

sizzle

FALL
2011

THE AMERICAN CULINARY FEDERATION QUARTERLY FOR STUDENTS OF COOKING

A close-up photograph of a white plate featuring three round, browned meatballs. Each meatball is garnished with a thin green herb. The meatballs are arranged in a diagonal line. A vibrant orange slice is positioned to the right of the middle meatball. The plate is decorated with a drizzle of brown sauce and dollops of green sauce.

ethnic
appetizers

steak
au poivre,
two ways

the business of
sustainability

singapore's
hawker-style cuisine

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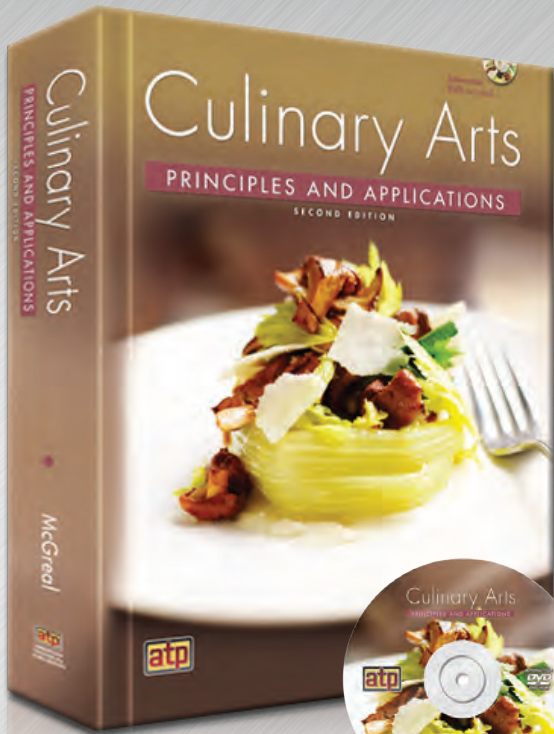
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cover: Lamb Chorizo Albondigas
with Mint Chimichurri from Seviche.



president's message

Becoming the Very Best You Can Be

By Michael Ty, CEC, AAC

Welcome back to campus. Again, you are faced with making significant decisions for your future.

Perhaps last year you loosely committed to being No. 1 among your peers. Now it's time to put all of your effort into becoming the very best you can be. Don't shortchange yourself. Nothing will come automatically or easily, but the time spent pursuing excellence will be a rewarding venture.

Now is the golden opportunity of your career. You are in an incubator of learning and inspiration. Work diligently and set good habits. Each day you

are developing your work ethic that will be with you throughout your career. During these years of learning at school and during your apprenticeship envision who you want to be in the future.

Today, the healthcare field is making great strides in culinary arts. New thoughts are emerging about how we feed not only patients, but also guests who come to hospitals. Consider all your career options. There are many paths within the culinary industry. In "Resuscitating Hospital Foodservice," we highlight several chefs who have chosen a career in hospital foodservice.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE becoming the very best

Sustainability is another topic you should pay close attention to in your studies. Learn best practices before you enter the professional kitchen and you'll find yourself ahead of the game. Read "Sustainability at Work" to learn steps you can take to be more sustainable in the workplace. From replacing light bulbs to upgrading equipment, there's a wealth of information in this article.

There are many opportunities for new chefs. Be the one to establish a breakthrough in nutrition, sanitation, sustainability or product development. Experiment with new offerings in seafood or vegetables, or resurrect some long-forgotten methods. The only hurdles you face in accomplishing extraordinary gains are your own fears. As Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself."

Returning to your studies this year indicates that you have the right attitude. Now, begin developing your aptitude to be one of the culinary leaders of the future.



As each year goes by, new challenges will arise. Learn to accept them. Begin building your library of significant items you wish to always have on hand for reference, whether books, articles or recipes. Adjust your personality, if needed, to be someone who is always welcomed in groups and conversations. Make your voice one that is sought out by others. Try to always contribute to the general welfare of your contemporaries; you are all learning together.

Get involved with your local American Culinary Federation (ACF) chapter and participate as much as your time allows. Involvement allows you to engage with chefs who can impact your future.

As I have advised before, seek mentors who will guide you throughout your career. I know that my mentors have aided me greatly.

Finally, take my advice and you will be better prepared for interviews: Learn to articulate your culinary knowledge, expertise and expectations, and be prepared to express where you see yourself in the future. Always be positive, assertive and honest. These are three characteristics of a great leader. ■

Sincerely,

Michael Ty, CEC, AAC
National President
American Culinary Federation

above: Michael Ty, CEC, AAC, far right, and Kristin Swaggart, 2011 Be Like "Mike" winner, far left, with the 2011 Student Culinarian Invitational teams in Dallas, July 23.

amuse-bouche

News & Opportunities



student wins grey poupon contest

Congratulations to Thitid Tassanakajohn, winner of the Future Chefs of Grey Poupon Student Culinary Competition that took place at The Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, N.Y., in April. Tassanakajohn took home a \$5,000 scholarship from Kraft Foodservice for his Blossom Tempura Club Sandwich. José Frayre took home \$3,000 for second place, and Brooke Maynard took home \$1,000 for third place.



Portland, Ore., was awarded a \$500 scholarship and third place.

dessert professional's top 10 pastry chefs

Who are the crème de la crème of the pastry world? *Dessert Professional* named its top picks in June at The Institute of Culinary Education in New York. [Find out who was selected at www.dessertprofessional.com.] Also at the event, Jacquy Pfeiffer, co-founder/owner of the French Pastry School, Chicago, was inducted into the magazine's Hall of Fame.

students get creative with pears

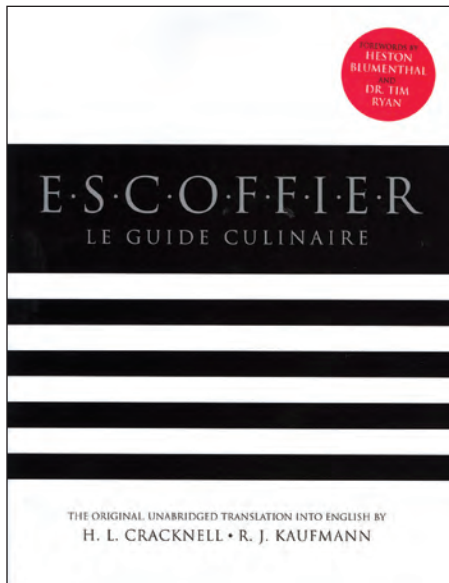
Charles O'Neill, a student at The Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, N.Y., took top honors and \$2,500, as well as the People's Choice award, for his Pomegranate Pear French Toast in the USA Pears Culinary Competition in May. Jacquy Wou of Santa Barbara City College, Santa Barbara, Calif., earned second place and a \$1,000 scholarship, and Michelle Soto of Le Cordon Bleu in

did you know?

According to USDA's Economic Research Service, the U.S. consumed 410 million pounds of honey in 2010. Celebrate national honey month by finding new uses for nature's tasty treat. And don't stop there; find new uses for rice, too, during national rice month (also in September). There are more than 120,000 rice varieties worldwide, from jasmine to black japonica, so get cooking.

top: From left to right: Michelle Soto, Charles O'Neill and Jacquy Wou.

bottom left: Thitid Tassanakajohn



new reads!

After more than a century, Auguste Escoffier's *Le Guide Culinaire* remains a must-have culinary resource. The new English translation, *Escoffier: Le Guide Culinaire* (Wiley Hardcover, June 2011, \$70), contains Escoffier's original foreword and more than 5,000 recipes written in narrative form.

Looking for a cookbook focused on cooking for one? If so, you're in luck with these two recent releases. In *Cooking for One* (Lebhar-Friedman Books, April 2011, \$24.95), authors Mark and Lisa Erickson and The Culinary Institute of America share seasonal recipes and demonstrate how to plan satisfying single meals, stressing mise en place, shopping strategies and maintaining a stocked pantry. In *Serve Yourself: Nightly Adventures in Cooking for One* (Ten Speed Press, March 2011, \$22), Washington Post food and travel editor Joe Yonan shares more than 100 single-serving dishes. The nearly 200-page book includes ideas for managing leftovers and has a range of global-inspired recipes.

kendall college launches new program

Kendall College School of Culinary Arts, Chicago, launches a program next month for part-time students seeking to complete a bachelor's degree in culinary arts. Designed

for working adults who have already obtained an associate degree in culinary arts from Kendall, the program will blend online and traditional on-campus instruction, and courses will last 10 weeks. More at kendall.edu.

american culinary federation names new board

The American Culinary Federation's (ACF) new national Board of Directors for the 2011-2013 term officially took office July 26 at the end of the ACF National Convention in Dallas. Michael Ty, CEC, AAC, will continue serving the organization as president. Visit www.acfchefs.org/board for the full list of who will lead the organization in the coming years.

sodexo pledges \$150,000 for CIA scholarships

Sodexo recently announced a gift of \$150,000 toward two scholarships for the next three years at The Culinary Institute of America (CIA), San Antonio, that will provide additional educational opportunities for Hispanic students who aspire to be the foodservice leaders of tomorrow. One scholarship is for new students and the other will assist a current student in financial need. In addition, beginning in 2012, the company will offer a paid externship for San Antonio students.

free seafood cooking lessons

Want to learn more about cooking seafood? If so, you'll enjoy a series of free seafood instructional videos from Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, featuring chefs Christine Keff from Flying Fish, Seattle, Jason Wilson from CRUSH, Seattle, and Dan Enos from Oceanaire Seafood Room, Boston. View the videos and learn new techniques at www.alaskaseafood.org/chef-cooking-techniques-videos.

