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

MAGAZINE

OMAHA EDITION





Chef led, technique-driven, hands-on lessons for passionate cooks seeking serious fun ... and serious deliciousness.



## DNTENTS N<sup>o.</sup> 26

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#### FEATURES THIS ISSUE



Chef-owner Goes Wood Fired 30-something Jared Clarke opens Timber Wood Fire Bistro and shares his true farm to restaurant story.



Omaha Native and Chicago Restaurateur Keeps Pushing Omaha native keeps the hungry Windy City diners of Chicago wanting more.



Best Burgers In Town Location Map 18 Ten locations for mouth watering burgers Omaha foodies won't want to miss.



Omaha Happy Hour Looking for a perfect location after a hard day or week? Visit 18 of Omaha's best establishments for a cocktail or two.



Pesach Sameach! (Happy Passover!) The Passover celebration seen through 45 the eyes of friendship and peace.



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Delicate and delicious, spring rolls are made easy with the help of Charles Schlussel's recipe. See recipe on page 23. Photo by Jacob Herrman.

#### No. 26

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#### LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



Welcome to the 26th issue of Food & Spirits Magazine. As we approach out 10-year anniversary, everything is rolling along quite nicely for us here at the magazine (finally!). This issue is loaded with some outstanding content that we feel certain you'll enjoy.

Two years ago we rolled out our series of maps that feature some of the best burgers, happy hours, pizzas, brunches,

Reubens, patios, etc. in the Omaha Metro. We started with the local burgers and happy hours and, after two years, we figured it was time to update them. So, you'll find those updated maps, designed by the talented **Beverly Nelligan**, in this issue.

We've also got a great feature on newly opened **Timber Wood Fire Bistro** written by **Leo Adam Biga.** Head chef and owner **Jared Clarke's** new restaurant (he also owns **Railcar**) is located at **Countryside Village** and it's a welcome addition to the Omaha restaurant scene.

Herbe Sainte, and owners Ron Samuelson, along with nephews Justin and Aaron Halbert, are also featured in this issue with details about their two upcoming projects. Herbe Sainte has quickly made a mark in Omaha and we suspect that the two new concepts will do the same. Aaron is also profiled in our 'Bartender Portrait' article.

I'm always mystified that more people aren't aware of Omaha native and Chicago restaurateur **Terry Alexander** (founder of **Violet Hour, Nico Osteria, Publican, Avec, Blackbird, Big Star, etc.).** We've got an update on some of his latest projects in the Windy City. It's a mystery to me why you don't seem him mentioned in the local media more, but we're trying to remedy that.

Kent Cisar gives your some breakfast tips for a bevy of restaurants around town, while Jess Clem breaks down where to find some of the best cannoli around the city. Edward Berna, owner of Paradigm Gardens, tells you about some of the finer aspects of indoor gardening. It's his inaugural article and we're happy to have him on board. Also new to the magazine is Ross Negrete and his entertaining take on cheesecake. Ross, along with B & G Tasty Food's owner Eddie Morin and his articles on Iron Chef and 'Sodas You May Not be Aware of,' will keep you chuckling. The always-entertaining Michael Campbell tells you about ghost peppers and, rounding out the food section, is Charles Schlussel and his recipe for spring rolls. As with nearly every recipe article we've published, Jacob Herrman provides the outstanding photography you'll see for that article.

In addition to the articles already mentioned for the spirits' section, **Jill Cockson** returns with another fantastic industry-insider piece that is, as always, on point. **John Finocchiaro** provides a super-informative piece on how wine has become so popular in the U.S. and the big-brained **Mark Gudgel** gives you another wine recommendation and tells you about wine's place in the Passover holiday celebration.

Of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention **Sheri Potter** and her always excellent design and photography work. She, along with the aforementioned Beverly, produce the pages you see before you. I hope that makes it pretty obvious how important they are to the magazine's final product. **Ryan Tantillo** has also done a great job at delivering us some top-notch photos.

I'm entirely thankful to get to work with all these outstanding individuals.

Event-wise, you'll find a recap of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Doughnut Shootout held at The Waiting Room Lounge and Reverb Lounge recently. Coming up soon, we've got the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Food Truck Rodeo (May 20<sup>th</sup>) and the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Omaha's Largest Pizza Review (June 6<sup>th</sup>). Our events are always a lot of fun (and sell out quickly) so be sure to make plans to attend.

Finally, it would be a huge omission to not mention our advertisers. Without them, none of this would be possible and I can't adequately express how grateful I am to them. Make sure you patronize their businesses because they basically subsidize this magazine for the entire city.

That's it for now. 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.

Erik Totten – Publisher Food & Spirits Magazine

#### EXPERTS PANEL



Edward G. Berna Edward Berna is founder of Paradigm Gardens. He is fascinated with local food systems, intensive plant production models and plant nutrient density. His connections to year round local food production fuels most of his foodie desires. Edward enjoys experience travel and learning from others and their heritage experiences

Leo Adam Biga Leo Adam Biga is an Omaha-based author-journalist-blogger. His books include Alexander Payne: His Journey in Film, Crossing Bridges: A Priest's Uplifting Life Among the Downtrodden and Memories of the Jewish Midwest: Mom and Pop Grocery Stores. The University of Nebraska at Omaha graduate contributes articles to newspapers and magazines. His work has been recognized by his peers at the local, regional and national levels. Sample his eclectic writing at leoadambiga.com or www.facebook.com/LeoAdamBiga.

Michael Campbell Michael Campbell is a songwriter and humor essayist. His "Dumpster" essays close every issue of *Food & Spirits. Are You Going To Eat That,* a collection of sixty humor essays, was released in 2009, and *My Turn Now,* his most recent album of 13 original songs, was released in 2015. Learn more at michaelcampbellsongwriter.com.

Kent Cisar Kent Cisar searches the local and national scene for unique ingredients and flavors to bring to the table here in Omaha. He'll catch his own fish from Florida, ship farmer's market shrimp from Louisiana, stash jams from the Pacific Northwest, or find the best cut of meat from a Nebraska farmer. Kent believes that regardless of where the it comes from, good food is meant to be shared.

Jessica Clem Jessica Clem is a freelance writer based in Omaha, Nebraska. A marathon runner and food writer, her favorite way to get motivated to finish a project is the promise of a craft beer. She has a B.A. in English, and an M.S. in Urban Studies, and enjoys traveling, finding typos on billboards, and the smell of a real book. When she is not eating or running, she works as a producer and account executive for Omaha Video Solutions.

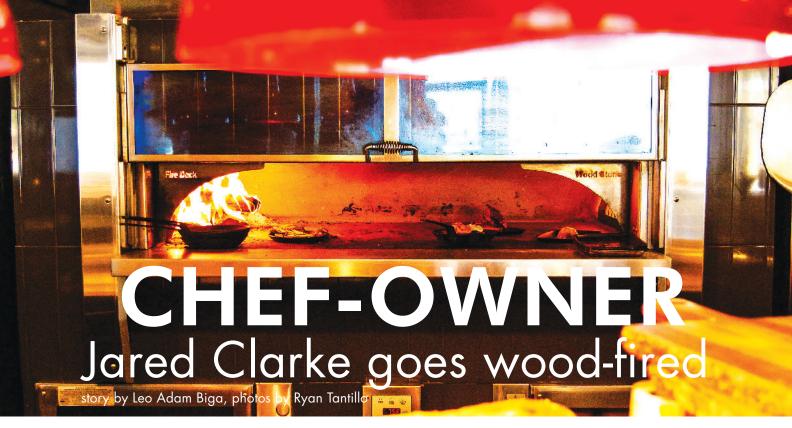
Jill Cockson Jill Cockson is a veteran bartender of 20 years, and co-developer of The Other Room, Nebraska's only James Beard-nominated cocktail program. She is also the owner of Rabbit and Turtle Beverage Corp., producers of Colonel Jesse's Small Batch Tonic, and has most recently established Atomic Hummingbird, Inc., a hospitality group dedicated to developing focused hospitality concepts in Kansas City, MO. Their first venue, Swordfish Tom's, is scheduled to open in the crossroads of Kansas City in April, 2017.

John Finocchiaro John Finocchiaro is a former owner of Finocchiaro Wine Company, Inc., a Nebraska wholesale wine, spirits, and beer distributorship dating back to 1935. He also formerly co-owned Johnson Brothers Finocchiaro, LLC. John is a former Certified Public Accountant and a Certified Specialist of Wine.

Mark Gudgel Dr. Mark Gudgel is a wine writer and educator who holds credentials through the Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) and is working towards becoming a Master of Wine. His interest in wine was sparked on his honeymoon to Napa and Sonoma. Gudgel and his wife, Sonja, have co-authored several articles as well as a book on the wineries of Nebraska, to be released in the spring of 2017. Gudgel is a regular contributor to Food & Spirits Magazine and American Winery Guide, as well as the blog he maintains with his wife, www. itheewine.com. Mark and Sonja live in Omaha with their children and their dog.

Eddie Morin I'm Eddie Morin. I'm from Omaha. I run B & G Tasty Foods, and I like eating food, playing video games, and dinking around with my wife and kids. I used to not be so fat. That's all I really think there is to me.

Charles Schlussel Professional head shaver, Reckless adventurer, Erstwhile Semi-Pro skydiver (amateur lander), Fanatical tomato lover, All round awesome cook extraordinaire!



Chef-owner Jared Clarke found a niche with his Railcar Modern American Kitchen in northwest Omaha. With it now well-established, he hankered trying a new concept with Timber Wood Fire Bistro in Countryside Village. Since opening in 2016 at the former site of The Bookworm, this extreme open-kitchen, wood-fired menu restaurant has added a signature spot in the heart of Omaha.

"The hardest thing as a chef is to choose to follow trends or not. I've always done comfort food. I grew up on the farm eating from-scratch meals and enjoyed it. I like making things very comforting and warming to your soul."

Like many young chefs, the 30-something Clarke is an interesting mix of traditional and contemporary influences. He borrows a little from many cuisines for his take on American comfort food rooted in French technique, all accented by a touch of super-hot oak-fired flame to enhance not obscure ingredients' optimal flavor.

"The hardest thing as a chef is to choose to follow trends or not. I've always done comfort food. I grew up on the farm eating fromscratch meals and enjoyed it. I like making things very comforting and warming to your soul. When I was a young chef I was all over the place because I wanted to learn as much as possible. Japanese, Thai, I've learned how to make all those cuisines."

But he always found himself coming back to comfort food, which has become a ubiquitous descriptor of what countless eateries serve.

"I don't know if this trend will go away or if it's even really a trend. It's always been there."

Clarke is a rarity in these parts as both a certified chef and a trained food scientist. His knowledge about the chemistry of food

pairs with his talent and experience in the kitchen to maximize flavor combinations and freshness.

"I do have a better understanding of things. It helps making better sauces or extracting more flavor out of bones. It's knowing when to season and not to season. It's knowing where to start and stop your food. There's science to back these things up."

Far from being stuck in a laboratory in his formative culinary years, he began cooking professionally in his late teens. He earned his chef certification at Southeast Community College near his hometown of Fairbury, Nebraska and his culinology degree at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Unlike other food science students, he had no interest in doing test kitchen work for ConAgra or Kraft.

"My goal was to get better at my job as a restaurant chef. A lot of my professors were like, 'What are you thinking?' 'I'm thinking about making better food.'

In college he worked at Chili's and **Misty's** in Lincoln. After college he moved to Chicago to work at Lettuce Entertain You and Cooper's Hawk Winery and Restaurant.

"I wanted something where I could incorporate a lot of different cuisines with the kiss of the wood flavor. Give that campfire flavor with more refined food."

He made a splash upon returning to Nebraska as executive chef at **Blue Sushi Sake Grill** in Omaha. Already on the short list of top new local chefs, he announced himself a chef-owner to watch with Railcar.

His coast-to-coast travels across America for business and pleasure find him learning new techniques and trends as well as tried and true things he then melds into what he does at his two restaurants.

"I'm always trying to make myself better as a chef."
Railcar's success emboldened him to try Timber Wood.

I've always wanted to do my own wood-fired cuisine — something fully wood-fired, not a wood-fired oven and then finish it off on the grill. I wanted something where I could incorporate a lot of different cuisines with the kiss of the wood flavor. Give that campfire flavor with more refined food. I try to do more French techniques with food off grill in the oven, rather than

going straight Midwestern cuisine or doing cowboy style food.

"Some people ask, 'Why don't you do barbecue?' Well, that's not the idea. The idea is to do more refined food off the wood fire. I'm not looking to smoke the food. I'm not going to be using a hickory or an applewood because I'm not looking to really change the flavor of the food – I'm looking to enhance it. I use oak because, to me, it adds an extra layer of seasoning that kind of sets the food apart. But the roast chicken still tastes like roast chicken."

He went against the grain of what most of us associate with wood-fire.

"I didn't want to focus strictly on pizzas because everybody thinks wood fire and pizza. I wanted to do something different here than

make pizza like everyone else is doing. We have a small selection of French-style pizzas – pissaladière – on our menu. French-style pizzas don't have a lot of sauce. Some don't have any sauce at all – they might just have some herb oil. We use a lot of high-end ingredients on it. It's not your normal pizza. It's a cross between Neapolitan style pizza and the focaccia. You have a cracker crust on the outside but it puffs out enough where you get these airy bubbles. It's chewy on the inside and crispy on the outside.

"The traditional Provencal-style pizza we do has a lot of lavender and thyme, caramelized onions, anchovies, salt cured olives. We

do a little frisee salad on top with shaved pecorino and a sherry vinaigrette.

That's a pretty classical combination for the Provence region. As chefs we have to be food historians, too. If you don't know where your food comes from or how it came to be that cuisine, it's hard to understand the food you're putting forward."

He became sold on the open-kitchen concept after seeing it in action on food travels.

"The aroma, the food coming out of there, talking to the cooks, having a great time – I thought this might be a fun concept to try in Omaha.

We designed it to give people the ability to sit at the counter or walk by and really see the show. Other open kitchens in Omaha are still closed off to the public – you can't walk right next to the line and peek in and talk to the guys and interact if you want to.

"Here, you can interact with us."

The show diners are treated to is a fast-paced ballet of efficient movements by the head chef, sous chef and support crew, variously working at a 900-degree cast-iron grill and oven and on the six-burner stove.

"On a busy weekend we pump out a hundred meals in less than an hour. Customers are like, 'Wow, you guys are fast. How do you do that?' They're intrigued with how we're able to put food out because they don't really get to see it anywhere else. To me, that's the fun part of it people get to see what we do. When we have 300 or 400 people on a Friday or Saturday night they can see us working hard, getting the

orders out right. They see there's a lot involved with their food."

Clarke's impressive chops are an amalgam of his many gigs and stops. He said the local chef community is much more generous today than when he came up.

"You were just doing whatever you thought was right and nobody ever really taught you. Back then a lot of the chefs here were not interested in teaching other people. They felt like if they taught you how to do their job they would lose their job. When I was in Chicago it was the other way around. If they taught you how to do your job, then their job just got easier. It all trickled





down. If everyone has the same mentality and you've given them the tools to be great, then you don't have to be there every day."

Having two restaurants now, he said, is "a little trying." He spends most of his time these days at the start-up, Timber Wood. He said, "Railcar is what got us here and we want to make sure that continues to be successful, so we make sure we have the right people over there. My ultimate goal is to spend time at both

places so nobody feels neglected. Chefs that I have at both restaurants are going to guide things moving forward.

"I didn't want to focus strictly on pizzas because everybody thinks wood fire and pizza. I wanted to do something different here"

"It's tough though because you have to figure out where you want to be, what you want to do, and I like being on-the-line. I will eventually be off-the-line a lot more. I want to be cooking more, but you've got to manage things, too." The satisfaction he finds in his work, which is also a lifestyle, is fundamental.

"It's the artistic approach to it because I really enjoy being creative. I grew up in an artistic family (his mother was an art and music teacher and his father a farmer) and this is my outlet now in just being creative and free. When I'm on-the-line I'm in a happy place – I'm making food for people, and at the end of the day,

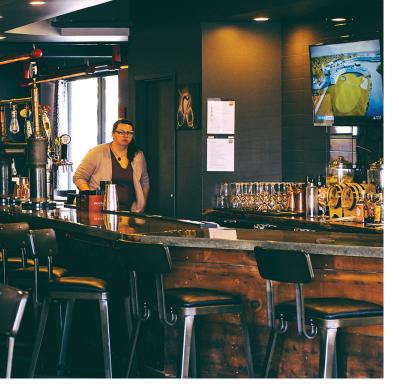
that's what I want."

