selecting great wines amongst the often-daunting sea of labels that confronts one in every grocery store and wine shop in Omaha. Using the camera on your phone, Vivino will scan a wine label, or even an entire shelf of wine, and tell you what dozens, sometimes hundreds or even thousands of wine drinkers have thought of that wine and vintage prior to you. A form of social media, I follow people like "Jay" "HCC" and "Dadavoodoo", as well as Jack Madrid, Christine Havens, and other well known wine lovers, reading their reviews and often taking their suggestions. In addition, I write my own tasting notes, offering further accolades to wines I love while warning people away from those I dislike. It's fast becoming a community, and I regularly meet up with other users in person. Then it occurred to some friends and I to gather Vivino users together in Omaha, so that's exactly what we did.

On Sunday, July 23, nearly forty people arrived at **Corkscrew** in **Blackstone**, where manager **Zach Ferguson**, proprietor **Jessica Keith**, and a healthy pour of staffers were working hard to ensure that everyone got to taste, and rate, the Varozza vertical that had been arranged. Varozza, a historic Napa property (that I wrote an article about in a previous issue of **FSM**) makes one of the better estate Cabernets in the Napa Valley, and this was the first vertical I had seen that wasn't at their winery. The 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 Cabernets were available to Corkscrew patrons that afternoon.

Guests appeared to approach the tasting one of two ways. Either they worked seriously from one end to the other, tasting solo or with a partner, taking notes and scanning labels, or they took a more laid back approach, getting a taste of wine, ambling off towards the charcuterie, chatting casually with others who favored their leisurely system. "Which wine am I on?" a woman asked me, taking a bite of bread slathered in mustard with cheese on top of it. I looked down at her tasting card. "Looks like 2010," I told her. "Sounds good," she said, striking off toward the middle of the room. *Taking wine seriously is fine*, I thought. *Not taking it seriously is equally so*.

Wine is a great equalizer, and a means of connecting people to one another. There were people at Corkscrew that day that I had seen there countless times before, and sommeliers I recognized from other wine establishments in Omaha. There were also guys who would clearly rather have had a beer, acquiescing to the wishes of their wine-loving spouses, and many people I had the pleasure of meeting for the first

time. I think my greatest complaint about social media is that it is often used as a substitute for real life, where people have "friends" rather than friends, and a place that people can act bravely or cowardly from behind the comfort of a screen. But at Corkscrew in Blackstone, the Vivino app and some pretty great wine brought real human beings face to face to socialize, converse, relax, and share a glass of wine – and that's the kind of social media that I will gladly get behind.

Ultimately, the event was a terrific time, and as a lover of great Cabernet, a regular at Corkscrew, and a passionate Vivino user, I'm grateful to everyone who made it possible – especially to those who attended the event. In fact, it was such a good time that we're organizing another one. The next "VivinOmaha" event will be on Saturday, December 2, from 1-5PM, and feature dessert wines like Port, Madeira, and Sauternes, just in time for the holidays! Watch www.corkscrewwineandcheese.com or www.itheewine.com for details about this upcoming event. You'll be able to buy tickets on Corkscrew's web page, or in person at either Corkscrew location. I hope to see you there!

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Introducing JEAN HOEFLIGER and the JH COLLECTION to OMAHA

by Mark Gudgel

I returned home to a familiar sight: a UPS hang-tag on my back door. I'd been dutifully waiting on the package I knew was coming, but had decided to run a quick errand; the shipment had been not-delivered in a narrow fifteen minute window. In the background of my mind, Murphy muttered smugly: "told you so". Now I had to hunt the driver down. I struck out, knowing I didn't want wine sitting in a dark brown truck on a 90 degree day in July no matter how well it had been packed in ice. I caught up with him around UNMC. He saw me coming, and by the time I reached his vehicle he was handing me the package. "Just missed you?" he asked smiling. "As usual," I replied with a wink. "Sign here, Mark." I try not to give the UPS guy too much grief. Wine isn't light, and he delivers an awful lot of it to my house.