JWU grad wins grape contest

Kudos to Elijah Gurman of Eden Restaurant, South Beach, Fla., and a recent graduate of Johnson & Wales University, North Miami, Fla. Gurman's Grape Fennel Flan recipe won \$1,500 and first place in California Table Grape Commission's Foodservice Recipe Contest.

take survey and win

Are you a young chef under 25 years of age? If so, complete the World

Association of Chefs Societies (WACS) Young Chef Survey for the chance to win one of three WACS Premium Dick knives. You'll also receive a one-year subscription to the *World Chefs* magazine. Click here to take the survey.

send us your news

We want to hear from you. Send recipe contests, student accomplishments and school announcements to sizzle@acfcchefs.net. ■

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slice of life

Alexandra Saurer



age

24

education

June 2011 graduate, The International Culinary School at The Art Institute of Atlanta

internship

Flavors Magazine: Atlanta's Dining Scene, Atlanta

why there?

Flavors Magazine allows me to combine two of my passions—cooking and writing.

things I learned that I didn't know in culinary school

Producing a food/dining magazine takes collaboration. Working with a team of writers, photographers, stylists and editors makes my job interesting.

career plans

I hope to one day be an inspiration to the next generation of female chefs. I would enjoy a career that intertwines cooking and food journalism. I'd also like to own a fine-dining restaurant one day.

5:00 a.m.

I hop out of bed, grab a cup of coffee, shower, throw my hair into a ponytail and race to my job at White Columns Country Club, Alpharetta, Ga.



5 am

12 pm

12:00 p.m.

Today is a day like most others—hectic, with countless breakfast and lunch tickets, and a large golf tournament. The hot line is frenzied, but exactly where I want to be. I wouldn't change the pace or any aspects of my job. This is the world of a culinarian.



4:00 p.m.

I arrive home to several emails from *Flavors Magazine*, Atlanta's premier and award-winning fine-dining publication, with a following of faithful readers who want cutting-edge information on the latest local food and wine trends, recipes, chef and restaurant news, travel, entertainment, and kitchen and home design tips for upscale lifestyles. I again tweak my beverage article on fall flavors; thankfully, it is received well. I make sure my edits include my editor's suggestions and changes.

This is the best internship in the world.



6:00 p.m.

I check my email. The text of my article is finalized, although I still have to submit my recipes. A light bulb goes off, as it occurs to me that cranberry, apple, sage and thyme can be mixed nicely with bourbon or whiskey, and that cranberry and mint make for an intriguing and pleasant flavor combination. These flavors are highlighted in the article, but I haven't incorporated them successfully into the recipes yet. I head to my kitchen to experiment before my recipe deadline at midnight.



10:00 p.m.

I finalize my recipes and revise my article one last time, incorporating the new text that highlights the drinks I've created.

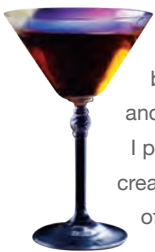
11:05 p.m.

I write an email to the editor, thanking her for her encouragement and support. I attach the recipes and finalized article and hit "send." With fingers crossed, I hope the final submission is accepted and that the article is complete.

4 pm 5 pm 6 pm 7 pm 8 pm 9 pm 10 pm 11 pm

4:45 p.m.

I email revisions to the editor and finish my research on spices—cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom, mace, etc.—that we are incorporating into drinks being created for the article. Pears, pumpkins and pomegranates are figuring prominently at this point. Sage and thyme are flavors I associate with fall. I consider how they can be incorporated into adult beverages and what flavors they will pair well with. I pretty much have carte blanche in the creation of this issue's drinks, assuming, of course, that they are appealing and taste great.



7:30 p.m.

I may have discovered a couple of successful flavor combinations, so I invite several enthusiastic friends over to test my pomegranate, pumpkin and apple/basil creations. In anticipation of their arrival, I make a healthful salad and a cheese platter, an easy showstopper.

9:15 p.m.

My taste testers are giddy, and the recipes are a go. However, the jury is still out on a vodka and ginger beer libation.

11:55 p.m.

With brilliant changes going through my mind and more creative ways I could have expressed my thoughts, I dash to the computer to make a few last-minute changes. I will email the editor first thing in the morning. I love the way my days combine the best of both my worlds. I couldn't ask for more. This is a great life.



classical v. modern



top: Jacques Wilson,
CEC, AAC, CDM
bottom: Jonathan Ikinaga

Steak au poivre, or pepper steak, is a classical French dish served in many restaurants across the country. Just search the Web and you'll find recipes from leading chefs, including Tom Colicchio, who uses skirt steak, shallots, Dijon mustard, brandy and spinach; Alton Brown, who uses tenderloin steaks and cognac; and a version by Anthony Bourdain from *Anthony Bourdain's Les Halles Cookbook* (Bloomsbury, 2004).

When we asked Jacques Wilson, CEC, AAC, certified dietary manager (CDM), executive chef at El Camino Hospital in El Camino, Calif., to come up with a classical dish to prepare for this issue of *Sizzle*, steak au poivre was his No. 1

pick. He worked with Jonathan Ikinaga, a 2011 graduate of Mountain View High School, Mountain View, Calif., who starts his bachelor's degree in culinary arts at The Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, N.Y., this semester, to show how a classical dish can be modernized while still respecting its tradition.

"We chose to prepare this classical dish because we both enjoy beef and wanted something savory and spicy," says Wilson.

Wilson drew from his many years working as an executive chef and preparing this dish in restaurants such as The Sardine Factory, Monterey, Calif., and at resorts such as Vista Verde Guest Ranch, Steamboat Springs,

Colo. "More times than not, it is received as a comfort food or a classic dish that is welcomed anytime."

When researching which classical recipe to use, Wilson and Ikinaga decided on Julia Child's and Jacques Pépin's. The classical recipe features filet mignon that is coated with loosely cracked peppercorns and then cooked. Other traditional ingredients are cognac or brandy for the sauce and *pommes frites* for a side, Wilson says.

"The New York strip steak, or shell steak, was introduced when steak au poivre became popular in the U.S.," says Wilson. "My thought process was to keep the integrity of the classical dish as it was meant to be."



classical

STEAK AU POIVRE 1. Classical steak au poivre features filet mignon cooked with loosely cracked peppercorns and pan juices. **2.** Steak au poivre is a simple dish that uses few ingredients. **3.** Shallots, cognac, beef stock, cream and butter are key ingredients for the traditional pan sauce served atop steak au poivre. **4.** *Pommes frites* and haricots verts are common sides. Double-frying *pommes frites* creates a crispier finish.



modern

BEEF SHOULDER PETITE TENDER AU POIVRE WITH MUSHROOM/POTATO GRATIN 1. Beef shoulder petite tender, a modern cut of meat, is used instead of filet mignon. **2.** Black and green peppercorns, fennel and Marsala give the modern version a sweet and peppery taste. **3.** Flavored mustard and black pepper oil gives the sauce a unique flavor. **4.** Potatoes are a common side with steak au poivre. Here, mushroom/potato gratin adds a cleaner presentation that allows the meat to shine. **5.** Instead of haricots verts, Broccolini and tomatoes are served, adding another flavor profile and a touch of color to the presentation.

classical

Preparing steak au poivre was a new experience for 18-year old Ikinaga. A native of Mountain View, Calif., his mother, who also works at El Camino Hospital, connected him with Wilson, because Wilson is a graduate of The Culinary Institute of America. Soon, they were researching and preparing steak au poivre together.

Ikinaga loves Latin American food and admires many chefs, but says Bobby Flay is his favorite because “it seems to me that he was my first teacher in the field.”

Not straying from Child’s and Pépin’s recipe for the dish, Ikinaga worked with Wilson to make sure the dish contained all the classical elements. Wilson points out that the classical French dish uses high-quality beef and is typically seared in a hot skillet with a small amount of butter and oil. The steak is seared at a high temperature to cook the outside quickly and form the crust, while leaving the interior rare to medium-rare. The dish is commonly accompanied by a pan sauce made by reducing cognac, heavy cream and ingredients such as butter and shallots, and is served with potatoes.

“Some of the skills I used when creating this recipe were seasoning the steak, searing, and deglazing the pan,” says Ikinaga. “The first time I made the dish on my own, I didn’t taste the sauce as I was preparing it, and it came out a little under-seasoned. I was reminded how important it is to taste as you go.” ■

Steak au Poivre

Yield: 4 servings

Jonathan Ikinaga
Student
The Culinary Institute of America
Hyde Park, N.Y.

Ingredients:

Pommes frites

2 large **Russet potatoes**

Peanut oil (enough for 3 in. depth in large saucepan)

Kosher salt, as needed for service

Steak

¼ t. **salt**

3 T. **black peppercorns**

4 (6 oz). **filet mignons**

2 T. unsalted **butter**

2 T. **grapeseed oil**

¼ cup **shallots**

2 oz. **cognac**

1 cup **beef stock**

¼ cup **heavy cream**

2 T. soft **butter**

¼ cup chopped **parsley**

Haricots verts

12 oz. **haricots verts**, trimmed

¼ cup **olive oil**

4 cloves **garlic**, peeled and thinly sliced

Kosher salt and freshly cracked **black pepper**, as needed

1 T. **butter**

Prepare pommes frites:

1. On a mandoline, cut potatoes, skin on, into ¼-inch-thick strips. Cover in cold water. Change water at least three times or until clear; soak for 1 hour.