He fell in love with locating Timber Wood in the old Bookworm space, he said, because of the "great windows, openness, and natural light." Following a much beloved business is not a bad thing. "The Bookworm was here for I don't know how many years, so this space has really good memories and feelings for people. If there had been eight restaurants here I probably would never have come to this space."

Ultimately, it's the food, not the brick-and-mortar that matters, and like many of his colleagues he strives for fresh, local, sustainable.

"The biggest thing is making sure suppliers are providing you with the best product possible at the right time. As spring rolls around we'll start really getting the produce. The goal is to try to bring forth as many fresh products





as possible and get it from as close as you can. It supports the community a lot more.

"The amount of options you can buy from has increased. We're starting to see more cheese, dairy and poultry farms. Ten years ago we didn't have this even though producers had the ability to do it."

Meanwhile, as if he doesn't have enough going on with two restaurants, a wife and three kids, he's visioning new eateries.

"I already know what they're going to be. As a guy who used to play a lot of chess, I'm always thinking four or five moves ahead of the game to see what else is available when the time's right."

"The show diners are treated to is a fast-paced ballet of efficient movements by the head chef, sous chef and support crew, variously working at a 900-degree cast-iron grill and oven and on the six-burner stove."

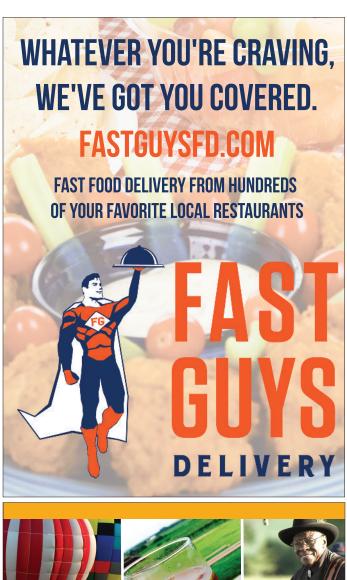
Clarke's proud to be a player in this ever more dynamic food scene that's gotten some of his friends and colleagues national attention.

"I don't think Omaha is a flyover city anymore. People are excited to actually be here.'

#### TIMBER WOOD FIRE BISTRO

Hours for Timber Wood, 8702 Pacific Street, are: 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to close on Friday. And 9 a.m. to close on Saturday and Sunday.

Visit https://timberomaha.com or call 402-964-2227.





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## SAMFAM, HERBE SAINTE

#### Team Has Their Sights Set on More

story and photos by Erik Totten

SamFam, LLC, the team behind recently opened New Orleans-influenced restaurant and bar, Herbe Sainte, has their sights set on two more concepts that will make their debut in Omaha in the coming year. Della Costa will open in Midtown Crossing (in the former Brix space) in May, while Mode de Vie will open at Regency in August.

SamFam is comprised of former M's Pub partner and restaurateur, Ron Samuelson, and his nephews Aaron and Justin Halbert, who are brothers.

"Herbe Sainte delivers on being a New Orleans-influenced restaurant and bar, but not one that is strictly defined by the term 'Cajun'."

"Our mom was his big sister and some of our earliest memories are watching them cook together. They were the adventurous

ones," Justin said. "I remember the music, the wine, the cooking. It's something we've been around our whole life."

Herbe Sainte, located in **Aksarben Village**, was the first concept put together by the team to see public eye. Herbe Sainte delivers on being a New Orleans-influenced restaurant and bar, but not one that is strictly defined by the term 'Cajun'.

"We wanted to make it feel like New Orleans is, not what the rest of the country thinks New Orleans is," Justin explained. "We wanted to find some fun and interesting food items that you don't see outside of New Orleans."

"It's not a yard of beer and gumbo," Aaron added. "(The concept) boiled down to what can we not get in Omaha."

The team was actually working on their other concepts when the opportunity for Herbe Sainte presented itself.

"Herbe Sainte came out of nowhere. I don't think people realize that," Justin explained. "When **Jay Noodle** approached us we had just had another deal fall though. He told us what he wanted to see and so we went back to the drawing board."









"We didn't even realize this was going to be an option for a business, but it came up faster than any other restaurant I've ever seen." Aaron added.

Despite its 'on-the-fly' roots, Herbe Sainte has quickly found a home in Omaha's restaurant community behind head chef **Jeff Owens** playful take on New Orleans' food. It's been lauded and praised from the beginning, even if that beginning was intended by the team to be more of a strictly bar concept, with some food, rather than a full-service restaurant concept.

"The thing about this place that has taken us by surprise is how insistent people are to eat here," Ron explained. "The whole thing was laid out to mostly be a bar. We had no idea it was going to work like this. It's worked out really well. We weren't even planning on being open for lunch, but we've had some really good lunches here."

While Herbe Sainte has quickly made a claim for being the top New Orleans' style restaurants in the city, Della Costa and Mode de Vie will embrace entirely different concepts.

Della Costa, while initially envisioned as an Italian restaurant, developed into more of costal Mediterranean concept. The restaurant, set to open in May, will focus on seafood. Whole fish,

roasted fish, fish en papillote (fish cooked in paper) and crudo will all find an ongoing spot on the menu.

"It was a very specific idea that we really fleshed out. First and foremost we wanted to focus on the seafood aspect," Justin said. "The idea of crudo being a section of the menu. We want that to be something we focus on."

"Della Costa, while initially envisioned as an Italian restaurant, developed into more of costal Mediterranean concept. The restaurant, set to open in May, will focus on seafood."

Della Costa will highlight that crudo with flavored oils, vinegars, peppers, salts and herbs. Chef Owens will take over as head chef with **Justin Gipe**, formerly at Omaha Country Club, taking over at Herbe Sainte. **Tina Tweedy**, formerly of M's Pub and Vivace, will come on as pastry chef for all of the group's restaurants and **Shawn Phifer**, previously at Vivace, **Grey Plume** and **Jams**, will be chef de cuisine. Scott French, also from Vivace, will run the dining room.



Mode de Vie will be a French inspired restaurant that will capture many flavors from around the world and focus on wine. It's set to open in August.

"The idea we started with was the wine program and we built around that," Justin said. "The food is wherever the French had influence on cuisine around the world. That means Vietnam, North Africa, the Caribbean, Louisiana and regional French."

While the food will be French-inspired, it won't have the feel of many French restaurants. The restaurant will have lighter fare with a menu that is accessible at both price point, and a variety of dishes that will work to share or as an entrée.

"It won't be a stuffy French place. It's going to be really fun and playful," Justin said.

"We're trying really hard to get authentic flavors and products that can be presented consistently," Ron added.

With the team working on such diverse concepts, being able to go with the flow and adjust has been critical.

"Adaptability is key," Justin said. "We go into it with an idea, but we've really tried to adapt to what the space and neighborhood needs."

With a team that is made up of all family members, they stressed the idea of letting each member focus on what they are good at. Justin concentrates on the business side of things and deals with the leasing and contractors, while Aaron is the beverage director and takes on the role of directing operations. Ron, as might be expected with his depth of experience, has his hand in all aspects and has sense of the pulse on every level.

"It's fun to see the ideas go back and forth," Justin said.

#### HERBE SAINTE

1934 South 67th Street - (402) 913-2396

Monday through Thursday 11 am - 2 pm and 4 - 10 pm, Friday and Saturday 11 am - 12 am.

Sunday -Brunch from 12 pm - 4 pm, open until 8 pm.

For more information, visit www.HerbeSainteOmaha.com





Omaha native and Chicago restaurateur Terry Alexander recently opened two more of his farmer and fishermen homage Publican locations, with Publican Anker and Publican Tavern at O'Hare going live in the last several months.

The original Publican and the location at O'Hare focuses on oysters, pork and beer, while the Anker location also skews towards fish, vegetables, wine and cocktails. As well, Publican Anker has expanded its hours to accommodate a Saturday and Sunday brunch, with tentative plans to begin lunch service in early spring.

"Our goal for Anker is to create a place you can stop by anytime; for weekend brunch, for lunch, for oysters and a glass of

wine, for snacks and cocktails at the bar or for a full dinner," Terry explained. "A cool little boutique hotel opened up across the street from us so we're seeing a lot of tourists in the neighborhood and we want to be a place everyone or anyone can stop by."

I've heard more than a few stories about how Terry keeps an eye out for his home state of Nebraska, even when it comes to staffing his restaurants. Publican Anker was no exception. With training set to begin in a few days at Publican Anker, Terry noticed the application of a fellow Omahan sitting on the stack. Although the applicant wouldn't be arriving in Chicago until the day before training started, Terry and his team interviewed her on a Sunday,

hired her after the interview and she began training the next day. All this after being in town for less than 24 hours. That applicant, Angela Hindley (formerly of Grey Plume, M's Pub and Nite Owl), is now an assistant manager at Publican Anker.

"The joke is, all you have to do to get a job at One Off Hospitality is put Nebraska on your resume and I'll find a way

to get you into our system," Terry said.

There are also further projects in the works. One Off recently signed a deal with Tom Ricketts to put another location of Big Star (their bourbon, beer and taco concept) into Ricketts' Hotel Zachary, located across from Wrigley Field.

"I was introduced to Tom by a college roommate a few years ago and I've stayed in contact with him

and his team at Hickory Street Capital (I believe named after the street he lived at in Omaha) and we were fortunate to be the first restaurant group the Cubs talked with for their renovation of Wrigley," Terry said. "Tom and his family's vision is pretty incredible and we're humbled to be part of it."

Along with the Big Star across from Wrigley, the team has their sights set on an entirely new concept that will open sometime later this year in Chicago's River North neighborhood. The new concept will be a California-influenced restaurant that will draw from the influence of three key staff members.

"We actually just told all of our staffs that we're partnering up with three key staff members," Terry elaborated. "Erling Wu Bower (12 years with One Off) who is our chef at Nico, Cosmo Goss (10 years) who oversees all of the Publican locations and Josh Tilden (4 years) who is in our corporate office. "

After multiple decades in the hospitality business, the plan for the new concept is to allow some of the fresher faces at One Off to flourish.

"We're going to let Erling, Cosmo and Josh take on some of the "heavier lifting" that we normally do," Terry said. "We'll be involved in the creation of the idea/concept but we'll be more mentors than in the day to day grind."

Terry was born in Omaha and graduated from Omaha Prep High School in 1981. He then attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, where he received a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism, and then Northwestern where he received a Master's

Degree in the same in 1986.

Terry and his management company, One Off Hospitality (which includes long-time and more recent partners Paul Kahan, Donnie Madia, Eduard Seitan, Rick Diarmit, Peter Garfield and Kimberly Galban), are the founders and/or operators of Blackbird, Avec, The Violet Hour, Publican, Nico Osteria, Big Star and

Dove's Luncheonette, among many others. While some of those partners helped establish the original concepts, others have joined the team along the way.

"It's really a team effort in everything we do and my partners deserve all the credit," Terry explained. "I've been fortunate to meet a lot of great people and I'm a firm believer in getting the right people around you and letting them do what they are great at. That's important and that's how we want to build things."

One Off Hospitality takes its name from the idea that every project is unique, or a one-off. It's meant to imply that each project could be their last and they take pride in bringing extreme creativity, attention to detail, uniqueness and robust character to each concept and location.

The company has received a bevy awards, most notably the James Beard Outstanding Chef Award to Paul Kahan in 2013, James Beard Outstanding Restaurateur Award to Donnie Madia in 2015 and James Beard Outstanding Bar Program for The Violet Hour, also in 2015. Their group of restaurants and bars has also received multiple James Beard nominations in a variety of categories.







11036 Elm St, Omaha NE 68144 **402–505–9917** online at www.espanaomaha.com



## Special Events

#### HAPPY HOUR

\$5 Spanish Happy Hour -Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays 4pm-6pm

#### TAPAS TUESDAY

Order two tapas per person, and the third is on us!

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50% off wine bottles Thursday Evenings 4pm-9pm

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## MOUTH WATERING

#### Best Burgers In Town

maha is definitely a burger town. Nebraska is famous for its beef, and the Metro Area boasts many restaurants that (justifiably) pride themselves on a wide variety of burger styles, toppings and preparations. There's nothing better than a thick, juicy hamburger to satisfy your hunger and brighten your day.

#### Anthony's Steakhouse - 7220 F Street, Omaha

Celebrating 50 years serving Omaha, Anthony's legendary steaks and burgers are cut and made fresh daily. They feature weekly hand-crafted, artisan burger specials made with in-house ground beef. The 90/10 blend is made from steak trimmings, hand-pattied and cooked to perfection. The current menu offers a "Burger Bene" which is a house steak patty with a poached egg and hollandaise sauce. Another customer favorite is the "Steakhouse Burger" it starts with the house steak patty, mushrooms, ragout, bacon and



Swiss cheese. The "Mac and Cheese Burger" is another popular item that starts with the steak patty and is topped with house made creamy macaroni and cheese. Anthony's also invites you to create your own favorite steak burger with a variety of toppings, just ask your server. Come in and experience their great steak burgers and experience what has made Anthony's a restaurantmainstay in Omaha for the last 50 years.

#### 2 B&G Tasty Foods - 7900 West Dodge Road, Omaha



While B&G Tasty Foods is most famous for their loose-meat sandwiches, they also make a killer burger. They start with a quarter pound of never-frozen beef. Next, they hand-press it and sear it on their griddle. Finally, the perfectly-seasoned patty is topped with your choice of fresh ingredients like ketchup, mayo, mustard, lettuce, tomato, onion and pickle. Want your burger smeared with peanut butter or topped with an egg? Just ask! Pair this with some shoestring French fries, waffle fries, tater tots or

onion rings and you'll have a better day.

#### Barrett's Barleycorn - 4322 Leavenworth Street, Omaha

Barrett's Barleycorn has been serving some of the best pub food since 1987. Tucked in the heart of the city, Barrett's is proud to serve delicious food to people of all ages. Their extensive menu has been perfected through the years. They are especially proud of their hand-pattied, never frozen choice beef. The burgers are grilled to your liking and served on a toasted Rotella Bakery



Kaiser bun. The choice of toppings is darn near endless. Most of their burgers are named after Omaha's local sports teams. They have a Bluejay, a Maverick and always a favorite Husker burger. As claimed on their menu, the patty melt will cure a hangover, especially when paired with a Guinness! The Phillies and pork tenderloins are also favorites with their customers. With their open kitchen, it's also fun to watch the cooks work in one of the tiniest kitchens in Omaha. Come down to Barrett's Barleycorn, where no one is a stranger.

#### Dixie Quicks - 157 West Broadway, Council Bluffs



Dixie Quicks offers a delicious 9-ounce, 90% lean ground beef patty massaged with a special blend of garlic, oregano, salt, pepper and olive oil. This tasty burger treat is charbroiled to the temperature you like and piled with grilled onions, Portobello mushrooms, lettuce, tomato, Swiss and American cheese on a French roll. You'll need a nap after!

#### Dundee Dell - 5007 Underwood Avenue, Omaha



All the food at the Dundee Dell is prepared fresh every day. Their hamburger is absolutely fresh-never-frozen, and made with short rib and chuck. No trim and grilled to your preference. Want it medium rare? No problem. These delicious burgers are served on a fresh Rotella Kaiser bun with pickle, lettuce and onion on the side. They are proud of all their menu selections and put their own special "Dell" spin on each item. They make their own pastrami from scratch, brining and smoking each brisket to

bring the best possible sandwich to your table. All the appetizers, soups, sandwiches, side dishes and desserts are made right there in the Dundee Dell's own kitchens. Next time you're enjoying the neighborhood, stop by the Dell!

6 Goldberg's - 5008 Dodge Street, Omaha



Goldberg's in Dundee has been serving quality hamburgers for over twenty years. Grilled over an open flame, the Blackstone, Havarti and Greek Burgers, along with the traditional styles, satisfy a variety of tastes and can be accompanied by sides from delicious sweet potato fries to fresh sautéed vegetables. Their fresh, never frozen, 100% beef hamburgers are charbroiled over an open flame, delicately seasoned and served deliciously moist on either a lightly toasted gourmet or pretzel bun. They are served with kettle chips, but more popular companions are curly-Q fries, thick, meaty potato wedges or sweet potato fries with a homemade dip. Toppings of choice include strips of bacon, fresh sautéed mushrooms and five types of cheese. The Greek burger is a tempting and innovative choice, stuffed with fresh red peppers, sautéed mushrooms, onion, spinach and feta cheese. The Caesar is seasoned with pepper and garlic and topped with guacamole, Caesar-mayo dressing and Parmesan cheese. The Blackstone is a Reuben-style burger, and the wild ranch is seasoned hot with a cool down dressing. The atmosphere is warm, cozy and comfortable and Goldberg's staff is friendly and attentive. They offer a full menu into the late hours, so they're a great after-work or weekend hangout.