“I believe that wine brings people together; there is something intimate about sharing a bottle of wine; it immediately creates an environment in which screens and distractions are unwelcome ”

I loaded the package into my car gingerly, wedging the oversized case between the base of my son's empty car seat and the back of the driver's seat, the AC still running in my burgundy colored sedan. I'd been gone about fifteen minutes. Excitedly, I drove home, eager to begin my, er... "research" for this article. When I arrived at my house, there was a hangtag from FedEx waiting on my front door, right above the sign that says "Deliveries: Please come to the back." I completely lost it.

I met Jean Hoeffliger in Napa a few years back, at the Alpha Omega winery on Highway 29 where he makes their excellent wines. There, in the company of friends, we spoke for several hours about wine, of course, but also the world in which we live, the good things and the bad, and the role that wine can play in it. Like Jean, I believe that wine brings people together; there is something intimate about sharing a bottle of wine; it immediately creates an environment in which screens and distractions are unwelcome.

"You're Swiss," I said playfully to Jean, "So, let's talk about Donald Trump." In the summer of 2016, nobody could have predicted what was about to happen; I still wasn't totally convinced that Trump wasn't just punking us all. But Jean's response was brilliant. "Wine is much greater than me," he began thoughtfully. "In modern society, wine has a social role to play." He spoke of what wine could do in bringing people around the table to talk, and how important it was to talk in a political climate such as ours, rather than to close doors and shut out people who don't think the way we do. The idea resonated with me. But all politics aside, Jean's wines got my attention that day, and have held it ever since.

Presently, the JH Collection wines are available at the **Omaha Wine Company**. I suggest you swing by OWC and try them out. They will also be represented at the OWC fall show, scheduled to take place on November 19, the weekend before Thanksgiving, but if you can't wait that long, you can swing by now to obtain them. The following are my thoughts on a few of the mind-blowers in an utterly amazing ensemble.

AXR Cabernet Sauvignon 2013

An exceptional wine and well-balanced despite its youth, the fine tannins string together in long chains to offer tremendous structure without being overbearing, while the flavor profile is made up largely



of black cherry, herbal notes, and subtle cedar. An easy drinker, it's drinking wonderfully right now, but is equally age-worthy. This is one to look out for. Web: www.axrwinery.com.

The Debate 2013

Ironically, there's really no debate to be had about these wines at all. A collection of three single-vineyard, 100% varietal Cabernets that have consistently earned astonishingly high praise from the likes of Robert Parker and, less significantly, me, these are some of the best Napa Cabs on the market, full stop.

The Missouri Hopper Vineyard has a nose that I could smell from three feet away, and an intense, inky body with brooding deep purple fruit character laced in bright reds. Ultra fine tannins that coat the mouth, the wine is leathery and bold, with some real staying power on the finish.

The To Kalon is slightly richer on the assault than the MH, but no less elegant. Robust and familiar, the baking spice lingering behind the intense and lush black fruits sets it apart. A quintessential Napa Cabernet, and evidence as to why this vineyard's fruit and this vintner's wines are both so highly coveted, I savored this one for quite a while.

The Dr. Crane is the most feminine of the collection, in my opinion, with subtle hints of lavender, dark chocolate, and mint lingering behind deep purple fruits, making this the smoothest of the three Debate Cabs. My wife, who recently has lost interest in big Napa Cabs in favor of more petite blends and Strongbow cider, asked for a second glass. High praise indeed.

The concept that wine brings people together to talk is deeply embedded in The Debate. Each bottle comes wrapped in headlines from that vintage, the 2013's bearing headlines reminding us of the legalization of gay marriage, the Boston marathon bombing, and more. In a world in which cowards attack others from behind computer screens, wine encourages shared space and eye contact, face to face conversations, and civil discourse. These are indeed

difficult times to live in – who couldn't use a glass of wine? Web: www.thedebatewine.com.