2. Heat oil to 320°F. Drain potatoes; dry with paper towels. Fry

potatoes about 4-5 minutes or until cooked through but not browned. Remove to paper-towel-lined plate. Reserve oil.

Note: *Pommes frites* can be prepared a few hours in advance, but leave at room temperature.

Prepare steak:

1. Place salt and peppercorns in heavy-duty sealable plastic bag. With bottom of heavy skillet or using spice grinder, crush ingredients until coarse.

2. Pat steaks dry; coat both sides with peppercorn mixture. In 10-inch heavy skillet, heat butter and grapeseed oil over moderate heat until hot but not smoking. Cook until tender, about 3 minutes; turn steaks over. Spoon pan juices over steaks; cook until medium-rare. Transfer to plates; hold for service.

3. Pour off excess fat from skillet. Sauté shallots for 2 minutes. Add cognac; deglaze pan. Add beef stock; bring to a boil. Reduce sauce by half. Add cream; bring back to a boil until sauce thickens and coats back of spoon, about 1 minute. Add butter; swirl until incorporated. Add parsley. Hold for service.

Prepare haricots verts:

1. Bring large pot of salted water over medium heat to a boil. In large bowl, prepare ice bath. Drop green beans in boiling water to blanch for 60 seconds. Immediately remove beans; shock in ice bath.

2. In large sauté pan over low heat, add olive oil and garlic. Fry garlic slices until golden, about 2-3 minutes. Remove garlic to paper towels to drain.

3. Remove green beans from ice bath. Using same sauté pan, add green beans to hot garlic-infused olive oil. Raise heat to high; cook, tossing frequently, about 2-3 minutes, for fried garlic slices. Season with salt and pepper.

4. While tossing beans, add butter. Taste; adjust seasoning if necessary.

At service:

1. Heat reserved *pommes frites* oil to 365-375°F. In batches, drop *pommes frites* into oil; fry until golden-brown and crispy. Remove to plate or baking sheet lined with paper towels. Season with salt; serve immediately.

2. To plate: Place steak in center of plate. Add *pommes frites*. Place haricots verts next to steak; add sauce over steak.



modern

Wilson was first introduced to steak au poivre as a student at The Culinary Institute of America in 1983, at the school's Escoffier Restaurant. Throughout his career, he has refined the dish.

Here, he uses a petite tender cut from the chuck, which he says was introduced to the culinary world in the early 2000s, instead of filet mignon. Black and green peppercorns, fennel and Marsala give the dish a sweet and peppery taste. Adding flavored mustard in the sauce and infused pepper oil also brings the classical dish to a new level. Other changes include preparing mushroom/potato gratin rather than *pommes frites*.

Broccolini, an underutilized vegetable, and grape tomatoes also accompany the dish rather than haricots verts. "Broccolini is versatile, and can be substituted in any situation in which cooks might use conventional broccoli," he says. "We serve it weekly at El Camino. I chose pear tomatoes to add color and to complement the Broccolini with a bit of acidity and sweetness."

There are many components to the modern version, which students may find challenging. "With any recipe, having your mise en place is half the battle," Wilson advises.

As a hospital chef since 2008 and a CDM since 2010, Wilson also suggests several ways to make the dish healthier. "You could poach the beef in an infused beef broth and thicken the sauce with a cornstarch slurry to reduce the overall fat content. Also, try using whole grains or lentils instead of *pommes frites*." ■

Beef Shoulder Petite Tender au Poivre with Mushroom/Potato Gratin

Yield: 4 servings

Jacques Wilson, CEC, AAC, CDM
Executive Chef
El Camino Hospital
Mountain View, Calif.

Ingredients:

Mushroom/potato gratin

4 oz. sliced **mushrooms**
 1 T. **butter**
 Salt and ground **black pepper**, to taste
 1 **clove garlic**, minced
 1 T. fresh **thyme leaves**
 2 medium **russet potatoes** (about 1 lb.), sliced thin
 4 oz. grated **Asiago cheese**
 6 oz. **chicken broth**
 6 oz. **cream**

Steak

¼ t. **salt**
 2 T. **black peppercorns**
 1 t. **fennel seeds**
 2 T. **green peppercorns** in brine, drained
 24 oz. **beef shoulder petite tender**, trimmed
 1 T. unsalted **butter**
 1 T. **olive oil**
 2 T. diced **shallots**
 3 oz. **Marsala**
 ½ cup **heavy cream**
 1 T. **basil mustard**

Seasonal fresh vegetables

12 oz. **Broccolini**
 2 T. unsalted **butter**
 1 t. minced **garlic**
 12 grape **tomatoes**, peeled

For service

1 T. **black pepper oil**

Prepare mushroom/potato gratin:

1. Sauté mushrooms in butter with a pinch of salt over medium heat for 15 minutes, or until well-browned; set aside.
2. Butter four 8 oz. aluminum cups. Rub bottom with garlic; sprinkle thyme leaves. Separate potatoes into thirds. Put ⅓ potatoes in four cups. Top each with salt and pepper. Divide mushrooms in half; split each ½ among four cups. Divide cheese into thirds; split ⅓ among four cups. Repeat all steps to make second layer in each cup. Top each cup with last ⅓ potatoes. Cover each cup with chicken broth and cream. Top with remaining ⅓ cheese.
3. Cover cups with foil. Bake at 350°F for 35 minutes. Remove foil; bake another 15 minutes or until potatoes are tender and top has browned. Let rest for 15 minutes. Slide tip of sharp knife in cup around potato. Once loose, remove potato. Keep warm for service.

Prepare steak:

1. Place salt, black peppercorns and fennel seeds in heavy-duty sealable plastic bag. With bottom of heavy skillet or using spice grinder, crush ingredients until coarse. Chop green

peppercorns; add to mixture.

2. Pat petite tender dry; coat both sides with peppercorn mixture. In 10-inch heavy skillet, heat butter and oil over moderate heat until hot but not smoking. Cook for 3-4 minutes on all sides for medium-rare. Transfer to plate; hold for service.
3. Pour off excess fat from skillet; sauté shallots for 2 minutes. Deglaze with Marsala; add cream. Bring to a boil, stirring pan with wooden spoon to scrape up browned bits, until sauce thickens and coats back of spoon, about 1 minute. Whisk in mustard.

Prepare seasonal fresh vegetables:

1. In large pot of boiling salted water, blanch Broccolini for 2 minutes. Drain immediately; immerse in bowl of ice water.
2. Melt butter in large sauté pan. Add garlic; stir. Drain Broccolini; add to garlic mixture. Heat for 2 minutes. Add tomatoes. Toss well before serving.

At service:

Slice beef shoulder petite tender, 5 oz. per serving. On hot plate, place mushroom/potato gratin. Put beef on top. Place Broccolini and tomatoes on side. Spoon sauce over meat; drizzle black pepper oil on top.





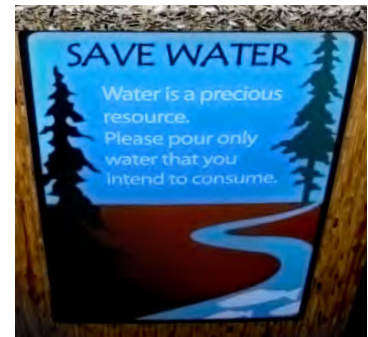
sustainability

AT WORK



Environmental watchfulness is more than
a trend; it's the business of the future.

By Jody Shee



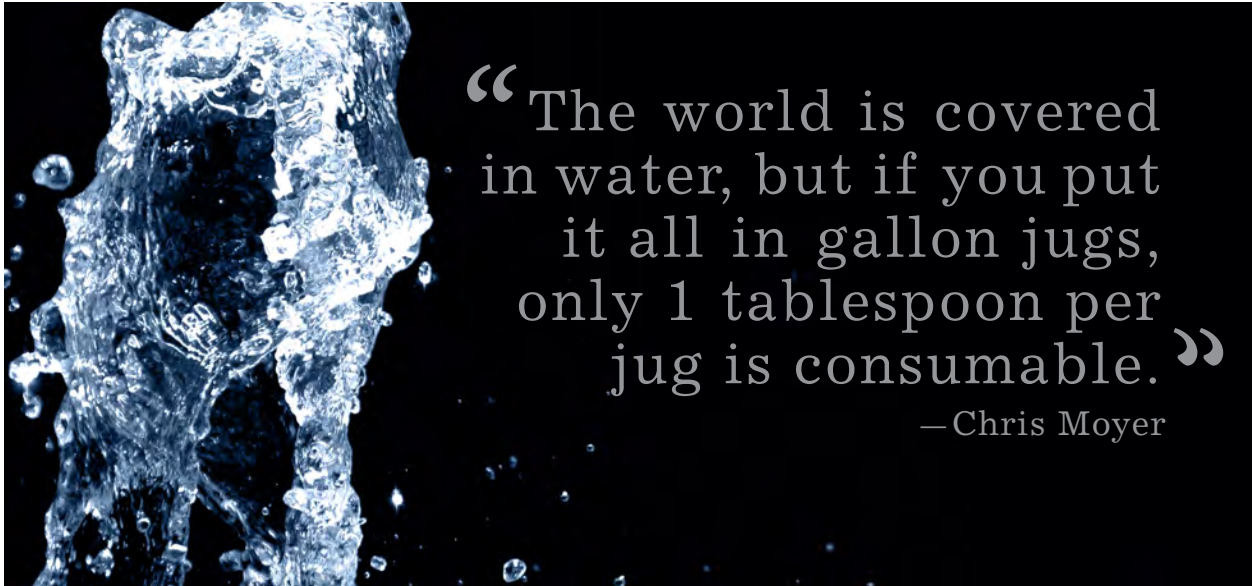
Two decades ago, when Ina Pinkney opened her first Chicago restaurant, there was miniscule foodservice-industry awareness of crammed landfills, water shortages and energy conservation. She just knew intuitively that Styrofoam was not an acceptable takeout option for leftovers, and looked for alternative packaging.