**7** Petrow's - 5914 Center Street, Omaha



Petrow's, an Omaha tradition since 1957, proudly serves fabulously fresh, loose hand-pattied Nebraska Angus beef in each of their famous hamburgers. They take care not to over-pack or smash their juicy 7-ounce hamburgers, which are seasoned with signature spices to enhance the Angus beef. Their burgers are cooked on a custom char broiler, flipped only once, and cooked to the temperature of your choice. The burger is paired with the freshest grilled Rotella's hamburger buns - delivered daily - along with crisp lettuce, dill pickle, tomato and your choice of fresh sliced or grilled onions. You can top your burger with American, Swiss, cheddar, jack, feta or bleu cheese. Variations on their classic burger are the black and bleu burger with blackening seasoning and bleu cheese, the Nebraska classic with bacon and cheese, or the patty melt, a local favorite, served on marbled rye bread with grilled onions and Swiss cheese. All burgers are served with French fries and two hand-battered signature onion rings. Extra patties are only \$1 on Wednesdays. A malt made with their homemade ice cream seals the deal.

Railcar - 1814 North 144th Street, Omaha



The signature burger at Railcar Modern American Kitchen is their all-natural, certified Angus cheddar burger. They start with local beef on a Le Quartier Brioche bun, then spread a thick layer of Merkt's all-natural cheddar on top. No Railcar burger is complete without their house-made pickles, red onion, homemade tomato jam and a tangy burger sauce that pulls all the flavors together.

9 Salt 88 - 3623 N 129th St, Omaha

Classics...preparing and executing them is important at Salt. It goes to what they do at Salt, the basics, properly made, every day. They offer two different burgers at Salt, the first is their half-pound Angus burger. They start with certified Angus beef, seasoned, basted and cooked over an open grill. Melted nutty and creamy fontina cheese, lettuce, roma tomato and red onion are sandwiched between a one of a kind seeded salt and pepper bun. The light and tasty bun is made from wheat and malted barley flour and is coated with



sesame seeds, poppy seeds, cracked black pepper and sea salt to give the bun a one of a kind taste. The Angus burger will have you wondering why other restaurants don't make them like they do. If you're joining Salt for happy hour, they have a burger treat for you. Salt offers a smaller certified Angus patty, seasoned and basted just as we do our regular burger. For the bun, a toasted pretzel bun and add an optional over-easy fried egg to the burger and you are on the right path for a great happy hour experience. The quality of beef they use and the care in the preparation is obvious at Salt.

#### 10 Stella's - 106 Galvin Road South, Bellevue



Stella's has been serving their famous hamburgers since 1936. Their 6 1/2 ounce, hand-pressed, fresh (never frozen) ground beef patties are served on a Rotella's hamburger bun (delivered fresh every morning) with lettuce, tomato, pickles, onions and real mayo. They are proudly presented on Stella's traditional napkin, just the way Stella liked it, but they do have baskets available if you prefer. Just ask!

Creative, unique burgers are a cornerstone of the restaurant business. Each and every one of these local,

Midwest-proud restaurants and pubs are happy to offer you a tasty, succulent burger experience you won't soon forget. Make sure to take a trip with Food & Spirits' burger map and get a taste of what each of these great places has to offer!



## **SUNRISE**STARTERS

A closer look at local menus reveals that breakfast isn't just a one course meal anymore.

by Kent Cisar



You just walked into one of your favorite restaurants with family and friends. You're hungry and a tad indecisive as the menu has so many good choices. You decide to buy some time to peruse, but also satisfy your demanding appetite and select an appetizer. It's a perfectly normal thing to do at a restaurant, except this time it's 10 a.m. and it's breakfast. Yes appetizers can be ordered for breakfast. My friends and I regularly go out to breakfast all over the **Omaha Metro**. We often find our eyes too big for our appetites, or we just can't quite make up our mind on our breakfast choices. By ordering an appetizer for breakfast, we get to sample and share one of the restaurant's specialties, share the cost of it, and buy ourselves a little more time to make the perfect choice for our main course. While there are few true breakfast appetizers on menus today, a search of several eateries in the area gives diners a multitude of ways to enjoy them. This article will show you how to do just that.

"By ordering an appetizer for breakfast, we get to sample and share one of the restaurant's specialties, share the cost of it, and buy ourselves a little more time to make the perfect choice for our main course"

Railcar Modern American Kitchen on 144<sup>th</sup> and Blondo is where our breakfast appetizer was born. Most of us had been there before, but not for brunch. Their ample menu with creative combinations made decision making difficult. We were intrigued by their chiliquiles. It's the equivalent of a breakfast nacho plate and it was terrific. A mix of pork, chicken, homemade salsa, avocado, eggs and more create an enjoyable dish to pass around the table both before and during breakfast.

If you'd like to explore another tasty Mexican breakfast item to start your meal, then head across town to one of Omaha's classic breakfast stops, the **11-Worth Café** at  $24^{th}$  and Leavenworth. Their menu is loaded with comfort food classics, but they also offer a breakfast quesadilla. These tortillas are grilled to perfection and filled with eggs, cheese, onions, tomato and your choice of meats: steak, sausage, ham, bacon or chicken.

The Farmhouse Café is on 84th Street between Center Street and Interstate 80. They are not shy on their serving sizes. "Our portions are more than shareable for two, and if you add a couple of our cinnamon rolls you can feed four pretty happily" says Matthew Brewer, quality control and social media manager at the Farmhouse. Brewer is right. It's hard to pass up their cinnamon, pecan or caramel rolls. Their muffins are both big on size and flavor, and are an excellent starter to a breakfast. Brewer encourages guests to check out their specials. Past specials include breakfast burritos and nachos, pancakes/French toast smothered in various fruit glazes, plus stratas and quiches whose ingredients vary daily. Their German potato pancakes are a fine choice to introduce yourself or your company to old style, German pancakes. They serve it with bacon and applesauce. It's warm, tasty, and comforting. Take your time upon entering the Farmhouse, as your best breakfast appetizer may be looking at you as you walk through the door. One glance at the Farmhouse pie counter and I think your table could easily justify a slice of pie for breakfast,

**Harold's Koffee House** on 8327 N. 30<sup>th</sup> Street has been serving **Florence** and everyone who comes their way since 1958. Harold's has a couple delicious options for those interested in breakfast appetizers. The baked goods route is one avenue. "I would suggest one of our cinnamon rolls or pecan rolls, topped with our whipped bacon butter, or our homemade cake donuts made in house every

day" says Matt Bohenkamp, general manager of Harold's. "The whipped bacon butter is good on pancakes, waffles, or our French toast too" Bohenkamp added. If a shared plate is your table's choice, Bohenkamp would recommend a couple unique Koffee House creations: the 2onTop or the chorizo hash. The 2onTop is a bed of hash browns piled high and mixed with sausage, their own cream gravy and two eggs served any way you like, on top. The chorizo hash is their own chorizo mixed with the hash browns, cream gravy and eggs, but they'll add your choice of toast, pancake or biscuit as well. Guests looking for a lighter choice to share can split their Veggie Scramble. It's a fresh mix of zucchini, green pepper, and tomato sautéed with two eggs. It comes with a choice of biscuit, toast or a pancake.

Duggar's Cafe at 4950 Dodge Street is a busy, happy eatery every time I visit. Duggar's offers a few perfect choices for breakfast appetizers. "People could start with our homemade donut holes with berry compote" says Rhonda Dugge, co-owner of Duggar's. These donut holes are terrific, and the berry compote is exquisite. I strongly encourage one order for a small table, and if you have four or more people, two orders is probably best. "If people would like to split something more like a main item I'd recommend our banana bread French toast with homemade maple syrup, our lemon pancakes with homemade raspberry syrup, and don't forget to ask about our seasonal pancake choices "added Dugge. Guests should heed Dugge's advice and always ask the name of the seasonal pancake. I've had the pumpkin and gingerbread seasonal cakes and they were wonderful. Capturing seasonal flavors at breakfast can be challenging, but the Duggar's delivers with this gem. Their homemade sauces, glazes, and syrups add a flavorful, comforting element to an already top notch breakfast. The February pancake was red velvet, and I saw several coming out of the kitchen on my last stop.

"a gathering of friends and family at a local eatery's breakfast table should be cause for celebration and the sharing of good food"

Full disclosure, the only thing I've ever ordered at **Amato's Cafe** at 6405 Center St. in my trips there are the ricotta pancakes. People may be a bit hesitant to try ricotta cheese in a pancake so a breakfast appetizer would be a fine way to introduce them to it. Order the pancake triple berry style with their homemade sausage, and don't be shy with the maple syrup. The syrup fills the small craters where the ricotta resides. I like the chances that your guest's first ricotta pancake won't be their last.

Whether you live in Downtown Omaha, Bennington, or Gretna, **Dixie Quicks** on 157 West Broadway in Council Bluffs is always worth the drive. Their menu is vibrant, fresh, and filling. My favorite is a plate or two of their French toast to be passed around the table. I prefer the toast straight up, but you can't go wrong with the sexual chocolate rendition that includes bananas, walnuts, chocolate and whipped cream. If fruit fits your fancy, you can also have a mixed berry plate with whipped cream.

If you and your crew enjoy all foods that originate from a pig, then **Bailey's** Porkasaurus is the perfect way to start your day. Bailey's is at 1259 S. 120<sup>th</sup> St. It's a heaping smorgasbord of ham, bacon (both Canadian and regular), three types of sausage, link, patty, and Andouille, served on top of red potatoes, jack and cheddar cheese. They throw in three eggs, a buttered biscuit and toast to help you strategize your consumption of this magnificent breakfast monster.

Biscuit and gravy enthusiasts in Omaha should venture to **Leo's Diner** in Benson at 6055 Maple Street. Be ready to explore a next level rendition and order their fantasy island. Their biscuits and



gravy is served on top of hash browns and this impressive mountain of toppings: two eggs cooked to order, bacon, sausage, ham, green pepper, onion, and tomato. I'm not sure how they keep it all on one plate, but keep your napkins handy for this breakfast heavyweight.

If you've grown up on potato casserole, have never tried it, or would like to introduce friends to it, then head to **Petrow's** on 60<sup>th</sup> and Center. Their bed of potatoes is a canvas for three meats, three vegetables, two cheeses and two eggs. Pass it around the table and it's easy to understand why it's an Omaha favorite.

Walk into any **Wheatfields'** location and their menu takes time to absorb the vast amount of choices. Buy yourself some time and appease your taste buds by ordering an assortment of cinnamon rolls (small or large work), you can order the traditional, pecan, orange, or gluten free choices as well.

If you can't make up your mind between having a cinnamon roll or French toast, then collaborate with your guests at **Vidlak's Brookside Café** on 156<sup>th</sup> and Center to order up their cinnamon roll French toast. Our server said it's like having dessert for breakfast, which is true, but we ordered it to start our meal. Cinnamon roll French toast as an appetizer is a perfect answer for the savory breakfast eaters that also enjoy sweets for breakfast.

Another dish that could be dessert but more than qualifies as a breakfast appetizer is at **Mantra** at 6913 Maple Street. Mantra's vibe matches its menu. It's a fun, flavorful place to be. Their pistachio French toast served with ice cream is that sweet treat that also hits a savory note. If you're breakfast company has pistachio lovers in their midst like me, there won't be anything left on the plate when your main courses arrive.

Breakfast is hailed as the most important meal of the day. Whether you're coming from a race, church service, an early morning fishing trip, or just trying to rustle the kids out of bed; a gathering of friends and family at a local eatery's breakfast table should be cause for celebration and the sharing of good food. Appetizers are often reserved for dinner but appetites can be just as demanding at breakfast. The menus at these places make our choices quite difficult. Appease both the appetite and the decision maker by choosing one or two breakfast appetizers. You may try something new, something good, and you're sharing it with family and friends. It's hard to imagine a better way to start your day.



Spring rolls are a classic Vietnamese appetizer that I discovered in the late 80's/early 90's at the long closed midtown Saigon restaurant location. Back then food on TV was virtually nonexistent except for PBS and it was incomprehensible that we would eventually have the myriad of forms that we can now access instantly in any and in every cultural and gastronomic variation that we can imagine. Furthermore, all of this is now instantly available with a virtual push of a button or is at our verbal beck and call via our own computerized personality.

Yes, it was much more of a hit and miss arduous task to find new and exotically delicious cuisines, especially landlocked as we are here in the middle of the country, but I must confess that as much as I love a great culinary seek and find adventure, that I am absolutely enamored with the incredibly diverse and abundant availability of every cuisine imaginable that we now enjoy right here in Omaha.

Nowadays, of course, we have a plethora of wonderful Vietnamese restaurants to choose from, but why not make your own at home? Spring rolls, or as they are sometimes called summer rolls, are for me a bite of fresh springtime flavors encapsulated in a rice paper wrap. Rather than being deep and crispy fried as is their close cousin the egg roll, the spring roll is enrobed with soft, pliable and seductively see-through rice paper. There is something wonderfully enticing about the X-ray like ability of a spring roll to show off its succulent pink shrimp and the verdant green of the fresh herbs peeking through and calling out to that lucky diner. I've always said taking that first bite of a spring roll is like taking a fresh and heavenly bite of spring itself.

The nice al dente texture and toothsome chew of both the wrapper and the rice vermicelli noodles encased within are juxtaposed with the sweet shrimp and accentuated with the lively punch of fresh mint, cilantro and basil and the crisp crunchiness of lettuce, carrots and cucumbers. The flavors on their own are incredible, but to fully activate the potential of the aforementioned roll, grasp it firmly in hand and dip it in the addictively sweet and spicy peanut sauce and the flavor game hits at a level that will have your friends and family pleading for more.

While I always enjoy eating spring rolls when dining out, I've added a few of my own tweaks for an optimized eating experience. Through the years I've discovered that adding flavor and seasoning to all the components of a dish greatly enhances the overall tastes. Case in point, while the rice noodles are great on their own, adding a little salt and a splash of rice vinegar, a tiny hit of sesame oil and black and white sesame seeds ups the flavor profile immensely. Many of the spring rolls I've eaten over the years have either no fresh herbs at all or just a few leaves of either cilantro or mint.

My version has a much heftier amount of each of three fresh herbs including mint, basil and cilantro, giving a great pop of fresh herbiness in each and every bite. Be sure to get some high quality shrimp for your rolls. For the last fifteen plus years anytime time I need fresh seafood I always head to **Absolutely Fresh Seafood**, they supplied us with the sweet and succulent wild caught shrimp we used for this recipe. Cooking the shrimp in the shell will help protect the delicate shrimp and impart a little extra flavor to the finished product.

Although the assembly instructions may look a little daunting, if you've ever rolled a burrito it's virtually the same process, eat a few of the practice rolls and soon you'll be rolling like a pro in no time!

#### Spring Rolls - makes 8 rolls

#### **Ingredients**

12 medium size shrimp cooked, shelled and cut in half lengthwise

1 package 8 inch round rice paper wrappers

2 cups Boston lettuce, rough chopped

1 small peeled carrots, cut into matchsticks

1/2 small English cucumber unpeeled, sliced into thin rounds and cut in half

2 green onions sliced into thin rounds, green tops only

1 bunch fresh basil, de-stemmed (Thai basil if available)

1 bunch fresh mint, de-stemmed

1 bunch fresh cilantro, tougher bottom stems cut off

#### Rice Noodles

2 cups rice vermicelli noodles, cooked per package directions then mix the cooled noodles with:

2 Tbsp. rice wine vinegar

1/4 tsp. sesame oil

1/2 tsp. white sesame seeds

1/2 tsp. black sesame seeds

Salt to taste

#### **DIRECTIONS**

Do all your prep work and have all your ingredients in your work area in bowls ready to go. Half fill a 12 inch skillet with very warm water. Take one of the rice wrappers and submerge it into the water for 15 - 30 seconds till softened. Place the wrapper on a cutting board and lightly blot excess water off the top with a paper towel.