Decades 5 Petit Verdot 2012

Wow. Just freaking wow. I opened this bottle to review it, yes, but also to celebrate the christening of my wine cellar. We'd put up a massive 12' x 10' rack, equal to storing a thousand bottles and requiring five of us and several attempts to get it into place. In gratitude, and because I desperately wanted to try it anyway, I made this bottle the first one ever opened in my cellar. Deep and brooding with impeccable balance, five years in the bottle has done nothing to tame the intensity of the dark black and purple fruit profile. Hearty notes of smoked meat mingle with more delicate, floral notes. An impressive barrel regiment, 26 months on new French oak, rounds it out, offering tremendous structure, character, and depth. Web: www.decades5.com.

“ Ultra fine tannins that coat the mouth, the wine is leathery and bold, with some real staying power on the finish ”

Michel Rolland 2013

The eponymous label of a world-renowned oenologist, this wine is what you would expect as the brain-child of two talented wine world rock stars. Deep, sensual, and rich, it's not at all surprising that this wine begs for food. Of course, I was happy to acquiesce, and paired it with some spicy pineapple bratwursts from HyVee. Exceptionally smooth, bursting with notes of refined leather, dry black currants, hints of herb, and blackberry jam, this is an age-worthy wine that's also drinking beautifully right now, and will for years to come. Web: www.michelrollandnapavalley.com.



Theory Cabernet Sauvignon 2014

Stunning! The combination of great winemaking, careful conditions, and terrific fruit make this a steal of a wine in my opinion. Wonderful and easy to enjoy, it pairs diversely and drinks well on its own. Notably, its one of, if not the, most affordable Cabernets in the JH Collection. You don't have to be a Cab lover, or even a wine lover, to enjoy this one. Web: www.theorywine.com.

Theory Zinfandel 2015

"Stylistically, we were trying to make a Zin reminiscent of the Zins of the '90's. Crushed red fruits and spice, medium weight and lower than 15% alcohol," explained Ryan Anderson, Jean's partner-in-crime on the Theory label. It caught me off guard at first; for as long as I've consumed Zinfandels, I've grown accustomed to jammy, spicy wines with nearly as much alcohol as Port. This is something else, boasting a bright red fruit profile, unique from nose to finish. If you like Zin, you should try it. If you don't think you like Zin, you should definitely try it. Web: www.theorywine.com.

Inside the box of wine that I'd gone so far out of my way to acquire as to stalk my UPS guy, were all of the wines I mentioned above. Over the course of a few weeks, after putting a larger and less polite sign on my front door for the folks at FedEx, I reverently tasted through the case, savoring every sip of each new and unique wine. As I did, I thought back on wonderful memories with Jean in the Napa Valley, shared glasses with my wife as we discussed and debated our increasingly turbulent world – a world in which we are raising children, and felt a deep sense of gratitude that I have such opportunities as to drink great wine, raise children, and hold discussions with people I love, as well as people whom I must work harder to understand. Wine has a social role to play, my friend once told me. I'm glad that his wines can now play that role in Omaha.





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GO BIG ROUGE

by Mark Gudgel

When I was a kid growing up in Valentine, I used to relish the lengthy road-trips to Lincoln to visit my mom's side of the family. We'd drive down Friday night, leaving right after I got out of school, stopping only for gasoline and fast food along the way. When we'd arrive, pulling into Grandma and Grandpa's farm on Friday night, we'd be greeted by the smell of dinner frying, countless farm cats darting around the driveway, followed by one of Grandma's huge, warm hugs. Grandpa, in his wheelchair, silent and watchful, would observe from the table; he spoke very little when I was very young, and not at all as I got older, yet he was cognizant and engaged in his surroundings, ever present, a fixture at the head of the table for every meal.