These days, to-go containers are a mere fraction of the environmental consciousness in foodservice, and Pinkney, owner of Ina's in Chicago's West Loop, is one of the leading forces in the movement toward sustainability in the Chicago foodservice market. She helped develop the Green Chicago Restaurant

Co-op, which allows operators to combine purchasing power and collaborate on environmental best practices.

Like other industry leaders, she has great hopes for culinary students. "They grew up with an [environmental] awareness. Young students are the ones who will lead the way. They will demand things like composting."

The foodservice industry is one of the greatest product and energy users and wasters. Some 4-10 percent of the food restaurants purchase is wasted before it ever reaches the guest, which is \$100,000 in waste per \$1 million spent on food, according to Portland, Ore.-



“The world is covered in water, but if you put it all in gallon jugs, only 1 tablespoon per jug is consumable.”

—Chris Moyer

based LeanPath, a technology company providing food waste tracking systems to the foodservice industry.

“The majority of energy purchased by commercial foodservice goes to waste, with no purpose,” says Richard Young, senior engineer and director of education for Fisher-Nickel, Inc. (Food Service Technology Center), San Ramon, Calif., an engineering consulting firm specializing in energy efficiency in commercial kitchens. The restaurant industry uses seven times more gas and electricity than the retail industry and five times more than the lodging industry, according to company research. Restaurant kitchens use five times more energy per square foot than the rest of the building.

do your research

Water conservation, energy efficiency, recycling and composting are common focus areas in sustainable business practices. Studying these areas matters for several reasons. Rather than a trend, sustainability is the way business will be done in the future, and the industry has a long way to go, says Christopher Koetke, CEC, CCE, HAAC, MBA, executive director of Kendall College’s School of Culinary Arts, Chicago, and vice president of Laureate International Universities Center of Excellence in Culinary Arts.

Beyond the “rightness” of sustainable practices, it makes the best business sense. “To

operate as cheaply as possible, you can’t waste energy and water,” Young says. “Those who want to be good business people need to know sustainability.”

Young notices that larger chains are getting into energy efficiency, with independent restaurants and cafes slower to adopt better business practices. “I feel they want to do it, but it takes time to figure it out.”

Sustainability knowledge will also one day be required as part of culinary schools’ curriculums. The American Culinary Federation (ACF) has added sustainability competencies to its training log for apprentices, requiring students to focus on it in the areas of water, waste, procurement and energy. ACF will also soon expand the

demand to its postsecondary accreditation process. This summer, ACF finished filming 33 training videos covering sustainability best practices.

So what can you do to get ahead of the curve? Start by paying attention to these key areas.

watch your water

“Water will become a gigantic issue in the future,” says Koetke. “There is crazy misuse of clean water.” Water availability is one issue, but heating it adds to energy costs, and sewer systems are another cost.

While water conservation is growing, it’s not happening fast enough, says Chris Moyer, project manager of the National Restaurant Association’s (NRA) Conserve: Solutions for Sustainability initiative. He notes that 70 percent of U.S. cities are experiencing drought. “The world is covered in water, but if you put it all in gallon jugs, only 1 tablespoon per jug is consumable.”

Traditional restaurant business practices tend to waste water, but they don’t need to. Transfer frozen product from the freezer to the refrigerator for a time rather than running it under water to thaw, Moyer suggests.

Toilets are the No. 1 use of water, Koetke says. Restaurants should have toilets that don’t use more than a gallon per flush.

Low-flow toilets and sinks were at the top of the sustainable to-do list when Laura Wood Habr, co-owner of Croc’s 19th Street Bistro, Virginia Beach, Va., made renovations to the 50-year-old restaurant building. But she also looked at simpler things. “Don’t bring a glass of water to a table unless it’s requested,” she says. “In the summer, if there’s a pitcher of water left, water the plants outside.”

As dishwashers wear out, replace them with water-efficient Energy Star®-rated versions. The same goes with any equipment, Habr suggests. (Energy Star is a program with a rating developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with the help of Fisher-Nickel, Inc., to ensure that products and equipment meet specific energy efficient standards.)

conserve energy

An immediate way for restaurants to save money is to focus on saving energy. “Consider the power-up-and-down schedule,” Koetke says. For example, change the practice of turning on the



oven at 8 a.m. and leaving it on all day. Rather, turn it on only when needed. It saves on air-conditioning costs, as well.

He recommends updating ventilation systems, when appropriate, with variable-speed controls rather than mere on-off switches.

Energy efficient light bulbs and programmable thermostats are ways Pinkney has found to cut energy costs. She also puts plastic over the windows with curtains over the top beginning in late October to keep the heat in and the cold out. She has seen her utility bills decrease from \$600 or \$700 per month to \$200 or \$300, simply by following through on her environmental consciousness and getting the staff to buy into it.



Fixing water leaks not only saves water, but the expense to heat it. A small leak can waste up to 100,000 gallons of water a year, according to Fisher-Nickel.

reduce waste

Food leads to waste, and disposing of waste is an area the foodservice industry is becoming more mindful of. “Universities are leaders in this, because students demand it,” Young says, noting the importance of focusing on both pre- and post-consumer waste.

Surprisingly, recycling and composting may be the least understood and the most under-supported areas of sustainability, Pinkney says.

As a Green Chicago Restaurant Co-op leader, she researched (sometimes following) waste haulers in the Chicago area to find haulers that were recycling correctly, and found that, in the end, most were co-mingling the recyclables and non-recyclables. Do your research, she advises.

Composting possibilities are even worse, she says. There is no way of composting biodegradables in Chicago and many other big cities. “Some guys pick up the stuff from some restaurants and take it to Indiana, leaving a big carbon footprint all the way there,” she says. “We need composting in every city. We’re not further ahead, and that’s a huge issue.”

It’s at the top of the NRA Conserve program’s to-do list. The organization recently entered into collaboration with Zero Waste Zone, Atlanta, to build infrastructures around the country to support restaurant recycling and composting, Moyer says, adding, “Waste diversion in foodservice is a very up-and-coming trend. It’s hot, with more operators trying to see how to do it.”

make a difference

Determine to learn all you can about sustainability, and follow in the footsteps of restaurant owners and chefs who are already making a difference.

Habr with Croc’s 19th Street Bistro has focused on sustainable restaurant business practices her entire restaurant career. Croc’s was the first Virginia restaurant to be certified Virginia Green in a state program that encourages green practices in all sectors of the tourism industry. Habr didn’t stop with recycling, replacing fixtures and equipment with Energy Star-certified items and replacing lighting with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) lighting. She also serves as a green restaurant and hospitality consultant for Greener Results, Lisle, Ill., a sustainability

consulting group for businesses. She was on the NRA think tank committee that helped advise on best practices, which eventually led to the Conserve initiative.

Her efforts and involvement have come back to the restaurant in increased publicity and media exposure. Plus, “It’s been great for our staff to feel like they are part of something and working somewhere that is doing something bigger,” she says. “It’s helped open their eyes and educate them.”

As with any initiative, the limelight easily focuses on misinformation and non-experts. Pinkney calls the result “greenwashing” (think, hogwash). To avoid environmental incorrectness, certification on various levels will become increasingly important.

For one, the Green Restaurant Association, Boston, helps restaurants become more sustainable through consulting and certification. To be certified green, restaurants must accumulate points for adhering to certain environmental standards in several categories, have a full-scale recycling program, be free of Styrofoam and be involved in continuing education. Currently, more than 340 restaurants are certified,

says communications manager Jennifer Fleck, adding, “Our growth doubled in 2008 and again in 2009.”

Green Seal, Washington, D.C., is another agency that develops sustainability standards for products, services and companies, and offers third-party certification.

Restaurants in Chicago that have been certified by one of these organizations and are members of the Green Chicago Restaurant Co-op get a “Guaranteed Green” seal to display on the front door so consumers know they have truly done what it takes, Pinkney says.

Going forward, young people will demand sustainability as they learn more about it at their universities, Young with Fisher-Nickel says. “Guess where they will want to eat? Those places that mirror their core values. Restaurants are catching onto that, and if culinary students want to get a job, they better know what they are talking about regarding sustainability.” ■

Jody Shee, an Olathe, Kan.-based freelance writer and editor, previously was editor of a foodservice magazine. She has 20 years of food writing experience and writes the blog www.sheefood.com.

did you know?