- 1. Place 1/4 cup of the chopped lettuce in a roughly rectangular shape about an inch from the bottom and an inch from each side of the wrapper, top with 5-6 carrot sticks, space out three of the cucumber slices across the top, sprinkle with a teaspoon of the green onions and top with several mint leaves, several basil leaves and a generous sprig of cilantro all evenly spaced across the top of the rectangle of ingredients, finally top with a 1/4 cup of the rice noodle mixture.
- 2. Slightly wet your hands with a little water then carefully pull up and roll up the bottom of the wrapper across the top of the ingredients compressing it into a fat, even cigar shape and roll until its gone just slightly past one revolution and the edges seal.
- 3. Now lay three of the halved shrimps in an even row one inch from the top and one inch from each of the sides at the top end of the wrapper. Finally fold the two sides of the wrapper up and across the center (just like rolling a burrito) and then grasp in the center and finish rolling the wrapper up, the sticky rice paper will seal itself.
- 4. Place the finished roll on a serving platter and repeat making sure the rolls don't touch each other. Serve immediately with the dipping sauce or cover the rolls with a lightly moistened paper towel or clean dish towel and refrigerate for up to two or three hours till serving.

#### Peanut Dipping Sauce

#### **Ingredients**

1/2 cup chunky natural peanut butter (salted, but no sugar added)

1/2 cup Mae Ploy Sweet Chili sauce (this is my favorite brand, use it if at all possible)

2 tsp. fish sauce

1/4 tsp. sesame oil

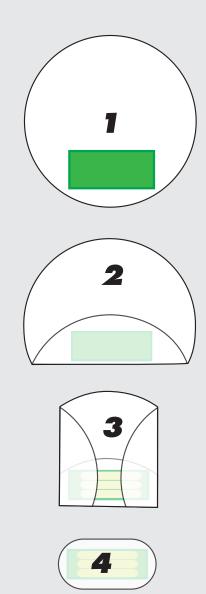
2 Tbsp. fresh squeezed lime juice

1/2 tsp. grated lime zest

1 clove fresh garlic clove finely minced

#### **DIRECTIONS**

Mix all ingredients together until fully incorporated and then thin out slightly with a tablespoon or two of water to desired consistency.





## YOU CANNOLI LIVE ONCE



So why dredge it out? In light of recent political chaos, the fact that we've been wearing shorts in February, and the all-together dissolving of organized society, this writer thought it would be best to focus on a story of the sweeter things.

Namely, cannoli, little ricotta filled tubes o'love.

The cannoli originated in Sicily, a sweet member of a pastry family believed to have been a part of the festivities of annual Christian rites. The cannoli itself has a background similar to the one your cousin Carl has who ran off to Brazil to "find himself" for a while. These lucky pastries are associated with 15th century Carnevale, a vibrant festival where attendees are draped in bright

"The cannoli itself has a background similar to the one your cousin Carl has who ran off to Brazil to "find himself" for a while. "

colors, beads and masks for a little party before Lent.

Some historians say the cannoli may have originated earlier than the 15th century, since it was made with ingredients like cane reed, brought to Italy by the Saracens from Turkey. Hard to argue when the word "cannoli" itself is derived from "canna," the word for cane reed, which was also used to create the cylindrical shell.

The shape of the cannoli (and its creamy filling) is interesting when thinking of the modern sexual innuendos and "debauchery" associated with the Carnevale festival even today, which makes you wonder where these people's heads were at so long ago. Even

the Saracens are theorized to have used these sweets in fertility festivals. Nonetheless, this little pastry has been captivating hearts, taste buds and dirty humor enthusiasts for centuries.

Omaha is fortunate to have easy access to fantastic Italian restaurants. Hell, we even have an entire neighborhood dedicated to the delicious genius of the Italian population. But great Italian food isn't just found in Little Italy. Throughout the metro, there are a number of fantastic restaurants, bakeries and little out of the way places, with some of the best cannoli you've had, this side of a fertility festival. Each spot has its own version of a traditional cannoli; some with pudding, some with cream cheese, some with triple sec. The only thing to do is try them all. After all, you cannoli live once.

With its bright logo and cheerful marquee, it's hard to miss **Petrow's** on Center St. A local favorite for over 50 years, this spot serves everything from eggs benedict to pork tenderloin. And their dessert display is enough to distract from dinner all together. As I devoured a silky cannoli with chocolate chips the way a lioness would a gazelle, owner and operator, **Nick Petrow**, proudly pointed towards the display case, saying, "Everything that's got piping, we make here. We also make the cinnamon rolls, muffins, and brownies."

But there is a magnificent partnership in this dessert case that started years ago.

"Nick's dad used to buy products from my dad, and Nick and I went to high school together," said **Mark Petti**, co-owner of Pettit's Pastry. "I went into Petrow's after they remodeled last year, and I asked if I could bring in some dessert samples to help both of us with our business. After trying a few items, he said go for it!"



Today Pettit's supplies the cannoli at Petrow's, along with hazelnut ganache, red velvet cakes, mini cheesecakes, and more.

Pettit's Pastry has been servicing Omaha's sweet tooth since 1954. Made from scratch favorites include donuts, cinnamon rolls, and the infamous cannoli, which have made a career out of being bought out of the Petrow's display case quicker than they can be made. If you are having a bad day (or a good one), these cannoli will make you feel like a million bucks.

"great Italian food isn't just found in Little Italy. Throughout the metro, there are a number of fantastic restaurants, bakeries and little out of the way places, with some of the best cannoli you've had, this side of a fertility festival"

The secret is in the filling, literally.

"It's a family recipe that I created after requests for cannoli that were a bit more shelf stable," said Mark. "It's sweeter than a traditional cannoli."

Thick, rich and velvety, these cannoli are truly unique. A blend of cream cheese icing, triple sec and chocolate chips are blended together in what must be the most luxurious and delicious mixing bowl concoction on earth, one that celebrities would pay big bucks to pose in and post on Instagram. The filling is then piped into a crispy shell, a perfect blend of sweet and crunchy.

As sad as I was to leave Petrow's, I was also excited to stop into **Orsi's Italian Bakery and Pizzeria**, an Italian joint tucked in the heart of Little Italy. Famous for their pizza and, honestly, pretty much everything else, this staple has been serving fresh made items since 1919. Owner **Jim Hall** has seen his share of food trends over the last few years at Orsi's. 50 years to be exact.

"We make our ricotta in house every day," said Hall, prepping a few pizzas for carry out. "Then we realized there was a need for cannoli for people who can't have dairy. Ricotta is too expensive not to use. So that's why we started making pudding-filled cannoli."

If you think you cannot possibly have a cannoli without the ricotta, then you haven't tried Orsi's. Offering both chocolate and vanilla, the pudding is a lovely, quicker way to get through the filling and into that satisfying, crispy shell crunch.

"A lot of people buy the shells from us, and make their own ricotta to fill them with," said Hall.

Due to the increasing line behind me, I took my cannoli home to try. The lack of cheese, dairy or cream, actually makes the cannoli lighter, making it (dangerously) easy to eat both of them and not feel too full. The pudding is also sturdier than you might think, giving a sweet resistance between filling and the pastry shell.





*But what about the ricotta*, you may be wondering, clutching your favorite framed picture of cannoli the way a tween would a poster of One Direction.

For the traditionalist, **Mangia Italiana** has what you are looking for. This Sicilian eatery boasts a reputation for authentic, delicious Italian food, and the cannoli are no exception. "The recipe itself is based on the standard cannoli recipe, but it's zipped up quite a bit," said owner **Tony Constantino**. "My dad has been making the cannoli here for 10 years."

And because of this, Dad has job security for life.

"I don't even know exactly how he makes the filling," he said. "He keeps it a secret!"



There are three types of cannoli handmade and mixed at Mangia: lemon, vanilla with chocolate chips and chocolate. All three are accented with chopped nuts and pistachios, giving a gorgeous, subtle savory foundation to the richness of the ricotta. For a moment I considered running off with the chocolate cannoli to live happily ever after. "The chocolate is fantastic, but I would say the customer favorite is actually vanilla," said Constantino. "Every so often Dad will make something a little crazy, with Reese's or Oreos, and we'll have the staff try them out. If they like it, we will run them as a special."

You need to remember to call in your order prior to making the trip to Mangia's. "The cannoli are all made to order," said Constantino. "We also make them for celebrations and events. We made 375 for a wedding not too long ago."

What really makes the cannoli at Mangia stand out is the adherence to tradition. "We really focus on making sure everything is authentic. That's what makes our products stand out," he said. "We started making them because we wanted to offer our customers cannoli done the right way."

For God's sake, order these cannoli. Get all three, but snuggle in with the chocolate. It's rich, but not too rich; sweet, but not too sweet. Much like the type of person you hope cousin Carl ends up with someday.

From the Saracens to Omahans, everyone can agree the cannoli is delicious. Though the traditional cannoli is something special, there is something wonderful about the innovative ways restaurants in Omaha have made the cannoli their own. The next time you wear both a snowsuit and shorts in the same week, or the next time your Facebook feed is nothing but negative drivel, remember the cannoli. Life is short anyway, so order dessert first, and remember; it cannoli go up from here.

#### Petrow's

5914 Center St, Omaha, NE 68106 (402) 551-0552 http://www.petrows.com/

#### PETTIT'S PASTRY

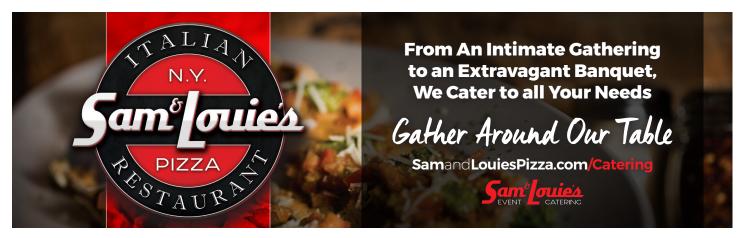
502 N 16th St. (Cannoli's at the downtown location) 402-345-1111 https://pettitpastry.com/

#### Orsi's Italian Bakery and Pizzeria

621 Pacific St, Omaha, NE 68108 (402) 345-3438 http://orsibakery.com/

#### Mangia's

6516 Irvington Rd, Omaha, NE 68122 (402) 614-0600 http://www.mangiaitaliana.com/indexs.php



## A COMMONER'S LATENT LOVE OF CHESECAKE

by Ross Negrete

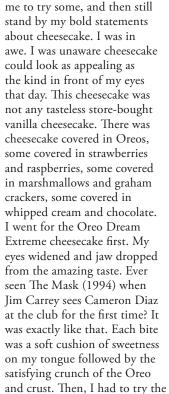
Cheesecake is a dessert I assumed most people hated. The name alone is off-putting, CHEESEcake. I did not want any cheese in or around my cake. I remember as a small child

trying a bit of cheesecake and becoming terribly disappointed in the wet cardboard taste, but that was the old me. I have changed. I have grown up. I have become enlightened. I have found love and understanding in the world of cheesecake.

My discovery of cheesecake was pushed upon me by my good friend, fearless leader, and Meat Wizard, Eddie Morin, of B & G Tasty Foods. I have worked for Eddie for the better part of six years and known him for much longer. When opening up the restaurant at B & G in the mornings, conversations emerge between Eddie and I. While most of the time the conversation consists of how great the movie

John Wick is (it is that great), or how the Nintendo Switch is going to change the world of at-home and portable gaming as we know it (it will change gaming forever), one special morning he mentioned his love of cheesecake. I snapped into a fit of disgust. I could not believe the man I worked with everyday had the dark secret of loving such a vile dessert, such a bland tasting dessert. Cheesecake was garbage as far as I was concerned. Eddie did not take my dislike for cheesecake seriously in the slightest. He simply whispered, "I bet you have never had good cheesecake before". I laughed at his poise and the idea of good cheesecake existing. He did not laugh however. He knew something I did not. He told me he was going to run a little errand and be right back. I knew he had something up his sleeve.

Eddie came back no more than twenty minutes later with two large plastic bags labeled **The Cheesecake Factory** on both sides. He unveiled a smorgasbord of cheesecakes upon me and told



Toasted Marshmallow S'mores cheesecake. That one tasted as if the cheesecake was roasted over a freshly lit bonfire. I had to bow my head in defeat. I had been living a lie for so long. The cheesecake was beyond delicious, even the original cheesecake was great without any extravagant toppings. The graham cracker crust mixed with the creaminess of the cheesecake was just too good. I owed Eddie an apology and owed the Cheesecake Factory a little visit.

Upon entering the restaurant, rows and rows of cheesecake are right by the host stand, just taunting you to skip dinner and go straight for dessert. I pressed my face against the glass barrier that guarded all the cheesecake as if they were the Hope Diamond in the Smithsonian. I was going to get to that cheesecake, but first I had to eat. The menu at The Cheesecake Factory is reminiscent





of a small novel. The menu is slightly overwhelming, but allows people to get what they are craving. The best part is one can order cheesecake at the end of any meal (or before any meal if you get down like that).

The menu has every item one could dream up. So, you want Italian? Then, have the chicken Parmesan sandwich with roasted peppers, tomato sauce and melted cheese on a freshly grilled French roll or your own personal pizza...then some cheesecake.

Oh, but you want seafood? Then, have the shrimp and chicken gumbo with andouille sausage, tomatoes, peppers, onions and garlic in a spicy Cajun style broth with cream...then some cheesecake.

Oh, but no, you really want a steak? Right? Then, have the filet mignon with mashed potatoes and vegetables...then some



cheesecake. But really? For real? You want some Mexican? Then, have the factory burrito grande with chicken, cheese, cilantro rice, onions, peppers, guacamole, sour cream, salsa and black beans... then some cheesecake.

". . . do not come to the Cheesecake Factory and cheat yourself and not get the cheesecake. I have been cheating myself for over twenty years"

You get the point. You're coming for the cheesecake. It's in the

name of the restaurant. You're not going to a baseball game for the game, you're going for the hot dogs and nachos. Right? Or is that just me? Regardless, do not come to the Cheesecake Factory and cheat yourself and not get the cheesecake. I have been cheating myself for over twenty years and I am still searching for the day I will forgive myself for the time I wasted with my vendetta towards cheesecake. I was young, naïve and a punk. Never again will I judge something so carelessly. In the kitchen of B & G I found a new love, appreciation and understanding for cheesecake, thanks to Eddie and the wonderful folks at the Cheesecake Factory. Also, Thanks to Eddie I found a love for pears, the McRib, Mediterranean food, and bananas and peanut butter, but those are a whole different story...



The Second Annual Omaha Doughnut Shootout was held February 12th at The Waiting Room Lounge, Krug Park and Reverb Lounge. A sold out crowd of nearly 400 attendees tasted samples from a total of nearly 2000 doughnuts from Hello Sugar, Aroma's Bliss, Culprit Café and Bakery, Harold's Koffee House, Pettit's Pastry, Sunrize Donuts (Omaha), LaMar's Donuts, Krispy Kreme, Donut Professor, Dunkin' Donuts and Winchell Donuts. Krug Park, Reverb Lounge and The Waiting Room also whipped up some specialty drinks to go with the doughnuts.

Those that attended voted for the favorites and at least one doughnut from every bakery received a first place vote. Here are the results:

#### **BEST CAKE DOUGHNUT**

Aroma's Bliss Sunrize Culprit Pettit's

Hello Sugar

#### **BEST GLAZED DOUGHNUT**

Pettit's LaMar's Hello Sugar Krispy Kreme Culprit

#### **BEST SPECIALTY DOUGHNUT**

Culprit Sunrize Hello Sugar Pettit's Aroma's Bliss

#### **OVERALL FAVORITE DOUGHNUT**

Hello Sugar Pettit's Culprit Aroma's Bliss LaMar's



#### JUDGE'S PICK

Sunrize

#### **PUBLISHER'S PICK**

Harold's Koffee

Along with those votes, some attendees also wrote in their favorite doughnuts. Those mentioned were;

HELLO SUGAR - Cheddar, bacon, chive

PETTIT'S - Wedding cake

PETTIT'S & HELLO SUGAR - Peanut

butter chocolate

CULPRIT - Crème brule

HAROLD'S - Maple bacon

AROMA'S BLISS - Chai

PETTIT'S - Strawberry cheesecake

LA MAR'S - Red velvet doughnut

SUNRIZE OMAHA - Apple Fritter

# Bobby Flay raises the roof ...or does he? by Eddie Morin

I don't remember much from when I was in high school, but one thing does stand out. The Iron Chef New York Special in 2000 is that thing. You see, the popularity of Food Network's Iron Chef was sweeping the nation. Hardly a day went by that someone didn't mention the program at school. Humans (especially high school boys) couldn't get enough of it. So to celebrate its success, the powers that be decided to pit Japan (the originators of Iron Chef) against America (not real Iron Chefs). They aired this special on March 28, 2000. Kings were made and lives were destroyed. Let's get to it.

The challenger chosen to be the face of the American Iron Chefs was Bobby Flay. He had clawed his way to the upper echelon of the food industry by what I can only assume were nefarious deeds. Bribing critics, back alley deals, and stepping on anyone to get to the top. At the time, he was owner and chef of Mesa Grill in New York. What a dumb name. Oh, well. He specialized in Neo-American cuisine which is a clever way to say fusion for fatties. Sure, Flay can cook, but he is also a turd. Kind of like when people say stuff like, "Did you know that Hitler was actually a pretty good painter?" Oh yeah? You can shut it.