Saturday morning would come, and as a young boy I'd want to go play out on the farm. For a boy who grew up in town, gathering the eggs from the chickens and petting goats was exciting business. But I knew that as soon as the game predictably came on, Grandpa would be seated in front of the television in his wheelchair for the duration, and sometimes I would join him. These are my earliest memories of college football, and subconsciously, this may be at least part of the reason why the Huskers are so important to me today.

It is interesting how our passions and hobbies evolve over time, and even more interesting how as adults we find ways to marry them to one another. As a lover of wines and a die-hard Husker fan, these two passions of mine have often existed in different realms, beer and soda being the drinks of choice for football games since I was in college at the University. But a while back, a few of my fellow Husker fans made an effort to bring the two together, and in my estimation, they've done it well.

"The concept of the brand **Sea of Red**™ is a tribute to the passionate fans. Just as football brings people together every Saturday in Lincoln, sharing and enjoying wine is also something that brings people together. We wanted to create a brand that tied those two together," said Mark Brungardt, one of the founders of the Sea of Red™ label and a former Husker football player. I asked him how he came up with the idea. "I was introduced to **Bill Kerr** through some mutual friends and we got talking about business opportunities in branding wine. He is a brand designer by trade and also an avid Husker fan. Since I played at Nebraska and Bill grew up in Nebraska, we decided to partner together on helping launch the concept of this wine," he told me.

On the label, a familiar "Big Red" motif greets the consumer, with the number 62 emblazoned across the front. 1962 was the year the NCAA record consecutive sellout streak began. Last year, the number broke 350 games when the Huskers defeated Oregon. The next closest streak is Notre Dame, nearly ten years and nearly 100 games behind us. Oh, and they "sold out" in 2000 when Nebraska turned their stadium red as the visiting fans bought up most of their tickets. Jus' sayin'. There is no place like Nebraska. 1962 indeed.

Sea of Red™ currently has two wines on the market for the current vintage. The 2016 Moscato is a sweeter wine, with some of the subtle notes of plastic and spice that I often hope for, yet rarely find, in the varietal. It's a solid game day wine, perfect for a hot autumnal afternoon. The 2016 red blend is a crowd-pleaser for sure, with a lavender nose and fruit-packed body. It's a made-to-drink wine that goes down easily, doesn't cost much money, and requires little thought, making it a great offering for a tailgate or in-home watch party. The wines are available at most area Hy-Vee grocers, as well as the **Heartland Tasting Room, Louie's Wine Dive, Baker's Lakeside, the Good Life Sports Bar, Patrick's Market, and Big Dog's Beverage.**

My grandfather died in 1993. I was in the eighth grade. In the years that followed, the Nebraska Cornhusker football team dominated the sport in an unprecedented fashion, winning three national titles in four years, and posting a 49-2 record with

three undefeated seasons in the same amount of time. It's nothing short of tragic in my mind that my grandfather, a fan to his very core, didn't get to witness their return to glory and dominance. These days, though I'm not particularly sentimental, I like to think that I watch every game with him.

It donned on me a while back, as the anticipation for this coming Husker football season began to swell, that between graduations and suspensions, I can't name a single pass-catcher for the Big Red this coming season. Then it occurred to me that I'm not a hundred percent sure who will be throwing the ball to them anyway. It could be a long season, but like my grandfather before me, and millions of other Big Red fans across the world, I'm going to watch every game from start to finish. I'll attend when I can, and when I can't make it to Memorial Stadium, I'll have friends over in my basement, sharing the glory and the agony, yelling our heads off, and probably sharing a glass of wine.