- 65 percent of restaurants have recycling programs in place. Of those, 74 percent use recycling programs in the back of the house and 43 percent use a program in the front of the house.
- Only 13 percent of restaurant operators participate in composting programs.
- 60 percent of consumers prefer to visit restaurants with recycling programs.
- 85 percent of consumers are willing to sort quick-service recyclables into bins, and 51 percent are willing to pay a little more at restaurants that recycle.

More at restaurantsrecycle.com.

for more information

Attempting to mine the depths of foodservice sustainability? Check out these useful sites:

- www.acfchefs.org
Go to “Resources” then “Sustainability Corner” for free articles.
- conserve.restaurant.org
Select “Find Resources” tab for federal and state resources.
- www.dinegreen.com
Visit for information on becoming environmentally responsible.
- www.energystar.gov
Start with the “Partner Resources” tab.
- www.fishnick.com
Click on the “Education” tab for resources.
- www.greenseal.org
Visit to learn about sustainability standards.
- www.leanpath.com
Under “Education,” select “Food Waste Tool Kit.”

FIRST-COURSE adventure

From Latin American eats to Nepalese cuisine, ethnic appetizers liven up menus and introduce guests to new flavors.

By Kathryn Kjarsgaard





Appetizers provide chefs with a comfortable platform from which to introduce guests to more-adventurous items. They also serve as a way for chefs to flex their artistic muscles and use inventory. At restaurants across the country, ethnic offerings are lighting up the menu, so much so that the National Restaurant Association named ethnic appetizers the No. 1 trend in the appetizers category in the “What’s Hot in 2011” survey.

“For a restaurant, appetizers can be very profitable,” says John Dion, associate professor at Johnson & Wales University’s Providence, R.I., campus. “They also are a good way for cooks to express themselves. If students are more artistically inclined,

they gravitate to appetizers to show their skills.”

Among appetizers, small bites are a popular trend. “Americans are finally getting better at sharing,” says Dion. “We’re better at communal dining now. Offerings such as tapas are providing more selection and adventure in dining.”

Utilization of product in the kitchen is also behind the ethnic appetizers movement. In the past, Dion notes, what was left over in the kitchen would often be used for an amuse-bouche, but now, appetizers change nightly.

Anthony Lamas, chef/owner of the Latin-inspired Sevice in Louisville, Ky., agrees “Chefs

are using all parts of the animal, and that means they are creating food that lets customers be more adventurous. Guests can take a small bite of something different, but fun, that’s presented on a skewer, and see how it tastes. We’re frying ears and using them as a crisp, using tongue in tacos, and using head meat in terrines and pâtés. There’s no waste.”

Cliff Ostrowski, executive chef/general manager at China Grill Chicago, which has six locations worldwide and features world cuisine with an Asian influence, says the public is more educated about food today and is eager to try new foods.

“Sushi has been popular for a while, but it’s becoming even more popular. It has quickly become our best-selling item in the restaurant,” says Ostrowski. “It’s insanely popular. Many consider it an appetizer, and start with it. It changes the course of how guests order, and sometimes, it’s almost like a side dish.”

what's new?

Dion of Johnson & Wales University has taught a course on international cuisine for more than 15 years. He covers 16 regions of cuisine, and everything from appetizers to entrees to desserts.

“Our lineup has not changed a lot, since our goal is technique. However, I see Asian and South American flavors as hot areas now for ethnic appetizers,” Dion says. “Italian and French foods are rigid. I think there’s confusion with fusion. It’s not how many different ingredients you can add. You still want chicken to taste like chicken. I tell students not to mask a dish with so much stuff just for the sake of being different.”

In his course, students have fun with dishes such as tapas and *paglia e fieno*. While encouraging creativity, Dion also teaches cost-effectiveness. “You’re not going to make money if you’re using unusual, expensive, hard-to-get ingredients like mushrooms from the side of a mountain you can only get two times a year,” Dion says. “Use what’s in the fridge.”

Influences from South America, particularly Peru, Argentina and Brazil, are also experiencing a wave of popularity, in addition to Asian cuisine, according to Dion.

“Asian food is considered healthy, which is big right now,” he says. “It’s also visual, especially appetizers like salmon tartare. Sushi-style appetizers with meat are also popular.”

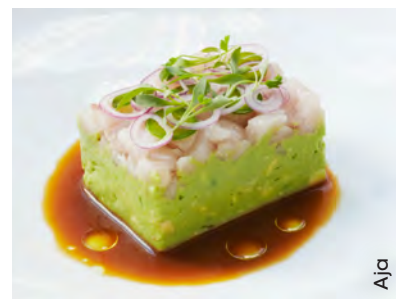
a taste of nepal

Amrit Thakali, owner/chef at Yak & Yeti, Somerville, Mass., is a native of Nepal. He opened Yak & Yeti to introduce diners to Indian and Nepalese cuisines. “Everyone is looking for a new taste in the U.S.,” he says. “They’ve had Thai, Chinese, Japanese and Korean, but have not had Nepali food.”

One way Yak & Yeti offers guests a taste of Nepal is by introducing them to goat meat with the restaurant’s *khasi sekuwa* appetizer. “Goat is unusual in the U.S., but prevalent in Nepal and India and much of the world,” Thakali says. “We’re seeing more and more people want to try it.”

The goat meat is cubed and marinated overnight in a mixture of ginger, garlic, cumin powder, coriander and mustard oil. Then, it is cooked over charcoal, hence earning the name *sekuwa*, meaning cooked over a fire. It is served over salad.

Thakali gets seasonings timur, which looks like black peppers, and jambu directly from Nepal to add authentic flavor. Timur is used in chicken mo-mo, a popular steamed chicken-dumpling appetizer that includes ground chicken and tomato, and is served with tomato chutney.



opposite: At Solera, patrons enjoy this Thai-style calamari appetizer.

top: At Johnson & Wales University, sophomore culinary students can learn about worldwide flavors in the school’s International Cuisine class, taught by professor John Dion, right.

bottom: Hamachi guacamole served at Aja at the Dana Hotel and Spa.



Seviche



Johnson & Wales University

latin american meats

Goose Sorensen is chef/owner of Solera, a Denver restaurant inspired by Spanish farmhouse cuisine that serves New American food. “We’re into educating diners and encouraging them to try new things on our menu,” says Sorensen.

One popular appetizer is *albondigas*, Spanish meatballs served in a bacon/tomato stew. Sorensen makes the meatballs with wild-boar bacon instead of pork bacon.

“People love it, because they don’t associate Spain with meatballs,” Sorensen says. “We use pork, veal and lamb for the meatballs, and a secret mix of spices, including paprika, nutmeg and clove. We serve it in a nice cast-iron pot with a lid, with manchego cheese that melts. The fat from the boar bacon explodes in your mouth.”

Solera also has a pork belly appetizer that is selling off the charts. “I think of Asia when I think of pork belly,” says Sorensen. “We cure the pork belly in brown sugar and a little salt. I smoke it in a smoker in my neighbor’s backyard, then pan-roast it and serve it on

greens with fig, orange wedges and marcona almonds, topped with a fried quail egg.”

Solera also serves a Thai-style calamari, which is traditional calamari spiced up with Thai chili sauce, tons of ginger and spicy peanuts.

For Seviche’s appetizers, Lamas offers small bites such as veal calf’s liver with smoked poblano demi glaze surrounded by caramelized onions and blue cheese crumbles. “Liver can be gamey to some people, and it is very rich,” he says. “The sides help bring the flavors together. In Latin America, people eat a lot of liver, since they try to eat the whole animal.”

He also serves *albondigas*, meatballs he makes of lamb, bison and pork. *Anticuchos* are another way to offer guests a little bite, says Lamas.

“These are Peruvian, and are served on little skewers, kind of like chicken satay,” says Lamas. “Traditionally, *anticuchos* are made with pieces of heart and liver grilled over a wood fire. It’s a great way to introduce something new. We also do seafood, chicken liver, lamb tongue and cow tongue, and a modernized fresh fish for people who are less adventurous.”

top: Anthony Lamas’ Lamb Chorizo Albondigas with Mint Chimichurri.

bottom: Johnson & Wales University students get hands-on experience making international cuisine. Here, they prepare dough for *paglia e fieno*.

asian flavors

At Aja at the Dana Hotel and Spa in Chicago, a contemporary Asian restaurant with a focus on Southeast Asian flavors and Japanese cuisine, executive chef Ariel Bagadiong features traditional appetizers with a modern twist.

“Traditional Asian recipes use a lot of MSG, but here, we take it out,” says Bagadiong. “We use nicer ingredients, such as better-quality meat. There’s also a trend toward chefs incorporating traditional Asian flavors with dishes from other ethnicities. I’ve seen fusions of Korean with Italian as well as Mexican.”

Bagadiong recently created jumbo hushpuppies as an appetizer special. “We took a hushpuppy and filled it with crab and seasoned the batter with ginger, mint and lemongrass to make it more Asian.”

Hamachi guacamole is another unusual appetizer. “It’s basically fish on top of avocados, which sounds strange but is one of the most delicious things we serve,” says Bagadiong. “We lightly crush avocados and season with lime juice, salt, yuzu juice and soy sauce. We create a bed of this guacamole and top with diced hamachi, as well as shaved red

pearl onion, jalapeños and micro cilantro.”