"men stand proud and dignified as the challenger Bobby Flay is announced. Flay then enters kitchen stadium screaming, mouth agape and pumping his arms in the air in the "raise the roof" gesture"

Gordon Elliot announces the start of the competition by first making fun of Japanese culture, and then by botching the pronunciation of Chairman Kaga's name. We're off to a great start. Kaga enters Kitchen Stadium like a God among men, while his worshippers toss yellow bell peppers to the audience. It's quite regal. Damn, I love Takashi Kaga. The Iron Chefs are then summoned: Rokusaburo Michiba (Honorary Iron Chef Japanese), Masahiko Kobe (Iron Chef Italian), Hiroyuki Sakai (Iron Chef French) and Masaharu

Morimoto (Iron Chef Japanese). These men stand proud and dignified as the challenger Bobby Flay is announced. Flay then enters kitchen stadium screaming, mouth agape and pumping his arms in the air in the "raise the roof" gesture. More on that later. It has already been decided that Flay will challenge Iron Chef Morimoto.

The theme ingredient is lowered down in a mirrored ball... it's ROCK CRAB! Chairman Kaga signals to begin, the gong is struck,

"At the final second, Bobby Flay jumps up on the countertop, stepping directly on the cutting board, and once again, "raises the roof." In fact, he literally says, "Raise the roof, yo!"

and the competitors scramble to collect their rock crab. Right into the boiling pots with them. From here on out, things move quickly. The crowd begins chanting Iron Chef Morimoto's name. He is grinding away at crab meat, while Bobby has a couple of blenders going with sauces being prepared. This is too hard to narrate what is going on. Just watch the episode, it's free on Food Network's site (episode 802). The purpose of this article isn't to give a play by play of the cooking. The focus of this article is to besmirch Bobby Flay's name. At one point, the television staff puts the microphone in front of Bobby Flay's mom. She is super bad on camera and has nothing interesting to say. Next, they show Bobby's girlfriend who must be a disgusting person to date, such an arrogant bozo. She doesn't have much to say either. No surprise from a morally-devoid Satanist, I suppose. Then the microphone moves to Mr. Michiba who says Flay is making a tomato and bell pepper sauce, which he is good at, while Morimoto is making intricate, impressive, Japanese dishes.

At this point, the commentators mention that Bobby Flay welcomed the Japanese quests by saying, "Welcome to New York. You will take back many memories of my victory in this battle." They then

comment on how cocky Flay is. Right after that, Flay touches a heater and claims to have been electrically shocked. Even if it did happen (I have my doubts), he plays it up like an injured soccer player. All this time, Morimoto is doing just fine. No theatrics from his side.

The cooking continues, as the chefs' finish up their dishes. The final touches are applied and the commentators begin to identify what the judges will actually be eating. The crowd rises to their feet for the last few minutes and the time is called! What I'm about to report on next is shocking and extremely disrespectful. Steel yourself, and hug your loved ones. At the final second, Bobby Flay jumps up on the countertop, stepping directly on the cutting board, and once again, "raises the roof." In fact, he literally says, "Raise the roof, yo!" Excuse me, while I pick my jaw up off the floor. Dirty shoes on the cook surface? Outdated, even for the time, gestures? He then complains to the interviewer that he cut himself and was getting electrocuted every three minutes, but was still able to "rock the house." What a disgrace. In fact, Iron Chef immediately dismisses Flay as a chef for his actions. He was appalled at Flay's standing on the cutting board. Cutting boards and knives are sacred to a chef, and for Flay to defile one of them means he is no longer a chef in the eyes of Morimoto. This takes us to the judging.

"Bobby Flay feels like he was treated unfairly and whines and whines until Chairman Kaga agrees to a rematch. Noooooo! Bobby lost fair and square,"

Iron Chef Morimoto's dishes are crab brain dip, crab rice in sour soup, crab hour d'oeuvres (two flavors), rock crabs grilled in seaweed, and Japanese crab salad. Bobby Flay's dishes are crab and scallops in coriander sauce, rock crab salad, ethnic crab cake, and spicy saffron soup. The judging begins and they immediately love Morimoto's first dish. They all continue to enjoy his dishes as they progress. Really, nothing negative at all is mentioned about Morimoto's food. The judges then move on to Flay's dishes. They don't say anything negative about Bobby's food either. What kind of judges are these?!?

So who's cuisine reigns supreme? Iron Chef Morimoto! Thank goodness. The final score is 76 to 68. Morimoto announces that he tried his best, and that he got lucky. Even in victory, he remains humble.

Well that's it then, right? Morimoto becomes a hero with his face on Japanese currency? Bobby Flay is shamed by his behavior and quits cooking altogether? He dies a penniless failure? Think again, mothertrucker. Bobby Flay feels like he was treated unfairly and whines and whines until Chairman Kaga agrees to a rematch. Noooooo! Bobby lost fair and square, I say. And his deplorable behavior hardly merits a rematch. But there is a rematch anyway. This time it takes place in Japan on January 2, 2001.

This time around, the battle takes place in Japan. If Bobby Flay wants a rematch, he better drag his ass halfway around the world. The competition is once again aired as a special, rather than placing it among the more standard episodes. Chairman Kaga calls it the 21st Century Battle, and they really play up the fact that it is now the year 2001. I think they should have called it, "Bobby Flay Demanded a Rematch and Won't Shut Up About Being Electrocuted, so Here We Are Battle," but nobody asked me.

The battle begins by showing Bobby's horrific entrance from the first match. Yeah, the one where he screams and raises the roof. Super embarrassing. His defiling of the cutting board is also touched upon. So far, Flay is already looking like a real ass. To top it off,

Chairman Kaga addresses the fact that Bobby has gone to multiple media sources to complain about his treatment in the first match and the fact the he got shocked. Will this guy ever stop complaining?

Bobby Flay is brought out, of course, raising the roof once again. He talks to Kaga, then Iron Chef Morimoto is introduced. He looks determined and serious. Kaga now reveals the theme ingredient of the battle... \$10,000 worth of JAPANESE LOBSTER! Both chefs don't seem fazed by this. The crowd goes crazy as Morimoto and Flay gather up lobsters. As they cook, the commentators mention that while Morimoto has taken the high road, and wished Flay a good, fun match, Bobby is still bitter and angry and is still saying he was treated unfairly a year ago.

Well, as before, I'm not going to give a step by step recount of the match. I'll highlight a few cool parts though. Morimoto dunks a few live lobsters in a big barrel of sake. There is a huge sumo wrestler as one of the judges. Bobby is using corn again, no surprise there. Morimoto has decided to challenge himself by not using a single drop of soy sauce. Flay has one of his assistants prepare a pomegranate. Bobby's girlfriend is present again. The flame goes out on Bobby Flay's grill and he says "You're doing this to me again!" The commentators notice that he is getting more and more irritable as time goes on. Morimoto makes sushi.

As the timer counts down to zero, Bobby Flay does the unthinkable. He picks up the cutting board, and throws it on the floor! He then climbs onto the work surface with his hands in the air again. What a disrespectful dude! And we wonder why other cultures hate Americans. Morimoto shakes his head in disgust.

Up first for judging is Flay who has prepared five dishes. These are spicy marinated lobster, lobster and fruit salad, boiled lobster tamale, butterflied lobster, and surf & turf (lobster and Kobe beef). Everything is well received except for the boiled lobster tamale. The more traditional of the judges thinks it is too floury. For some reason, the program completely skips over presenting the lobster and fruit salad. I can only assume that it was too horrible to even present. A judge probably puked.

"As the timer counts down to zero, Bobby Flay does the unthinkable. He picks up the cutting board, and throws it on the floor! He then climbs onto the work surface with his hands in the air again. What a disrespectful dude!"

Morimoto's four dishes are presented next to the judges. He has offered grilled drunken lobster, New Year's appetizer (caviar, truffles, and lobster), fried sushi rolls, and bouillabaisse shabu-shabu. The judges go absolutely bonkers over the grilled drunken lobster they love it so much. They can't get enough. While every other dish served by Flay and Morimoto was picked apart and eaten daintily, these guys were sucked down in huge mouthfuls. The fried sushi rolls are also highly praised. The huge sumo guy even cleaned his plate! This has got to be in the bag for Morimoto. While the judges definitely enjoyed Flay's food, they were gaga over Morimoto's. Whelp, time to go home. Flay loses again...

WHAT!?! They give the victory to Bobby Flay. What kind of crap is this? I saw the judge's reactions. There is no way they liked Flay's food better. The only way I'm buying Flay's triumph is that Chairman Kaga was so hurt by Flay's constant slandering and whining that he simply gave him the win. Kaga is no dummy though. Surely he is only biding his time, erasing the motive, and distancing himself before his assassins take care of Bobby for good. Your days are numbered, Flay!

## PARADIGM SHIFTS

## Changing local buying habits

 ${f P}$  aradigm Gardens is a family owned local business that is dedicated to providing superior horticultural and progressive gardening products and technologies available in today's growing marketplace.

A paradigm is a set of assumptions, concepts, values and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them. If you want a change in your life or if you want different results you must change your paradigm. This is where we started the manifestation of our paradigm into Paradigm Gardens.

We began with our first retail store, to address the lack of infrastructure for growers of local food in our community. Many people want to grow their own food year round, but lack access to quality sourced or healthy organic products. Many also lack the knowledge on how to use these products.

In 1999, we set out to change that. We started with a small retail space and began to source a variety of unique gardening products and provide education on how to use them, to local and regional growers. In 2000, we opened our Madison, Wisconsin retail outlet. Both of our locations promote earth-friendly, waterwise and organic gardening practices, as the future health of our Earth and communities are important to us.

Paradigm Gardens offers a premium selection of:

- Horticultural Lighting
- Hydroponic systems and supplies
- Plant nutrients and supplements
- Organic Soils and nutrients, even vegan based options
- Diverse soils and soilless growing medias
- Specialty and Urban Gardening solutions
- Heirloom Seed offerings

We now offer various growing area design and consulting services, which include:

· Growing business feasibility studies



- Greenhouse design and install
- 2D and 3D renderings of your growing area designed to fit your space and growing objective.

With the use of technology and services, we are able to assist a number of different client types with their unique growing needs. We service everyone from the home gardener, various specialty plant growers, to market growers or small acreage farmers, as well as, plant growing Non-Profit organizations and many other large institutions.

Paradigm Gardens has been influencing the change of paradigms each and every day within our local communities with those that we work with. The process of producing healthy, clean, cost-effective and environmentally sustainable produce at the location it is needed, has been an extreme challenge. We find ourselves having to educate and shape policy on several levels. Thus, why we are exploring ways to unite people through food and agricultural production.

In order for us to continue this educational process with all of our local stakeholders in food production, we have created many learning opportunities with our upcoming events. You can find all of the details for these opportunities on our Facebook page or online at www.paradigmgardens.com

March 25th and 26th Orchid Show at Lauritzen Gardens

April 15th Cultivation & Benefits of Peru Crop-Yacon and Huacatay and Potatoes-In the Ground or Containers?

April 19th-23rd Earth Day Sales Event (includes education and promotions)

April 29th-Pollination, Native Wildflowers & Importance of Beneficial Insects

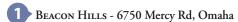
May 13th- The Many Benefits of Fungi: Exploring Mushroom Cultivation at Home & Beyond

May 18th-22nd Spring Fling Event (includes a seminar on Compost Tea Brewing)



## OMAHA HAPPY HOUR 2017

Happy hour is a tradition and an excellent way to treat yourself after a long, hard day at work or to take it easy on a Saturday or Sunday. Omaha has a bar, restaurant or pub to suit every craving and every mood, and with these outstanding choices, you'll definitely find a favorite new hang-out spot.





Newly opened Beacon Hills, located in Aksarben Village, offers a wide variety of happy hour specials. Happy hour is Monday – Friday from 2-6 pm and includes offerings in both drinks and food items. For drinks, a variety of beer, wine and cocktail specials are available at happy hour. If food is on your mind, Beacon Hills doesn't disappoint. Crab cakes, crab Rangoon, tomato basil dip, chicken wing, polenta fries, chicken strips, lasagna bites, baked brie, Parmesan spinach dip, French onion soup bread and signature flatbread pizzas (prime rib, Italian sausage, roasted tomato artichoke, Craig's cheese burger and chicken pesto), each affordably priced. Beacon Hills also offers one of the best patio experiences in Omaha. See you there!

#### BRICKWAY BREWERY & DISTILLERY 1116 Jackson Street, Omaha

Brickway Brewery and Distillery is located in the heart of Omaha's Old Market District. They brew and distill on-premise and offer 15+ beers and 6+ spirits in the tasting room. The tasting room is open 7 days a week and now offers a full food menu. Brickway specializes in bringing quality products to an ever-changing market. From their flagship Pils to the tasty 'coffee vanilla stout' and an ever-changing list of single batch beers, they pride themselves on quality. Don't forget about the spirits either. The American single malt whisky and bourbon are the most popular. Brickway offers knowledgeable tours Thursday - Sunday as well as one of



the best happy hours in town. Mon-Thurs \$4 session series beers from 2 pm -7 pm. Friday 1/2 price growlers and Sunday \$4 session series beers all day.

#### Dundee Dell - 5007 Underwood Avenue, Omaha

For those craving some food along with great prices on happy hour drinks, Dundee Dell offers up a happy hour that has the best of both their spirits and food offerings. As if that wasn't enough, you can take advantage of their happy hour pricing every day of the week from 2



- 6 pm. Dundee Dell is known for their high quality well liquors and during happy hour well drinks are only \$3. Additionally, any of their drinks, including their nationally-renowned Scotch selection, can be had for \$1 off. If food is more what you're looking for, Dundee Dell has you taken care of with their world famous two piece fish and chips for only \$7.99 and their most popular appetizer, the fried pickles, for half price at \$3.99 for six big dill pickles.

#### FLEMING'S PRIME STEAKHOUSE & WINE BAR 140 Regency Parkway, Omaha

Fleming's offers a special 'five six seven' menu for happy hour, which runs from 5-7 pm nightly in the bar. For cocktails, the 'purely fresh margarita' and 'emerald isle' are available for \$6, the 'whiskey peach martini' and 'blueberry lemon drop' for \$7 and the 'debonair martini' for \$8. Happy hour wines include a sauvignon blanc and chardonnay for \$6, a pinot noir and cabernet blend for \$7 and a cabernet sauvignon for \$8. Blue Moon seasonal beer is available for \$3. For food, Fleming's has you covered with a roasted Portobello mushroom ravioli or house-made burrata for \$6, sweet chili calamari for \$7 and tenderloin carpaccio or filet mignon flatbread for \$8. Additionally, the 'prime burger' can be had for \$8.



Herbe Sainte - 1934 S. 67th Street, Omaha



Located in Aksarben Village, Herbe Sainte is happy to announce their all night happy hour every Monday from 4 - 10 pm. They also offer happy hour Tuesday through Thursday from 4 - 6 pm. Their specials include \$1 off all beers, a daily cocktail for \$6, \$5 house wines, and 25% off all of their fresh from the Gulf oysters and peel and eat shrimp. Herbe Sainte is a New Orleans themed restaurant and cocktail

bar. From classic drinks and dishes like the Sazerac and crawfish étouffée (a vegan étouffée is available as well), to more modern recipes like the 'bywater' or crawfish cheesecake with a spicy meunier sauce they've got something interesting for everyone to enjoy. They are very excited to be a part of this community and look forward to serving all of Omaha.

6 Jams - 7814 Dodge St 🚺



1101 Harney St, Omaha



Jams, an Omaha restaurant legacy, is an American grill that offers a melting pot of different styles and varieties of food dishes containing high-quality ingredients paired with the optional cold drink or creative cocktail. The original Jams Midtown is located on 78th & Dodge and offers great drink and appetizer specials from 4 – 6 pm, Monday thru Friday. Special happy hour appetizers are all just \$7. Happy hour drink prices range from \$4 - \$7: seasonal beer, Jams sangria, Kentucky punch, P.G. martini, Jams cosmo, Beverly Hills bubbly or dirty tini.

Jams Old Market opened in 2015 and boasts the best patio in the Old Market where you can enjoy drink happy hour drink prices on seasonal beer, Jams sangria, Kentucky punch, P.G. martini, Jams cosmo, Beverly Hills bubbly or dirty tini with prices that range from \$4 - \$7. Specialty happy hour appetizers are just \$7. Monday thru Friday, 4-6pm. Voted 'Best Happy Hour' in the OWH Omaha Choice Awards.