LITTLE WINE *Lies*

by John Finocchiaro

For the most part the business of wine is an honest one, albeit not perfect. Over the course of its two thousand year history there has been a smattering of documented crimes. For example, there is the phony bottle of 1787 wine, allegedly once owned by Thomas Jefferson, purchased in 1985 by one of the Koch brothers. Lawsuits followed. In 2008 Italy was hit by scandal when it was discovered that producers in Montalcino were ‘enhancing’ large quantities of their pure Sangiovese wines with other inferior grape types. Oops. Busted. Speaking of Italy, there was the massive recall of their wine in 1986 due to the addition of methanol. (The fact that the ingestion of such adjunct might actually kill you didn’t seem to faze the perpetrators.) I was involved with the recall. It was not fun. More recently there was the epic sale of millions of dollars of phony rare wines by a sir Rudy Kurniawan. His deft use of an exacto knife, copy machine, and Elmer’s Glue was all that was needed to produce counterfeit Bordeaux in his basement. He is now in prison.

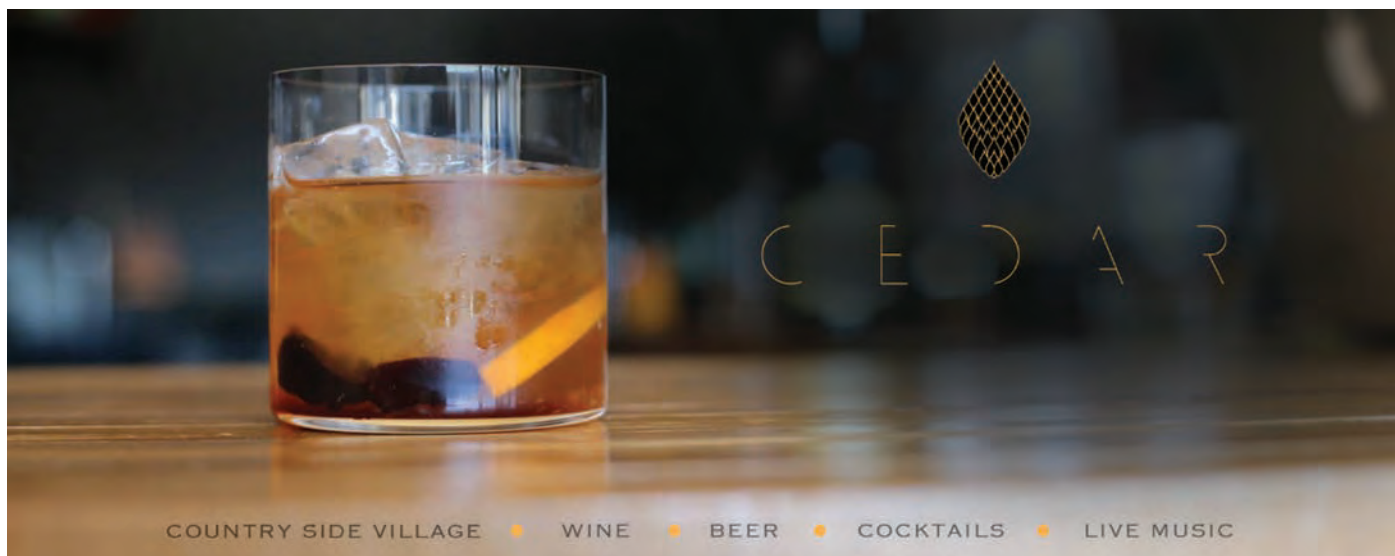
The wonderful world of wine is not so squeaky clean. But when you’ve been in business since the time of Noah’s Ark one has to expect a few rotten vines.

My concern here is not with the criminal element, but rather the non-criminal deceptions that many average wine buyers may believe. No one will go to jail for these misconceptions. If anyone did, it would be the consumer for buying into such lies. Let’s straighten some of these out.