Bagadiong says chefs love eating and cooking obscure things, but the key is to translate that into something the public will like and be willing to try.

Asian-style pork belly is a new appetizer on the menu at China Grill Chicago. “Pork belly is basically bacon, and is tender and crispy,” says Ostrowski. “We serve it with a sweet chili/plum sauce over watermelon and with avocado salsa.”

China Grill also offers a lobster pancake—similar to a crêpe or *moo shu* pancake—that has sautéed mushrooms, jalapeños and lobster rolled inside. The pancakes are served with a Thai-influenced lobster curry sauce.

For vegetarians, China Grill serves lemongrass-encrusted tofu tots. “We marinate tofu pieces in a spicy marinade, bread with lemongrass powder and breading, freeze, and fry to order,” says Ostrowski. “They are served with a spicy kimchi sauce, a mayonnaise-like sauce similar to an aioli.” ■

Kathryn Kjarsgaard is a freelance food writer based in Forest Park, Ill.

NEXT ISSUE

utilizing the whole animal

on the map

Here’s a look at which countries’ cuisines translates well to American appetizers.

Latin America

- **Peru:** *Anticuchos* (tiny bites on skewers) and ceviche are fun ways for guests to try new tastes. Across the country, ceviche bars are opening and are becoming as familiar as sushi bars.
- **Brazil:** America is seeing a rise in Brazilian steakhouses, which provide tastes and small bites of a wide variety of meats, as opposed to ordering a large portion of meat as an entree.

India and Nepal

- **Nepal:** While not widespread in the U.S., more than 75 percent of the world’s population eats goat meat. Opportunities for Americans to sample it are increasing through appetizers such as *khasi sekuwa*, goat meat cooked over a fire and served over salad.

Asia

- **Thailand:** Many chefs are using the spiciness and flavor of Thai chili sauce to jazz up tried-and-true dishes such as calamari.
- **Japan:** Sushi-style appetizers of rice topped with raw or delicately cooked meat or sashimi are increasingly popular.
- **Korea:** More chefs are studying this lesser-known Asian cuisine.

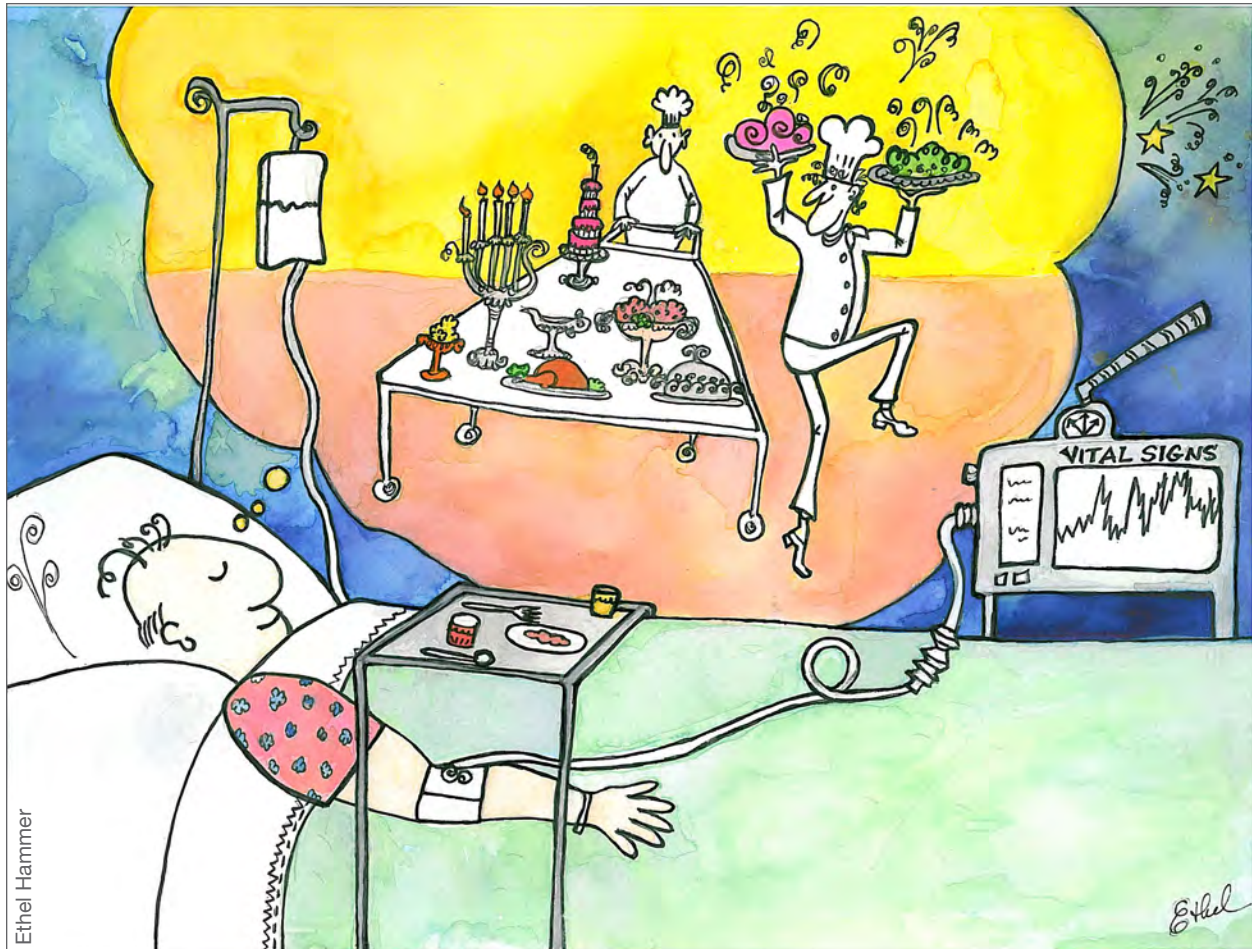
RECIPE ONLINE

Click here for Anthony Lamas’ recipe for **Lamb Chorizo Albondigas with Mint Chimichurri**.

RESUSCITATING
hospital
foodservice

A new culinary frontier awaits.

By Ethel Hammer



A distressed woman recently approached Jim McGrody at a farmers market, begging him to bus in food for her husband, who was at a competing hospital where he loved his doctor but hated the food. “We did it kind of sub rosa and gave it to them for free,” says McGrody, director of food and nutrition at Rex Healthcare in Raleigh, N.C. “It was such a neat thing.”

A graduate of The Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, N.Y., McGrody describes himself as “one unrelenting chef” on a

quest to change how patients eat. “We’re in what people call the ‘stroke belt,’” says McGrody, author of *What We Feed Our Patients* (iUniverse, 2011). “We’re the fattest country on earth, but around the world, people don’t put fillers and other stuff in their food. The message is clear. Just serve good food. It can be done.”

He’s doing it. So, why is so much hospital food on life support? “My husband won’t eat hospital food,” a Chicago waitress confides. “I tell him, ‘Don’t eat, and you’ll starve.’ He says, ‘I don’t care.’”

“My mother was in a nursing home with declining health a few years back, and she kept complaining about how tasteless and grungy the food was,” said another woman. “I called the chef, who honestly tried to do better, but it was an uphill struggle. Then, I spoke to a foodservice professional who worked for the same company in another part of the country, who told me it was no wonder. The contract company was probably feeding her for \$3.30 a day.”

These are heart-stopping situations. “Many nursing homes



top: A sampling of the tasty fare served to patients at Rex Healthcare.

bottom: Pizzas are made in a Wood Stone oven at Café 1910, located in Swedish Medical Center's newest hospital.

opposite: Eric Eisenberg of Swedish Medical Center says, when hiring, he looks for workers with the same skill sets as any restaurateur.

only have about \$4 for three daily meals,” McGrody says.

So, why consider healthcare feeding as a career option?

“Hospital foodservice is an unknown jewel,” says McGrody. “It’s a great opportunity for young chefs. This end of the foodservice industry is going to explode as patients demand better food.”

In fact, healthcare feeding may well be one of the most promising growth areas for tomorrow’s chefs. People are living longer. They are also sacrificing restaurant experiences as the economy struggles. No wonder future chefs are eyeing healthcare as a hot new area.

While the foodservice industry is only projected to grow by 6 percent, about 22 percent of new jobs are expected to come from the healthcare segment between 2008 and 2018, according to *Career Guide to Industries, 2010-2011 Edition*, a publication of the U.S. Department of Labor/Bureau of Labor Statistics. And, foodservice managers may be asked to do work formerly done by dietitians and nutritionists. Welcome to a new frontier.

patient (food) rights

Determined to hoist hospital foodservice to restaurant levels, McGrody is doing some snazzy, fresh, restaurant-style cooking with a budget of \$6.25-\$6.75 per day on average for three daily meals (meaning, some people are getting Jell-o and liquid diets while others are eating pan-seared salmon or calypso chicken marinated in tropical fruits, cilantro and jalapeños).

In fact, in October 2010, McGrody and his team at Rex Healthcare won the Cut to the Core hospital-foodservice competition with a three-course meal that included fennel-dusted shrimp with quinoa and sweet potato succotash, plus strawberry mousse with homemade snickerdoodles

and chocolate chip cookies—all low-fat. Imagine their delight when patients are served that instead of dried-out meatloaf.