#### 8 Nosн - 1006 Dodge Street, Omaha

Nosh Restaurant and Wine Lounge is considered one of the best happy hour spots in downtown Omaha! The happy hour selection of food and drinks are some of their most popular items. Drink specials include \$2 off any wine by the glass, \$3 domestic beers, \$4 well drinks and \$5 for select martinis and cocktails (the most popular choice is their happy hour mule). Their happy hour food specials include the duck tacos, margherita flatbread, and spinach and artichoke dip along with a few other favorites, all priced between \$4 and \$6. Happy hour is every day from 4 pm until 6 pm (including Saturday and Sunday), and late night happy hour happens Friday



and Saturday evenings from 10 pm until 12 am.





The Ozone Lounge features live music nightly that transforms it into the Omaha dance hotspot. Their happy hour specials are Monday thru Friday from 3:30 to 6:30 pm and offer half price appetizers and drink specials. During happy hour their house wines are \$4, wells are \$3, Coors Light are \$4 and the Moscow Mule is a featured drink for only \$4. The Ozone also has hand-crafted martinis and other specialty drinks, along with a great wine list and a large selection of popular beers. Come in and experience The Ozone Lounge and help them celebrate 50 years in Omaha.

#### 10 Petrow's - 5914 Center Street, Omaha

Cold beer, cool cocktails and nostalgic eats on Petrow's relaxing patio space is a great way to enjoy the evening! When the weather calls you outside, enjoy their world famous ice cream. Their heated and covered outdoor patio provides the perfect atmosphere for your evening out. Enjoy two big screen TVs, fireplaces, casual seating, including couches for lounging, and plenty of dining and bar seating. Their sunset happy hour on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 6:30 to 9:30 pm offers a number of delicious selections. You can't beat their \$10 'burger and a beer' combo. Thirsty? Their happy hour includes specials on all ice cold domestic beer, all margaritas, icebergs and daily drink specials crafted by



our bartender. Stop by for classic food and drinks at one of the best outdoor spaces in Midtown Omaha.



#### RAILCAR - 1814 N 144th Street, Omaha



At Railcar Modern American Kitchen, they specialize in the classic American dining experience. Made-from-scratch comfort food, craft cocktails and a friendly, knowledgeable staff, all delivered in a warm, cozy atmosphere. Stop in to try their house-smoked ribs with a signature cherry barbecue sauce, or their succulent prime rib (Fri & Sat night), or their house-baked apple pie topped with rich vanilla ice cream. Railcar makes the promise that once you've dined there, you'll travel back for more.



#### SALT 88 - 3623 N 129th St, Omaha



Check out Salt for an amazing selection of food and drinks in their beautiful restaurant. Enjoy the flexibility of a restaurant that offers happy hour throughout the dining and patio areas. Many restaurants in the metro will have you sectioned off to a specific area for happy hour,

but not at Salt. There is never a need to grab a dirty table in a cramped bar area. At Salt, they want you to be happy and feel happy. From classic cocktails and signature drinks, they have a drink for everyone on their happy hour menu. To balance their happy hour cocktails they have a unique beer selection and plenty of wine varietals to choose from, so make your plans to stop by Salt for your next happy hour.

SHUCKS FISH HOUSE - 1911 Leavenworth,

14 119th & Pacific 15 168th & Center, Omaha



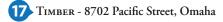
All three locations of Shucks offer happy hour 7 days a week from 2 - 6 pm. Their happy hour oyster bar features Blue Point oysters for \$.99 and peel and eat shrimp for just \$.35. If something from their kitchen is more to your liking, there are happy hour discounts on fresh clam strips, calamari, tail on shrimp and cat fingers all served golden crispy with their house-made sauces. For happy hour drink specials, Shucks doesn't disappoint with \$3 margaritas, \$5 hurricanes and killer Bloody Marys. There is also special happy hour pricing for beer, wine and well drinks.

16 Spezia - 3125 S 72nd Street, Omaha

What's one the best kept secret in town? Spezia's happy hour! Every afternoon from 4-6 pm this is the place to be. They offer their delicious flat breads at half off of the regular price plus other specialties. If wine is your deal, they have over 30 wines by the glass, from Italian to Californian, available at half price. Recently they have added a local brewery to their draft beer collection that will change on a seasonal basis. All of the beer, craft included, are also half price. Looking for a perfect manhattan, cosmopolitan, old fashioned, or perhaps just a vodka and tonic? Whatever you



want, they will make it half off! Bring your friends, join them for food, cocktails and great atmosphere 7 days a week with the promise that once you've dined there, you'll travel back for more.





Come experience the delicious wood-fired cuisine at Timber Wood Fire Bistro. With a roaring hearth and warm atmosphere you'll feel at home the moment you walk in. Enjoy their wood oven-baked sour dough bread service with herbed California olive oil or locally whipped butter. Try one of their pissaladière — French style pizzas — wood fired to perfection. Select from one of the fresh-from-the-fire

entrees including their house-made rigatoni with roasted vegetables, herb crusted bistro steak and cedar planked steelhead salmon. All of their meals are made-from-scratch and served with care by an experienced staff.

B Vincenzo's Ristorante - 15701 Pacific Street, Omaha



Vincenzo's happy hour is available Sunday – Friday (excluding holidays) from 3 – 6 pm in the bar and patio areas. Food choices are \$4 and include bruschetta, bruschetta spinazola, toasted ravioli, melanzane, polpette, tomato and mozzarella caprese and cheese pizza. A glass of wine is only \$3, with choices of chardonnay, pinot grigio, white zinfandel, paisano Chianti, merlot and cabernet sauvignon. Well drinks are also just \$3, import/craft beers are \$4 and domestic (Budweiser, Bud Light, Mich Ultra, Miller Lite, Coors Light and O'Doul's) beers are \$3. For an authentic Italian experience, check out Vincenzo's and their killer happy hour specials today.

Everyone needs some down time to unwind with your pals, have a bite to eat and enjoy a beer, a glass of wine or a well-made cocktail. There's no shortage in Omaha of happy hours to enjoy, so make the rounds and have a few rounds with friends as you follow the happy hour map from Food & Spirits Magazine!



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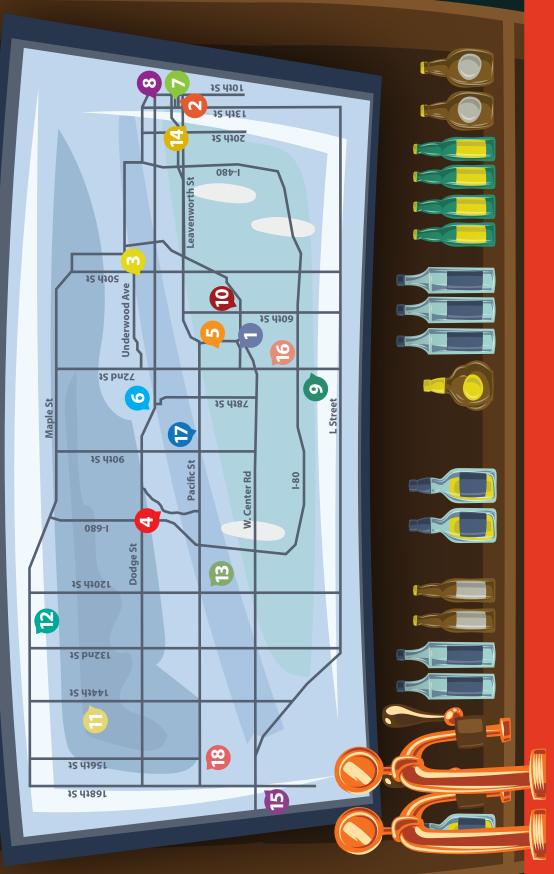


















## SODAS IN WHICH YOU MAY NOT BE ENTIRELY AWARE OF:

Classy Faygo

by Eddie Morin

Just last month, B & G Tasty Foods was finally able to secure glass-bottled Faygo soda. While normally the rather shabby bottled beverage of Juggalos, this change in container signifies the maturing of Faygo as a brand. We received two flavors from the Detroit bottler: Rock n' Rye and Redpop. Let's see how they turned out.

Let's first look at Redpop. I really like the name. Too often soda companies try to bedazzle us with their nomenclature (Pepsi's Sierra Mist? Give me a break.). Faygo keeps it tidy with Redpop. Some of the critics I encountered were put off by the name, saying it doesn't give any indication of the flavor. What a bunch of morons. Does 7up taste like 7's? Does Dr. Pepper taste like an accomplished human? Cryptic soda names are nothing new, get with it, weirdo. To answer this question though, Redpop is simply a unique blend of every single red flavor. Strawberry, raspberry, watermelon, cherry, and more! But is it good? While I wanted to love this, I found it just... okay. It's not bad, I wouldn't spew it in the face of Señor Faygo, but I won't be asking for a second either. There are just too many other great sodas, and so few teeth in my mouth to dissolve in their acidy goodness.

Next up is Rock n' Rye. Once again, I love the name. It gives me almost no indication as to what it will taste like. Immediately after pouring a droplet into my mouth, I have the answer. Cream soda! But not just any cream soda. It has a cherry touch at the end. But how is it? It is pleasant. Quite pleasant, indeed. In a very short time, I have become a great fan of this flavor. If you like cream sodas, you simply must give this a try. While I'm not sure it will replace the more traditional cream sans cherry, it is a welcome addition. There is no limit to the quantities of sodas that one may enjoy!

The bottles themselves are simple and classy albeit a bit boring. They are all the same print with the flavors being the only difference. I can only guess that this was to separate the brand from the plastic bottled variation. A good effort, but I hoped for something with a bit more kick. Anyway, it'll do.

If you've always wanted to try Faygo, but were too afraid of being lured into the dark world of Juggalife, now's your chance. Come in to **B & G Tasty Foods** and try one for yourself. We will hopefully be sampling many other flavors in the upcoming months including Cotton Candy, Moon Mist, 60/40, and more. If you are already indoctrinated into the ways of the ICP, fear not! We have our resident Juggalo, **Nick Marasco**, on staff to make you feel more at home. He has been a die-hard Rock n' Rye fan for some time now, and can help ease you into the ways of Faygo. We hope to see you soon, HatchetGear or not.



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## NO BUBBLE TROUBLE

By Jill Cockson

I am coming up on my 20-year anniversary as a bartender/
hospitality professional, which has caused me to reflect on how
much the beverage industry has changed in the Midwest during
that time. Like many who enter the industry, I began bartending
as a means to an end to put myself through college. As the years
progressed, however, the debt I incurred from student loans ironically
boxed me into the business long-term; I simply could not afford to
take an 'entry-level, professional' pay scale position, and bartending
was paying my bills.

I developed a passion for the dynamic atmosphere, the nightlife, the opportunity to meet new and interesting people on a daily basis, and the reward-based compensation: the harder you work, the more you make. I derived a certain pride from offering real added value to my guests' experience through product knowledge, attention to service detail, remembering names and continuing conversations that brought them back, etc. I began to embrace my bartending as a career path, and to shed the yoke of needing to 'get a real job'. I placed my faith in the industry making a transition from predominantly quantity-consumption business models to those geared toward the quality consumer...and it has paid off.

The hospitality industry, like most industries, has spent the last several decades pandering primarily to the baby boomer - their standards for service/atmosphere, their income bracket, their limited product knowledge, their limited access to information, etc. We designed everything about our businesses around the consumer behavior of a generation that is now dying off. We sacrificed brand identity to accommodate the ridiculous notion that 'the customer is always right'. We substituted grandiose aesthetics for hospitality. We fell for the ease of selling terrible products, at an offensive markup, to people who didn't know any better. Essentially, we got too comfortable with a very large margin for error. As millennials take over the consumer market, however, with an evolved consumer profile and unprecedented access to trend/product information, the rules of business are changing. For those who insist on clinging to an antiquated business model, that will mean failure. For those evolving to meet new demands, however, this means incredible opportunity.

It's time to stop whining about a 'bubble that's bursting' in hospitality. There is no bubble. There are a lot of people who have made poor investments as a result of not doing math, not developing holistic business plans, not taking the time to conceptualize a unique brand identity, not putting the proper skill sets to work, and not

being able to forecast/respond to a changing industry. During the dot-com era, when investment capital was in excess, extravagance became an aesthetic standard in our industry. Hospitality took a back seat, causing an industry identity crisis, of sorts. Never mind that the drinks/food/service suck...they have an *ultra-lounge!* With a fireplace! Or, a waterfall! Or, both! Whatever. A lot of people came into money quickly, which quickly led to them wanting to actualize their dream of owning a bar. Financing was not an issue, but since there was no real experience or passion for hospitality at the helm, extravagant aesthetics dictated the experience. Never mind that the whole thing was a money pit, profitability mattered not. The industry began to adopt the whole charade as a standard. If you wanted to compete for the same audience, you needed that ultra-lounge/fireplace/waterfall. The consumer had been successfully trained on what to expect...the biggest, brightest, flashiest craptastic show that money could buy.

Essentially, a bunch of people with money to burn created an illusion of success that began to draw in aspiring owners/investors without the same, expendable capital. Suddenly, people with a lot to lose were losing a lot. No one was actually sitting down with a brand development/business plan and doing the math. They had the ultralounge! They had the fireplace! They had the waterfall! So, why wasn't it working?!?!?!? The truth is because it doesn't, and it never has. As an industry, we have conceptually confused the words 'recognition' and 'success'. Success, to most, is necessarily tied to profitability.

The good news is that the model geared for success into the next phase of hospitality is smaller and more manageable, allowing for a potential restart of entrepreneurship in the industry. One could argue that the baby boomer obsession with extravagant cruise ships is quickly being replaced by the millennial appreciation for the wellcrafted rowboat. They seek smaller, more intimate atmospheres, and personal experiences with quality products. Many are quick to suggest that millennials are 'spoiled' and need to feel 'special'. The good (or bad) news for hospitality professionals is that making people feel special is supposed to be our area of expertise! Hospitality is currently being called out to be what it was supposed to be all along! In sum, if you have put in your requisite 10,000 hours toward developing a passion for delivering quality products and experiences, then you will weather this consumer changing-of-the-guard with ease. As a bonus, you will actually realize greater potential for smaller (i.e. lower cost) start-ups than we have seen in decades. If you have focused your energy, however, on interior design and marketing gimmicks, good luck. You've got some catching up to do.

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## PORTRAIT OF A BARTENDER:

## Aaron Halbert

This issue of *Food & Spirits Magazine's* bartender profile features Aaron Halbert. Aaron has worked at a variety of places around Omaha and, most recently, is one of the co-owners

of SamFam, LLC (along with his uncle, Ron Samuelson, and his brother, Justin Halbert). SamFam recently opened Herbe Sainte and will soon be opening Della Costa in Midtown Crossing and Mode de Vie in Regency. Aaron can occasionally be found bartending at Herbe Sainte, when he's not swamped with his responsibilities.

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

Aaron: Recently, my brother, our uncle and I started Herbe Sainte in Aksarben Village. We've been open just over 4 months now.

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

Aaron: Well, I've been in the service industry for 17 years, at this point. Serving, bussing, washing dishes, bartending - whatever I needed to do. My first bartending gig was at a nightclub in Sarasota, FL. I was 17 - totally illegal -

but I made friends with one of the owners and he thought it was funny to have me make all of his espresso martinis. From there I moved on to a couple of different restaurants in SRQ, then made my way to Omaha and worked at **M's Pub, The Boiler Room,**Lot 2, Jake's, and a little bit at The Trap Room and Slowdown. Anything from popping beers at the College World Series to making tons of craft cocktails in a fine dining establishment.

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

**Aaron:** It was the year my brother's friends all started graduating college. I was working at that nightclub, making hourly plus tips.

Every night the bartenders tipped us out (bar backs) and we knew the percentage of what they were making based on what we were getting. So I've got my own apartment on Siesta Key, I'm a 2 minute walk from the beach, and my brothers friends are all moving back in with their parents. I wanted to get those bar shifts.

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

Aaron: Get ready for a novel on this one... The first person I think of is Paul Kulik, formerly of the Boiler Room and currently at Via Farina and Le Bouillon. Every single day he challenged me to be faster, smarter, and more creative. I have always been a confident person and a hard worker, but Paul really made me take myself seriously as a professional. Then there's Johanna and Brad Marr. Johanna has always been super caring. She has one of the fastest wits - there isn't a single problem that could arise on the floor of a restaurant that she doesn't immediately know how to fix. She and I worked together at M's, and the day

after I got fired from M's, Brad hired me on immediately at **Nick and Tony's**. Brad was one of the first people I worked with that got me really serious about expanding my wine knowledge. Working with the two of them at Lot 2 was awesome.