1. THE VINEYARDS – Have you ever driven through wine country or perused pictures in brochures or magazines of beautiful vines? News flash: The lushest, green, dense, over grown vineyards do not produce the best grapes. They likely produce mostly pedestrian, non-descript, everyday cheapo bulk wines. Now, take a peek at those sickly looking acres of rocky soiled, stumpy, craggy vines with scarcely few leaves and minimal grape clusters hanging from. They may look sick, but that is the good stuff. Herein lies a concept referred to as “vine stress”. Growing grapes is kind of like raising kids. Make ‘em struggle a bit. Make ‘em work for it. They will dig deeper. Later, after they have strained and persevered, they will turn out beautifully. Guaranteed.

2. COLOR – Deeper color does not indicate richer, better wine. That’s just silly. The optimal color of a particular wine depends largely on the grape type. Red burgundy (pinot noir) and Beaujolais will almost always be paler in color than cabernet or zinfandel. A big oaky chardonnay will likely be much more yellow (‘yellowier’ isn’t a word, is it?) than a terrific sauvignon



blanc. Different grape types have different coloration. Do not judge a book by its cover. And do not judge a wine by its color.

3. WINE LABELS – Speaking of judging a book by its cover.... Pretty, modern, creative, artistic labels do not automatically mean the wine inside is better. It's all window dressing. Some, if not most of the great wines on planet earth possess very plain, outdated-looking labels. Look at traditional French, Spanish and Italian bottles and you will see what I mean.

“Do not judge a book by its cover. And do not judge a wine by its color”

For some odd reason, America went through a good half dozen or so years of labeling new, trendy wines with bizarre animal names. I have no idea what animals have to do with wine. But it worked. Truckloads of this nondescript drivel were sold. And that blew me away. At a bare minimum a wine label should say something about the contents, such as the region it was produced

or at least the name of the winery. “Skinny Giraffe Riesling” and “Monkey Junk Cabernet” do nothing of the sort. (These brand names were changed to protect the innocent animals).

“If wine labels were to use living creatures as names, we should have used humans”

If wine labels were to use living creatures as names, we should have used humans. At least this would have indicated a little something about the wine inside the bottle. “Tom Selleck Syrah” would obviously be rustic, sturdy, and certainly not wimpy. I would buy it. “Kardashian Merlot” would likely be full bodied, but overpriced and overrated. Pass. In a related wine, “Kanye Chardonnay” would simply be an empty bottle. Bottom line, pretty jazzy stylish artsy packaging is absolutely no indication of the juice inside, especially if it's a zoo animal.

4. PRICE – I get it, you're bringing wine to a dinner party. You want something good. But spending \$40 instead of \$20 or \$30 does not guarantee you a better wine. Within a particular wine





brand, the higher priced cabernet absolutely should be better than that same winery's cabernet at half the cost. But such a price comparison between two or three different wineries is not an absolute contest of cost. Do some homework, use your own palate, and enlist the knowledge of your local wine shop. Tell them you want "something very good, for special friends". They may have something at far less cost. Or they may show you a killer wine for a mere \$5 more. Get it? We're not buying lottery tickets here, hoping we get a winner. We want a terrific wine, within a reasonable price range. Now go find it.

5. FLAVOR DESCRIPTIONS – I tip my hat to the wine writers on this one. Their level of creative absurdity is off the charts. A quintessential description of sauvignon blanc is often described as having aromas of "cat's pee on a gooseberry bush". No, I'm not kidding. World class cabernet can possess notes of "tar, tobacco, slate, and old leather". Yeah, drink that. Wine with "scent of wet wool" makes you want to run out and buy a case, doesn't it? And did you know that "graphite" could be experienced in liquid form? How 'bout "camphor"... I mean, what's that? What's disheartening about these bizarre descriptions is that we, as consumers, often feel as if our palates are not developed or matured if we can't pick out such taste components. Don't buy into it. This is wine's version of the emperor's new clothes. I mean, think about it. Do you believe that these geeks have ever really tasted graphite, tar, or the gooseberry bush thing? Yuck.