McGrody sees himself as part of a new echelon of chefs, dietitians and young doctors trying to liberalize hospital diets. At Rex Healthcare, patients can order grilled marinated chicken with charred spinach, low-fat fresh mozzarella and roasted red pepper coulis, topped with tomato/pesto/garlic bruschetta; rice pilaf with toasted almonds; and low-fat vanilla panna cotta topped with blueberry compote.

McGrody rules out fruit cups, frozen broccoli cuts and oven “grilled” chicken (aka frozen chicken cooked on a sheet pan and served up as lifeless as rubber chicken). He advocates no more Jell-o, except when it is a dietary necessity. Patients and their families are sick and tired, and they don’t want to take it anymore.

exciting venues

Eric Eisenberg is a European-trained chef whose New York restaurant experience includes having worked with David Burke at River Club and Alfred Portale at the Gotham Bar and Grille, plus a career in Paris that included a stint at the Chateau



d’Artigny in the Loire. For the past seven years, he’s been corporate executive chef at Swedish Medical Center in Seattle, where he oversees foodservice at five hospitals and nine venues. Seventy percent of his sales come from his retail operation. “This is a union house,” he says. “My cooks are compensated one third more than cooks at nearby restaurant venues, and they get great benefits.”

But is it interesting work? “Right now, I’m looking out at the best multimillion-dollar kitchen I’ve

ever seen,” Eisenberg says. “Most of our energy goes into coming up with creative ideas.” He recently helped open Café 1910 in the center’s hospital in Issaquah, Wash., outside Seattle, which uses fresh local and sustainable food purchased from a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and buys from a local farmers market setup once a week at the hospital.

The venue is proud of its flattop EVO grill and its Wood Stone oven, in which staff recently baked rigatoni with portobello



mushrooms, caramelized shallots, fresh ricotta, truffle oil and San Marzano tomatoes. There are no fountain drinks, and nothing is fried. Instead, patients enjoy highly seasoned baked polenta fries filled with Parmesan cheese. Everything is made from scratch, except the bread and tortillas, and meat for the salami board, which is imported from Italy. The formaggio board features high-end Italian cheeses, and the Mediterranean board has hummus, peppers and roasted lemons.

“All of our salsas are fresh, and we only use fresh grilled meat at our Taqueria Fresca station,” Eisenberg says. “As soon as you taste it, you know it.”

Counting on sales from the surrounding community, not just hospital traffic, Eisenberg says the dining room resembles a fine fast-casual restaurant, with elegant china and good silverware. “You’d never know this restaurant was in a hospital, except there’s a big building behind it with the hospital logo.”

the challenges

Still, healthcare cooking may initially be a shock. While restaurant foodservice workers tend to move around, promoting a culture of striving and superiority where everyone is part of an in-group, hospital foodservice workers often stay in one place for a long time, where inbred behaviors could



impede innovation. “Healthcare foodservice workers are often a special breed,” says Stephen Kleiman, president of the Center for Creativity Through Awareness, Chicago, who has worked in hospital foodservice for self-operations and contract companies alike. “Many hospital cooks are not trained. Some follow recipes, others think, ‘Hey, don’t tell me. I know how to make chicken soup.’”

“Unions and administrators are often pitted against one another. Often, dietitians run the show in hospital foodservice, and their nutritional goals may conflict with the culinary goals of the chef,” says Kleiman. “CFOs may be bean counters who don’t care about food quality. Contract companies may sacrifice food quality for profit by invoking ‘economy of scale.’”

Another scenario is that sales peoples may low-ball the contract to get the sale and their commission, leaving the on-site foodservice director to suffer with impossibly small margins. “There are lots of real-life problems in healthcare feeding,” says Kleiman. “And because many patients must eat puréed foods, flavors get diluted. I contracted natural-flavor companies to add flavor back into puréed dishes so

patients could enjoy what they were eating.”

the bright side

But many benefits balance out the difficulties and complexities of a career in hospital foodservice.

“Restaurants have crazy hours, but in hospitals, you generally get every other weekend off, great healthcare benefits and great pay,” says McGrody. “My cooks make between \$13 and \$17 an hour. Executive chefs can make between \$60,000 and \$80,000 a year.”

Another reward in this segment is the chance to make a difference in someone’s life. “Recently, the dietitian and I brought up fresh guacamole to a patient with leukemia, and she started crying,” says McGrody. “If I see a grandma with 12 grandkids around her, I get to say, ‘How about a pizza and soda for the kids?’ Your patient satisfaction goes up, and a pizza only costs a couple of dollars.”

Eisenberg says, “Anybody working in a dirty, sweaty kitchen should consider healthcare. It’s a really good, viable job.” ■

Ethel Hammer is a writer, lecturer and cartoonist based in Chicago.

contract vs. self-op

Self-operations are foodservice operations totally run by the hospital. Contract foodservice management companies are for-profit businesses that either run the entire foodservice or just contract the management, leaving the foodservice staff in the hospital’s employ.

■ “Lots of healthcare facilities contract their foodservice operations because they don’t want to be in the foodservice business. They make an expensive investment in exchange for expertise and a turnkey operation.”

—Stephen Kleiman, president, Center for Creativity Through Awareness, Chicago

■ “Going self-op saved Rex Healthcare \$800,000 to \$1 million in the first year, and patient satisfaction went up from 40 percent to 95 percent.”

—Jim McGrody, director of food and nutrition, Rex Healthcare, Raleigh, N.C.

left: Jim McGrody of Rex Healthcare says hospital foodservice is an unknown jewel.

right: Desserts at Café 1910 in Swedish Medical Center’s newest hospital are made fresh each day.

by degrees

Neapolitan Gelato

By Keith Gardiner, CEC, CCE, CCA, AAC

Photography by April N. Wright



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COMMUNITY COLLEGE



**Keith Gardiner, CEC,
CCE, CCA, AAC,**

a culinary instructor at The Katherine A. Ragsdale School of Hospitality Education at Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) in Jamestown, N.C., has more than 30 years of culinary experience. He has taught at GTCC for more than 15 years.

“Gelato” is a term used in Italy to describe a variety of ice-cream-type products. It typically contains between 4 percent and 8 percent butterfat, versus 10-16 percent for ice cream. It also contains more sugar, 16-24 percent, versus ice cream with 12-16 percent. As a result, gelato and ice cream have a similar number of calories, but gelato is often considered healthier than ice cream because of its lower fat content.

Gelato is creamy and rich in flavor because of the low overrun, or air, it contains. In the U.S., ice cream can have up to 50 percent overrun, while gelato generally has 20-35 percent.

I have found that one of the best pieces of equipment to use to make gelato—as well as other frozen desserts, and even savory items—is the Pacojet. Using this machine, you can make one liter of gelato in fewer than four minutes, or a single portion in 20 seconds. Because it is so fast, product is spun, or “Pacotized,” as needed, or just before service so the gelato is served at its peak. Unused product can be refrozen and spun as needed, offering a 100 percent yield, with no product lost from crystallization.

Here, you’ll learn how to make Neapolitan gelato. Named after the Italian city of its origin, Naples, Neapolitan ice cream was introduced in the U.S. as *spumoni*, an Italian ice cream that often contained a variety of three different flavors molded together.

Today, Neapolitan usually contains three flavors: chocolate, strawberry and vanilla. From cup or cone to plated dessert, gelato can be served in a variety of ways. ■

step 1

Mise en place all ingredients: strawberries, vanilla bean, chocolate, cocoa powder, milk, cream, egg yolks and sugar. Measure ingredients by weight for best results.



step 2

Prepare gelato base by heating milk to just below boiling. Mix egg yolks and sugar together; slowly stir in milk to temper yolks. Cook mixture over double boiler, stirring constantly to 170°F. Cool over ice-water bath.



step 3

Place measured ingredients in three Pacojet beakers. Add strawberries to first beaker. Add chocolate and cocoa to another. Fill final beaker with gelato base to line; top with vanilla bean seeds.



step 4

Freeze beakers at -4°F to -10°F for 24 hours. When ready to spin, remove beakers from freezer. For best results, move beakers directly from freezer to Pacojet.



step 5

Spin each beaker completely, about 3½ minutes. While doing this, hold blue button to limit overrun and keep gelato's richness.



step 6

A: Remove beakers. Check consistency. Cover; label. Store in freezer for service.
B: Serve in cup, cone or as plated dessert. Here, gelato is served as a plated dessert with quenelles of each flavor accompanied by fresh macerated berries, whipped cream and caramel sauce.



ingredients

yield: 6 servings

- 14 oz. ripe strawberries
- 1 fresh vanilla bean, split and scraped
- 8 oz. dark chocolate
- 2 oz. cocoa powder
- 24 oz. milk
- 8 oz. heavy cream
- 14 oz. pasteurized egg yolks
- 1 oz. sugar

equipment

- Scale
- Saucepan
- Stainless steel mixing bowl
- Whip
- Pacojet with three beakers
- Freezer set at -4°F to -10°F

helpful hints

- To keep product from overflowing, never overfill Pacojet beakers.
- Always freeze beakers with ingredients for 24 hours at -4°F to -10°F.
- After spinning, store beakers in freezer for service.
- Level off top of unused product in beaker to prolong the life of Pacojet blade; refreeze, and spin as needed for later use.
- For more information on the Pacojet, visit www.pacojetus.com.