**FSM:** Where do you find inspiration?

**Aaron:** Everywhere. If it's a 10 ingredient cocktail or a Coors Banquet - if it's delicious, I'm in.





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

**Aaron:** Best part is R&D (research and development), no doubt. Eating and drinking to learn more? Yes, please. Worst part? Ugh, I had to fire someone. That was just awful.

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

**Aaron:** Trends come and go, but the inherent idea of service will always be around. People like to connect, to feel like a part of something interesting. There's no way to take the human element out of it.

"I've been in the service industry for 17 years, at this point. Serving, bussing, washing dishes, bartending - whatever I needed to do. My first bartending gig was at a nightclub in Sarasota, FL. I was 17 - totally illegal - "

FSM: What makes a good bartender?

**Aaron:** (Paul Kulik in the back of my head) Four things. SERVICE. SERVICE. SERVICE. Without hospitality, you have nothing.

**FSM:** What is your favorite drink to make?

**Aaron:** A Sidecar. Brandy is totally underrated in this market, and it's just simple and delicious. Four ingredients and room for play (a couple of years ago I did a pear and baking spice infused brandy at Lot 2. We sold out fast.). A well-made one is a thing of beauty, and I've never had a guest that didn't enjoy it.

FSM: What do you drink?

Aaron: Whattaya got?

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

**Aaron:** How terrible it feels to be verbally abused. People forget that the person across the bar from them is working, at their job. Probably their only job. It's the source of all of their income. Talk to them like they are human. Do you verbally berate people in a doctor's office? A bank? Your florist? Probably not. For some reason, with some people, all bets are off once they walk in to a bar. It bewilders me.

FSM: Describe the perfect cocktail?

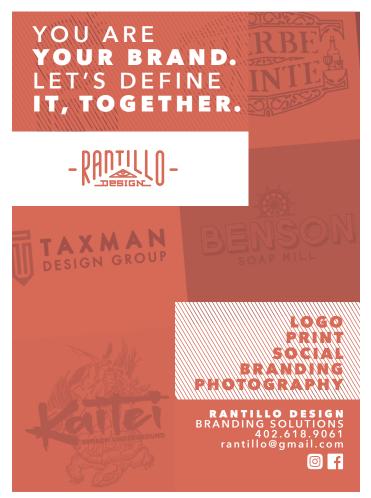
**Aaron:** That depends. What are you looking for? Bitter, sweet, tart, boozy, light, sparkling? There are billions of flavor combinations out there, and it's our job to steer you in the right direction for your preferences.

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

Aaron: Nite Owl, Mercury, Boiler Room, V Mertz, Trap Room, Jake's, Krug Park, St. Andrews, Beercade, La Buvette, Le Bouillon, Wicked Rabbit, Lake Lono, Lot 2, Cork and Bottle, Dario's, Pageturners Lounge...

**FSM:** Tell me about Herbe Sainte. What can you expect to find at the bar there?

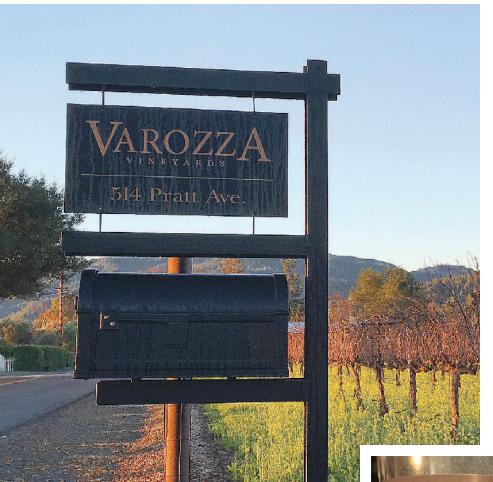
**Aaron:** We're just over four months old, and located at 67th and Frances in Aksarben Village. We feature New Orleans inspired food and drinks. One thing we don't do is discriminate. If you'd like an inexpensive wine, a light beer, or just a spirit on the rocks, we have that. If you'd like a thoughtful, well-made cocktail, we have that. Would you like an elegant bottle of wine? We've got that, too.





## **WINE RECOMMENDATION:**

## Varozza Vineyard by Mark Gudgel



Livery year, twice a year, I make it a point to attend the bi-annual fall and spring open house events at the Omaha Wine Company, in order to reunite with old friends in the industry, make new connections and, of course, taste terrific wines. The Omaha Wine Company's focus on the Napa Valley aligns well with my palate and my preferences, and I look forward to these events in much the same manner that I once, as a boy, eagerly anticipated the coming of Christmas morning.

One of the things about this show that is difficult, however, is that when you're tasting 40, 50, 60 or even more wines than that in a short amount of time, the combination of consistent excellence and palate fatigue can give the false impression that such truly extraordinary wines are common. The \$25 entry fee comes with unlimited tastings, a crystal glass to take home, and a \$20 voucher towards your purchase that day. With that voucher, I allow myself at each show to purchase but a single bottle of wine, which requires of me a concentration that I might otherwise not embrace in such a setting. I call that single bottle "the winner", have it signed by the winemaker, and cellar it for a special occasion. Past winners

include Pine & Brown Cabernet Sauvignon 2013, Hourglass Merlot 2012, and one of the best bottles of Zinfandel I've ever had in my life, the product of the labor of love and legacy that is Varozza Vineyards.

I had the chance to visit Varozza, both the winery and the people for whom it is named, Jack and Dianna Varozza, on my trip to Napa this past January. The visit, on a crisp early morning seated across a grand table from the couple, separated by but a few wine glasses and a generous chunk of Manchego cheese, reminded me of what I love so much about the Napa Valley. In the ancient stone facility in the northern part of the Valley not far from Calistoga, the Varozzas shared with me their history, their stories, and their passion for producing excellent wines — a passion the Varozza family has maintained for five generations now, and counting.

If you visit the Napa Valley, I'd put Varozza Vineyards at the top of my list of places to make an appointment. Fortunately for those too busy to travel soon, however, there is a good selection of their wine available in the Omaha market. Below are my thoughts on those Varozza offerings currently available in Omaha, as well as where to find them.

#### **SAUVIGNON BLANC 2015**

Available at Omaha Wine Company and **The Winery** 

To be honest, I've had a ton of Sauv Blanc this year, yet somehow Varozza's still managed to stand out. The tropical fruit notes are brilliant from nose to palate, and it walks the line between crispness and creaminess in a way that only this varietal can. Pair with a patio and good company as the weather gets better, and enjoy!

#### PETITE SIRAH 2011

Available at **Champions Run**, **Mahogany**, the Omaha Wine Company, and **Pitch** in **Dundee** 

It says something when the Petite Sirah is as widely available

as the Cabernet Sauvignon, especially here in Omaha where steak and Napa Cabs are kings. This Petite Sirah is nothing short of killer juice, intense and rich, made from grapes dry farmed by Jack from 60-year-old vines. Complicated yet balanced with terrific deep purple and black fruit notes that mingle with black pepper and other spices, in my personal opinion this wine is underpriced at \$50 retail.

#### **CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2012**

Available at **801 Chophouse**, Champions Run, Mahogany, and Omaha Wine Company

Really a beautiful expression of the varietal and what it can be when done well, this bold Napa Cab is easy-drinking with fine, integrated tannins lending it a firm yet unimposing structure. Terrific dark fruits, baking spice, dark chocolate and earthy notes persist. I decanted this for about an hour and it paired perfectly with a nice grass-fed filet from the Sandhills.

#### **BLOOD LINES 2011**

Available at Omaha Wine Company

The Varozzas have not, to my knowledge, come out and called this their "Flagship" wine, but I'm willing to do it for them. A stunning blend of Jack's Cabernet Sauvignon and Petite Sirah, this is a bold and beautiful red blend and I savored every sip. It pairs well with red meat but stands so beautifully on its own, lacking for nothing, that I'm almost hesitant to pair it, lest food distract from the experience that is this amazing wine. The 2011 vintage is a 50-50 blend, while the coming 2012 is 2/3 Cabernet. Both are utterly amazing.

The Varozzas, in my opinion, are producing some of the best wines coming out of Napa right now, and are among the very best boutique producers in the storied Napa Valley. The combination of winemaker Kristy Melton's skill, Jack's prowess as a grower, the tremendous heritage of an ancient Napa property, and the attention to detail that goes into every bottle they produce makes this one of the finest portfolios coming out of the Napa Valley today. The terrific news for those of us based here in Omaha is, of course, that these wines are



widely available at some of the best shops and restaurants in this food and wine rich city.

In addition to the current releases listed above, Omaha Wine Company has Varozza library wines in stock, including Cabernet Sauvignon from 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010, as well as 2012 Zinfandel (if you can beat me to it). The next OWC show is May 7, 2017, starting at 9:30am and running to around 7:00pm. Dianna Varozza should be there, pouring the current vintages and perhaps even the newly released vintages by that point. I encourage you to stop by, shake her hand, buy some wine, and taste Varozza for yourself. I'll see you there.



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## WINE A MELODRAMA:

### How They Got it All Wrong, but it Turned Out All Right

by John Finocchiaro

ACT 1, SCENE 1

It is a cool, foggy evening circa late 1970's or early '80's. The curtain rises. Mandolin music plays softly in the background. Somewhere in the back room of a secluded local restaurant in Napa, California sit the heads of all the families. The Gallo brothers, Ernest and Julio, sit together. The Bobs are there - Mondavi and Trinchero. Among the others present is the new kid on the block, Francis Coppola, along with Don Carano ("The Don") from Sonoma's Ferrari-Carano winery. Sam Sebastiani appears with his mother Sylvia in tow. Seems they wanted her to cook the pasta and meatballs. She will not disappoint. She surprises them with cannoli and biscotti plates for dessert.

The meal concludes. Amidst many open bottles of vino and half-filled glasses, the important business at hand is addressed. That is, the business of building the piece. No, not the 'peace'. The 'piece'.

It seems California winemakers are not doing enough business. And so, these men of the grape are desperately in need of increasing their piece of the pie. In comparison to Europe, domestic wine consumption is barely a blip. The beer guzzling, whiskey loving U.S. of A. has been slow to accept wine as an everyday – or every week or every month – alcoholic beverage of choice. With the exception of sweet beverage wines of questionable quality, wine is, at best, an afterthought.

"The only way to one day entice true table wine consumers is to first lead them through sweet, tooth decaying pop wines. It is common knowledge that white zinfandel, wine coolers, and asti-spumante appeal to the kiddies"

Finally, after much banter and analysis of extensive market research, countless product trials, numerous demographic studies and consumer trends, the wise sages of the wine world have reached some conclusions regarding the future of their livelihood. Remember, this is the late '70's/early '80's. And this is their prediction:

America is largely a beverage alcohol nation. We like our drinks plenty sweet and plenty cold. Our idea of consuming a nice alcoholic beverage with dinner would be a beer with a burger. Vino simply isn't in our culture. So, wine with dinner? Not going to happen, at least with regard to the masses. The only way to one day entice true table wine consumers is to first lead them through sweet, tooth decaying pop wines. It is common knowledge that white zinfandel, wine coolers, and asti-spumante appeal to the kiddies.

After umpteen years wallowing in the sweetness, there is a chance, albeit slim, that they may graduate to an actual table wine, such as a chardonnay or merlot. That is, as long as the chardonnay doesn't taste like real chardonnay. We must give it a bit of residual sugar and serve it overly cold. (In France, the homeland of this renowned varietal wine, this style would not qualify as true chardonnay. Thankfully, we aren't in France). After all this, we may eventually fool the consumer into drinking a faux-table wine. With time comes maturity, perhaps a bit more affluence, and, eventually, a greater appreciation of the finer things in life. Only then will a decent quality wine be found appealing. Only

then may an actual wine bottle, as symbol of sophistication and success, eventually find its way onto the dinner table of the married, middle aged, and fully domesticated.

So, to all those west coast wineries in search of an American evolution, don't hold your breath. Change is going to come, but it's going to take a while. The future of the wine industry lies in the hands of the middle aged, middle to upper income, sophisticated, educated consumer. The cold hard truth is that the young adult American is not the prime target audience. You want the young and the restless to embrace wine? Fuhgeddaboudit.

Well, here we are, a good three or four decades later, and boy, were they wrong. American millennials – those between the ages of 21 and 38 – drank a whopping 42 percent of all wine in the U.S. last year. Far more than any other generation. And the vast majority of them are not drinking sweet, innocuous pop wines. They are not affluent, yet. They are not purchasing wine as a 'symbol' of sophistication. They drink wine because they like it. A lot. Wine does not intimidate them. It fascinates them. They are not afraid to try wines of strange origin, or wines they cannot pronounce. They are curious. And they get it.

Value matters. They may not be able to tell you which wines have barnyard aromas and tobacco and leather accents, but they know what they like. And what they don't like. Yes, their taste buds are fully functioning. They are going after the good stuff, with their eyes and palates on the great stuff in the future, when their wallets allow for it. It's pretty impressive. Just imagine the fuel that this youthful demographic will provide to the American wine industry when they are the sophisticated, middle aged, middle to upper income target market that the wise sages of the wine word predicted would be America's wine future.

"All the analysis in the world could not have predicted that young 20-somethings would dive into the wine world uninhibited and totally serious in their endeavor."

Yes, when it came to projecting the future of the industry, America's most brilliant wine minds got it wrong. All the analysis in the world could not have predicted that young 20-somethings would dive into the wine world uninhibited and totally serious in their endeavor. The pet shop label, smuckery swill that marketers produced as the gateway to eventual wine aficionado-dom did prove, for the most part, to be a complete miscalculation. Whodathunk?

One thing American winemakers most definitely did get right was the quality of their wines. Today, our best wines are terrific, easily on a scale equal to the finest in the world. Back in the late '70's and early '80's, with a few exceptions (reference the infamous 1976 Paris wine tasting), this was definitely not the case. Since then, we have stepped it up big time. And, to producers and consumers alike, what could possibly be more significant than the quality of the wine in the bottle?

When it came to predicting America's future wine consumer, our best and brightest may have gotten it all wrong. But it sure turned out alright.

AND THEY ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.



I remember vividly my first Passover Seder. I had been invited by dear friends, Lou and Rose Leviticus, into their home for this special Jewish celebration. It wasn't terribly unlike many of the other nights I had spent with the couple I fondly referred to as "Grandpa Lou and Grandma Rose", especially given that Lou and Rose were, as Jews go, more or less secular. And yet the evening, and the meal in particular, took on a special sort of importance that even my dull gentile senses could easily discern. The bite of horseradish, the recitations, and Lou, in his thick Dutch accent that was altered over time from the acquisition of some seven other languages, reading aloud from a sheet of paper he'd printed out – a humble Haggadah, as he dipped his fingers in the Seder cup and flicked wine upon his own neatly varnished hardwood floor. All of it remains in my mind to this day, cherished, and beautiful.

My wife Sonja and I had our first date on a Thursday night, over a long dinner that ended with sharing a bottle of wine on the back porch of what would eventually become our home. The next night, we attended Good Friday services at the church at which we would eventually marry, and then went to dinner with some of Sonja's friends. We had no plans to hang out on Saturday night; I had my own plans in fact. But our time together was enjoyable, and in the early stages of romance we couldn't get enough. My plans that following night included celebrating Passover with other close friends, Gary and Cece (Grandpa Lou and Grandma Rose were, by then, older, and no longer hosted Seders). Not willing to cancel on Gary and Cece, nor on the holiday I had come to love if not yet fully understand, I called Gary Saturday morning.

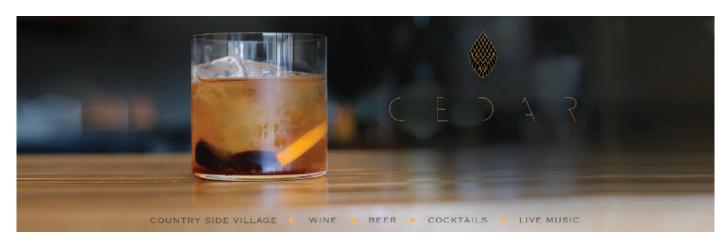
"Hey, Gary. I'm really looking forward to tonight. So, uh, look, feel free to say 'no' here, but I was wondering if there was any way I could bring a guest to your Seder tonight?"

Ever patient with me, Gary replied with a smile I could almost see through the phone: "Mark, it's Passover! There's always an extra chair at the Seder table! Bring whomever you like!"