You know wine. You love wine. Trust your palate. Do not hesitate to enlist tips from publications, trusted friends and wine shops. But take such recommendations with a grain of salt, or maybe an entire shaker. That rare \$40 bottle of Screaming Turkey Zinfandel with 'barnyard notes of damp newspaper and mud' may taste like, well...just that. Not that I would know.

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A young girl with long brown hair, wearing a blue sleeveless shirt, white pants with a tear at the knee, and a colorful patterned headband, is crouching on a paved surface. She is using a paintbrush to apply pink paint to a large, colorful mural on the ground. The mural features various abstract shapes and colors like pink, blue, yellow, and orange. In the background, several people are standing and watching. One person is holding a smartphone, and another is holding a camera. The scene appears to be an outdoor community art event.

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*Community Art piece by Norm4eva (photo by Sarah Miller)

THE DUMPSTER Fads Gone Bad

by Michael Campbell

As *Food & Spirits* celebrates its 10th year of persnickiness and gluttony, I offer my congratulations to Erik the Publisher. In his honor I've come up with a top ten list of food fads from the last ten years that are now as popular as Bart Simpson tattoos.

The cronut. The French spent generations perfecting the art of turning a stick of butter into something light, flaky and delicious. Americans then deep-fried it, delicate as a state fair corn dog. What did we learn, kids? Deep-frying doesn't make perfect things perfecter.

Red Bull and vodka. Red Bull is for people who think something great will happen if they just stay awake long enough. Vodka is for people who would rather be skinny than happy. Red Bull is an upper. Vodka is a downer. Drinking them together makes you a drunk who won't shut up and go home.

Bacon everything. Sure, I love bacon. Out of respect for its holiness I eat it like, well, bacon. In strips. Of bacon. I don't put it on a maple donut. I don't macramé it into a lattice to be draped over a turkey on Thanksgiving. I don't chew bacon-flavored gum. Which brings me to...

Turducken. I like convertibles and unicycles and bulldozers, but I don't have to have a convertibulldozer. If you stuff a turkey with a duck that was stuffed with a chicken, write down the recipe so you can hand it to the emergency room attendant when you get food poisoning.

Oh, and of course deep-fry it. Put that layered blob of factory-grown meat into a deep fryer to give it a good crust on the outside while protecting the freshness and vitality of the bacteria inside. And speaking of raw...

Paleo. If eating like cave men were good for you, you'd still be covered in fur. A real paleo-era diet plan would be to eat only

the foods you can run down and kill with a weapon made from chipping at a rock for three hours, then tying the sort-of-sharp shards to a stick with strips of your peeling sunburn. Skin your catch, gut it, then drag it two miles back to your family, who will help you chop it into marginally chewable bits. All this uses more calories than you will consume. Like eating celery.

The McRib. McDonald's had an early hit when they made

McNuggets, because we don't like bones. Painting fake bones on fake meat doesn't make it meat, and did I mention we don't eat bones?

Krispy-Creme. I'll say it: the emperor has no clothes and he's eating a plain friggin' donut. What makes it taste special is you were at the back of the line when the bell rang to announce fresh donuts were coming out, and your subconscious had to justify why you were twenty minutes late for work.

Chocolate wine. Because for some people, drinking wine and eating chocolate was too much work.

Pod coffee. It's more delicious because it comes in little plastic single-serving cups we get to throw away to make ourselves feel special with every lonely cup. Espresso machines make single servings too, but they make them out of coffee.

Craft bartenders. In this usage, "craft" meant "it's about me, not you." You sit for twenty minutes watching a bartender count drips of homemade

jasmine tincture out of an eyedropper while his greasy beard hairs dangle into your drink. The only time I want to see an eyedropper in a bar is if you're making a cocktail for my eyeball.

Now keep in mind that while I sit here casting my judgements, I'm drinking cheap wine while eating popcorn by the fistful as crumbs tumble down my shirt. Which is to say that for the last ten years, some things have remained comfortably unchanged. Happy anniversary.





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