"if memory serves, the whole occasion took some five to six hours – time that flew by as we ate, sang, laughed, and enjoyed the company of old friends and new ones alike"

The Seder meal at the home of Gary and Cece Hill was the best third date Sonja and I could have asked for. Surrounded by amazing people, there was a splendid meal and enough energy and uncertainty in what we were doing to keep us distracted from the fact that we were entering the early stages of a relationship. There were nearly twenty people in attendance that evening, all at one great table, and if memory serves, the whole occasion took some five to six hours – time that flew by as we ate, sang, laughed, and enjoyed the company of old friends and new ones alike.

Over the years, Sonja and I haven't always managed to attend a Seder, though we try, and Passover never takes place without some pleasant reminiscence on our part. Last year, we celebrated Seder at the home of some Jewish friends in Omaha whose son



is roughly the same age as ours; sharing it with our children added still more to the experience. In many ways, this Seder was similar to that of Gary and Cece's, though our understanding of the customs remained incomplete enough to keep us on our toes and guessing. When it came my turn to read from the Maxwell House Haggadah, I underwhelmed everyone with my Hebrew pronunciations, a holdover from my time in theology school, and together with friends, food, and wine, we passed yet another beautiful holiday.

If by now you've flipped the magazine over and checked the cover to make sure you're still reading *Food & Spirits*, I can assure you, you are. I write about Passover and Seders out of my love for them and admiration for the Jewish faith, yes, but also because they are, to me, the perfect illustration of a point I often make: that wine can be the compliment to a great experience, but rarely should wine be the experience unto itself. Wine is not the centerpiece of a Passover Seder, but like a good steak dinner or a summer evening on the patio, it has an important role to play.

I asked Liz Feldstern, a friend and a Jewish educator based here in Omaha, to help me better understand the role of wine in the Passover Seder. Her response clarified a few points for me, helping me to answer a lot of the "why" questions that had persisted through the years, and which I hadn't sought answers to during past festivities.

"Jesus of course, like all of his disciples, was a Jew, and the "last supper" was most likely a Passover Seder"

"The centerpiece of the week-long Passover observance is an elaborately structured meal. The purpose of the Passover Seder is to retell (and in some sense re-live) the biblical account of the Hebrew slaves' deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The number four is a recurring theme at the Seder meal. The educational element of the evening includes asking and answering four basic questions about the uniqueness of the Passover meal, namely, 'Why is this night different from all other nights?' One of the many rituals included in the meal is the drinking of four cups of wine at proscribed points in the Seder. All participants are obligated to drink these four cups (although grape juice is also acceptable). The first glass accompanies the opening blessing, the second goes with the telling of the Exodus story, the third is with the grace said after the meal, and the fourth complements the concluding psalms, which, after four glasses of wine, are usually sung pretty spiritedly!"

Liz's explanation brought back to me many memories, not least the lively singing of Psalms, as well as the telling and retelling of the Exodus story which, from the Christian tradition, was something I was familiar with. Something that has always stood out to me, in fact, is the immense amount of overlap between the Jewish faith and my own. Jesus of course, like all of his disciples, was a Jew, and the "last supper" was most likely a Passover Seder. The connections aren't at all subtle. In my religious tradition, prayer is central to the faith, and the same is true of Judaism. In fact, there's even a prayer devoted to wine, recited prior to the drinking of each cup. It reads as follows:

In Hebrew (read from right to left):

וְפֵגָהַ יִרְפָּ ארֵוֹבּ םלָוֹעהָ דְּלֵמֵ וּניהֵלֹאֵ ינָדֹאַ התָאַ דְּוּרבָּ

Transliterated:
Baruch atah
Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Haolam,
borei p'ri hagafen.

Translated:
Blessed are You,
Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe,
Creator of the fruit of the vine.

While wine is no more a focal point than food or conversation or prayer at most Passover Seders I have attended, it nevertheless plays a central role in the festivities. Children often drink grape juice, and we take turns filling the glasses of those who sit amongst us. It is hard for me to imagine a warmer, more enjoyable evening than sitting around a Seder table with friends, sharing food, conversation, and wine for hours on end.

Though most Jews I know personally celebrate Passover with whatever wine they've got around the house or whatever is on sale that week, there are a vast array of Kosher wines, that is, wines that adhere to the laws of Kashrut found in the Torah. They aren't easy to find in Omaha, but easy enough to order online. Israel also has a booming wine industry, and is making some truly terrific stuff.

On occasion, a friend has questioned me about my enthusiasm for a Jewish holiday, given that I am a Christian. Of course, there is the substantial overlap between the faiths that I mentioned before, but perhaps even more importantly, there's nothing more spiritual in my eyes than fellowship, no experience greater than sharing time with people you love and enjoy talking to. And if that shared experience happens to dictate that it come with four cups of wine, well then, even better!

L'Chaim!





## SELECT AREA RESTAURANTS, BARS, LOUNGES & PRODUCERS

#### **B&G Tasty Foods**

402-390-6096 7900 West Dodge Road



B&G Tasty Foods has been serving their delicious, original loose meat sandwiches and other tasty delights since 1953. Come in today for a satisfying meal or an ice cream treat. Unrivaled for fast, friendly, family dining! Dine in and carry-out available.

#### **Bliss Bakery**

402-934-7450 1031 Jones St ~ Old Market



Aromas Coffeehouse and Bliss Old Market Bakery (collectively AromasBliss) serve specialty coffee and made-from-scratch baked goods. With three Omaha locations, you can visit The Old Market, Benson, and Flagship Commons for a taste of this local business.

#### **Culprit Cafe & Bakery**

402-505-3897 1603 Farnam St.



Culprit Café & Bakery is a lunch destination that makes everything in house - from artisan breads to donuts to rotating dessert. This downtown bakery serves breakfast and lunch all day, has a full coffee menu, coffee cocktails, and select wine and beer. Hours: 8-3pm Tuesday - Sunday

#### Dixie Quicks

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



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

#### Hello Sugar

402-319-5771 Omaha, NE



Hello Sugar is an artisan doughnut concept founded in Omaha, Nebraska. At Hello Sugar, our goal is to elevate the humble donut beyond its roots, creating vibrant and unique flavors. We take pride in tediously crafting each doughnut from scratch. Hand-crafted, artfully designed, pure, simple flavors.

#### **Herbe Sainte**

402-913-2396 1934 S 67th Street



A New Orleans inspired cocktail bar and restaurant located right in the heart of Aksarben Village. Herbe Sainte brings a New Orleans flair to the Omaha market. Open Monday-Thursday; 11am-2pm and 4pm-10pm, Friday-Saturday; 11am-12am and Sunday; Noon—8pm.

#### **Just Good Meat**

402-339-7474 4422 S 84th Street



Proudly serving Omaha and surrounding communities since 1959! Located just off the interstate near 84th & L, Just Good Meat provides the finest quality beef, chicken, pork and seafood. They also offer a full line of home made deli items, fresh sandwiches and foods ranging from Chili to BBQ meats.

#### LaMar's Donuts

402-933-7444 17202 Audrey St



Ray Lamar began making donuts in 1933 and has never wavered from his original recipe and process. Today, we still make our donuts from scratch, by hand, with fresh ingredients. We get the most street cred for our Ray's Original Glazed. A full-flavored treat that doesn't jump on the kitschy trends.

#### Little España

402-557-6738 11036 Elm Street



Little España is Omaha's only authentic Spanish/Mediterranean restaurant, bar and club featuring over 60 tapas or "small plates". Featuring performances by flamenco guitarists, Latin jazz musicians & flamenco/salsa dancers. Select bar menu now available.

#### Orsi's Italian Bakery

402-345-3438 621 Pacific Street



Located in the heart of Omaha's Little Italy, Orsi's has been family run since 1919 and in the same location since 1934. Famous for our pizza and bread products, Orsi's now features an Italian deli including Italian cheeses, meats, homemade Italian sausage and imported olives.

#### Paradigm Gardens

402-339-4949 8949 J Street



Paradigm Gardens is a family owned local business, established in 1999. They are dedicated to providing superior horticultural and progressive organic gardening products. Paradigm Gardens also aims to create an educational environment that will set the standard in the 21st Century!

#### Petrow's

402-551-0552 5914 Center Street



A family owned Omaha tradition since 1957. The whole family will love this original diner's look and taste. The menu features all the classic staples, from hot beef and pork tenderloin to made-from-scratch pies and homemade ice cream. Open 7am - 9:30pm Mon-Thurs and 7am - 10pm Fri & Sat.

#### Pettit's Pastry

402-345-1111 502 N 16th Street



Pettit's Pastry is family owned bakery that as been around since 1954. Pettit's might be famous for glazed donuts, cake donuts and apple fritters, but we also offer cakes, cookies, muffins, pies, and specialty desserts. Pettit's has 3 locations. North 16th St., 12039 Blondo St. and 15615 Pacific St. Open 7 days a week!

#### Sam & Louie's

402-575-5500 2949 N 204th Street



Sam & Louie's specializes in fresh, hand tossed pizza, pasta, burgers, chicken sandwiches, calzones, stromboli, salads and more. Gluten free? We have a wide variety of dishes for you to enjoy. Open 7 days a week for lunch & dinner. Catering is available for any occasion, weddings, meetings, graduations & birthdays.

#### **Shucks Fish House & Oyster Bar**

402-827-4376 1218 South 119th Street



Shucks Fish House & Oyster Bar is a locally owned restaurant that is inspired by many different areas along the coast. We've been opened for over eight years and now have three convenient locations in Omaha. We offer a very casual environment with Omaha's best seafood. Open 7 days a week.

#### **Soaring Wings Vineyard**

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



Soaring Wings is one of the region's ultimate getaways just 10 minutes south of Omaha. Overlooking the Platte river valley, the view is often compared to Napa and Sonoma. Facilities include covered decks, outdoor seating for 3000, and indoor seating for 120. Come out and "Toast the Good Life".

#### **Sunrize Donuts**

402-614-2228 17676 Welch Plaza



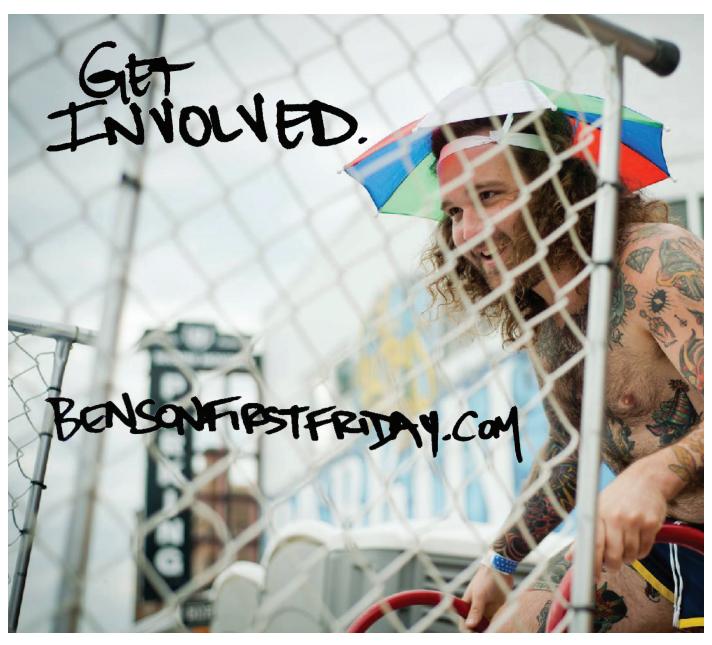
SunRize Donuts is a family owned donut shop serving the Omaha area for over 20 years. Enjoy over 50 different varieties. Our donuts and rolls are guaranteed fresh every day. Open 7 days a week from 6 a.m. until noon. Come in at 11:30 and enjoy half off!

#### Ted & Wally's

402-341-5827 1120 Jackson Street



Taste the difference of REAL homemade ice cream! Since 1984, we have been producing high-quality, homemade ice cream using only the highest quality ingredients, made the old-fashioned way. New flavors are continually being made in addition to several diabetic-friendly selections.





Let's say you come home to the apartment you share with Johnny Knoxville and when you open the front door a gallon of paint spills on your head and of course you look up, about to say "What the f—" and paint falls in your mouth.

Your stomach will be heroic. It has a checklist, and paint is not on it. The paint is sent back up like a firehose, because paint is not food. It is poisonous and your stomach is there to help.

Hot peppers are food. They grow on a plant and have seeds and they're green or some other attractive food color and they have nutritional value. They're on the checklist.

"people build up a tolerance for the heat, much like Muhammad Ali built up a tolerance for being punched in the face. Still, there is brain damage—which accounts for people wanting hotter peppers"

But peppers don't act like food. They're filled with capsaicin, a pepper's defense system designed to protect its little seeds, as a Detroit mama with a blowtorch will protect her babies.

Imagine that you are eating a raw jalapeño. Think of the satisfying crunch and the floral taste and the sort-of-tolerable after-burn. Right now your mouth is watering, isn't it? Probably a lot. Not because this food sounds tasty, but because your salivary glands are responding like tiny fire sprinklers. Your brain says you can eat peppers and your stomach checks them off the list, but your mouth is your first line of defense and the first to suffer. It has to act fast. It pushes the big red pain button.

One third of the world eats hot peppers every day. Food made with hot peppers does not need refrigeration, which is to say even bacteria won't eat them. These people build up a tolerance for the heat, much like Muhammad Ali built up a tolerance for being punched in the face. Still, there is brain damage—which accounts for people wanting hotter peppers.

Peppers are measured using the Scoville Scale, invented in 1912 by Wilbur Scoville, who fed human testers hot peppers and then counted their tears. Bell peppers rank 0 on the Scoville Scale. Your average jalapeño hits about 4000 Scoville heat units. A habanero screams 360,000 SHUs. Once a pepper

hits six digits, we should stop putting it in our mouths.

Now imagine a pepper that is 1 million Scoville heat units. You can't, because nobody can imagine more than 35 of anything. Peppers over 1 million SHU have names like Ghost and Scorpion. At these numbers the scale loses accuracy, but we can forgive the human subjects for superlatives like, "Ow ow OWW! It's a million

Currently the champion hottest pepper is the Reaper, weighing in at 2.2 million SHUs. For reference, pepper spray is 5 million, and we use that to bring down hardened criminals tripping on

meth. There are twenty people who have tried to eat a Reaper, and I know this because every one of them shot a YouTube video of their attempt, which shows they knew in advance how stupid it was. Every video shows young morons laughing nervously, then

being vaguely apprehensive, then panic-stricken, then frantically trying to rip off their own head.

They try to scream, but only hot air hisses out in the form of "mommy" because their vocal chords have retreated down to the boiling acids of the stomach, where it is safer. The lungs squeeze like fists until there is no more air to push, and the sphincter opens with a capital O. The eyes deflate and tumble back into the skull, which then crackles, hisses and ignites. The rest of the body is wrung like a dishrag as sweat glands raid it for more water.

I hope these people got a lot of YouTube ad revenue so they'll be happily remembered by their heirs.

"Always open the windows when cooking with peppers," offers Mike Hultquist, author of 1 Million Plus: Cooking with the World's Hottest Chili Peppers, "and turn on a fan." Someone tell your stomach that this same warning is printed on can of paint stripper.



545

DIRECTIONS FOR L Apply a liberal, even area is untreated. The stripper get to work it has started to bu further 10-15 minu be necessary.

FOOD&Spirits











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Our skilled designers bring the right mix of imagination and practical knowledge to create facilities with optimum traffic patterns, smooth workflow and maximum use of available space.

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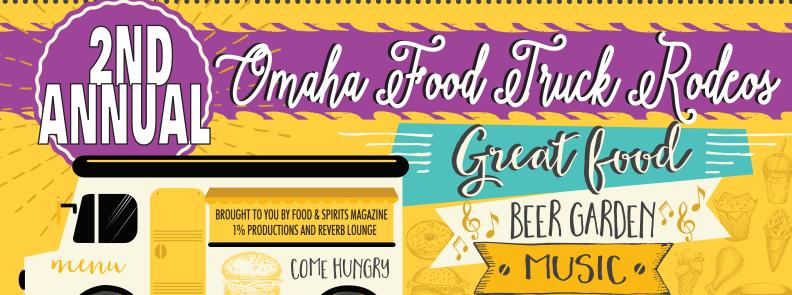












SATURDAY, MAY 20TH, 2017

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30TH, 2017

DOWNTOWN BENSON

(ON MILITARY AVENUE)

11 A.M. TO 11 P.M.

15-20 FOOD TRUCKS • DJ • BEER GARDEN • OUTDOOR BARS • OUTDOOR SEATING



at Metro Community College, some of whom will be on hand to help serve the pizza.