grill

Jay Yarbrough, CEC, CCA

By Becky Marmorato



Jay Yarbrough, CEC, CCA, executive chef at Piedmont Driving Club, Atlanta, is the American Culinary Federation Education Foundation (ACFEF) Apprenticeship Program's newest Area Regional Trainer (ART), representing the Southeast Region. A graduate of Georgia State University, Atlanta, Yarbrough was not trained as an apprentice, but has been active in the program as a supervising chef and chair of ACF Greater Atlanta Chapter Inc.'s apprenticeship committee. Here, he shares highlights from his more than 30 years in the industry, thoughts on the program and advice for students.

tell us about your history with the ACFEF Apprenticeship Program.

jy: During my 16 years at Piedmont Driving Club, I have had an ACFEF apprentice on staff most of the time. Several apprentices have graduated from the program and received certification.

what are you most passionate about in the industry?

jy: Without a doubt, my greatest passion lies in producing high-quality fresh food for my guests. Whether it is a grilled cheese sandwich or a North Georgia rainbow trout that has only been out of the water four hours, it should always be the best product we are capable of preparing.

why would someone choose the apprenticeship path?

jy: The ACFEF Apprenticeship Program offers a head start to those willing and able to complete the program. Three

years is a long time, but when an apprentice finishes, he or she doesn't don't simply have a certificate saying they "should" know how to cook. They have actually done it, lived it and know it inside out. The graduating apprentice will also most likely not have a \$45,000 student loan to repay, and will already have built a solid base for his or her résumé.

do you think the station rotations give apprentices an edge in the job market?

jy: It is rare to encounter any line cook or chef who has worked in every area of the kitchen, from stewarding and purchasing to pastry and butchering. ACFEF apprentices have actually done all these things when they complete the program. This provides them with a significant advantage. They are able to work in any area with the confidence of knowing they have been there before.

what do you think about the program's new online portal?

jy: The major benefit of online learning for apprentices is being able to work according to their own schedule. Culinary operations have varying hours and schedules, so being able to complete log pages and have the supervising chef sign off on competencies at any time is a definite benefit.

would you recommend the program for those seeking a career path?

jy: The program has a valid place in the culinary industry today. In particular, the smaller cities and rural areas where certain large resorts and conference centers are located could benefit from this program. In some areas, it is difficult to recruit experienced cooks and chefs. The ACFEF Apprenticeship Program can bridge this gap by providing a mutually beneficial arrangement where the employee learns while getting paid to do the job and the employer develops a valuable long-term employee. It is certainly not a shortcut to success, but an alternate method to reach the end result of becoming a professional chef.

what do future apprentices need to know before starting the program?

jy: The program is not a free job location service, and the only thing

that guarantees success in this industry is hard work and attention to detail. This is also not a free program, even though you are working and getting paid while you are in the program. It very well may cost less in the end than attending a culinary school, but there are still expenses for the required academic lessons.

It typically takes a minimum of 10 years or more in the industry to become an executive-level manager, and not everyone is cut out for this type of work. The reality of the situation is that you really need to enjoy working in a kitchen if you want to be a chef. If you want to be on TV, I would recommend trying out for "American Idol," instead.

what is one of the biggest challenges students entering the culinary field today face?

jy: The huge number of students graduating from culinary schools creates a lot of competition for jobs. Graduates are taking introductory cooking jobs that do not pay enough to repay student loans and afford a decent income at the same time. A lot of graduates are not staying in the profession because it is too hard to get a good start in a quality establishment and they are not willing to invest the time to learn and move up the ladder. ■

for more information:

To learn more about the ACFEF Apprenticeship Program, visit www.acfchefs.org and select "schools" then "apprenticeships."



taste test

Career Primer

High school students at Georgia's Rockdale Career Academy get a taste of the culinary world.

By Cathy Harris and Wes Goodman



“I want to own my own restaurant.”
“I watch Food Network all the time and want to cook, too.”
“I want to be a pastry chef.” These are typical statements made by high school sophomores beginning their adventure in culinary arts at Rockdale Career Academy (RCA) in Conyers, Ga. The program provides an opportunity for future chefs to learn about the career they hope to pursue.

cooking experiment

The culinary program in Rockdale County, Ga., began as a trial in one high school 12 years ago. Wes Goodman, an experienced foodservice management professional, started the program to provide an option for students who wanted to pursue a career in foodservice. The original program used the high school cafeteria, which was only available for students after 2 p.m. each day. There was interest, but unfortunately, many students were forced to choose between extracurricular activities and the culinary class. The school system recognized the need to have a professional kitchen and to make the culinary program available to all students during regular school hours.

The culinary program, along with 16 other career technical programs, was the building block for RCA, a charter school designed to provide students with an opportunity to learn about potential careers while still in high school.

RCA opened in August 2006 with Goodman and 63 culinary students. The facility included a professional kitchen for students; major equipment such as the hood system, walk-in cooler, walk-in freezer and industrial dishwasher was shared with school foodservice staff.

“The opportunity to participate in the design of a professional kitchen gave our students hands-on, real-world experiences that, prior to the kitchen lab, had not been seen in our culinary-arts program,” says Goodman. “Soon, we will be designing a baking kitchen for our new baking program.”

one-of-a-kind

In 2008, RCA's culinary program was the first program in Georgia to seek secondary certification through the American Culinary Federation Education

Foundation (ACFEF). By this time, the program had added a second instructor and had three class levels—Introduction to Culinary Arts, Culinary Arts I and Culinary Arts II—with a total of 166 students. An additional classroom was added when the original classroom was changed into a second kitchen area for skills. In July 2009, the program was awarded secondary certification.

Today, the program has nearly 300 students. The graduating class of 2011 included 44 pathway completers (those who have completed all three levels of the program, or all three years) who had the opportunity to take the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) culinary certification exam. Thirty-six students passed the written portion and 16 students participated in the practical exam and received the certified junior culinarian (CJC) designation. This fall, many of the students will head to culinary colleges such as Johnson & Wales University, The International Culinary School at The Art Institute of Atlanta and Gwinnett Technical College, Lawrenceville, Ga.

knowledgeable and well-seasoned

The culinary-arts program not only provides solid classroom experience but many practical applications for students through community service activities and catering events. The program has partnered with United Way and Jim ‘N Nick’s Bar-B-Q Southern Kitchen to prepare and serve as many as 2,000 barbecue pork dinners to Rockdale County citizens. Each September, students prepare slaw,



beans and sauce for the fundraising event and pack hundreds of carryout trays with pulled pork prepared by Jim ‘N Nick’s. Students also prepared and served brunch to Rockdale County cancer survivors during the annual Relay for Life Survivor’s Celebration in March.

Catering services are also offered to local community groups and school organizations. Last year, more than 2,000 meals were catered. High school bands, cheerleaders, athletic teams and clubs often hold their annual awards dinners at the school, and each February, the school hosts the local Rotary Club for its Father-Daughter Valentine Dinner Dance.

“This program changed my life,” says Mikhail Morrison, an RCA pathway completer and recently named CJC. “I now know what I want to do and know that I have the skills to make it happen.” ■

Cathy Harris and Wes Goodman are culinary instructors at Rockdale Career Academy, an ACFEF-certified secondary program in Conyers, Ga.



opposite: Students Marilyn Hayles, left, and Delvin Denham.

top: A team of students from Rockdale Career Academy competed in the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, Inc.’s STAR Events, April 2011.

bottom: Catering provides students with practical culinary experience.

events

2011 ACF National Convention

Articles by Leah Spellman Craig

Photos by davesmithphotographer.com



More than 1,200 chefs, students and foodservice professionals gathered at the Gaylord Texan just outside Dallas, July 22-26, for the 2011 American Culinary Federation (ACF) National Convention. The annual gathering allowed attendees to learn new skills, view the latest culinary products, make connections and enjoy good company. Among the recurring messages was a focus on nutrition and a push for community involvement.

eat your fruits & veggies

The four-day event began Friday with a day of hands-on workshops and volunteering. Nearly 50 chefs and students headed to Dallas to give back to the community at the 2nd annual Chefs Outreach to the Community Day. More than 100 Habitat for Humanity families attended the day of nutritional workshops, where children in chef toques, and their parents, learned directly from chefs about new healthy foods and the health problems caused by poor eating habits. Families left empowered to make healthy eating decisions and went home with several gifts.

“The ability to interact with families who are so much less fortunate than us was both humbling and inspiring,” said volunteer Kristin Swaggart, 2011 Be Like “Mike” winner. “The time I spent with those families solidified everything I believe about the impact chefs can have on a community.”

spotlight on students

On Saturday evening, it was the students turn to shine as the five winning Student Culinarian Invitational teams, plus a team from Canada, offered 150 guests a taste of their region’s cuisine at a special fundraising reception. Attendees sampled everything from orange/mango Florida-style barbecue ribs to braised bison shoulder. “I’ve never cooked for so many people before,” said Katie Arant from the Nebraska team. “It’s been awesome, and it was all worth it.”

In addition to the amount raised from ticket sales, several donations came in throughout the convention to help fund the teams’ trip to the 2012 World Association of Chefs Societies International Congress in South Korea.

above: Ian Fleischmann cooks for guests at the 2011 Student Culinarian Invitational in Dallas, July 23.

opposite: Alton Brown shows attendees how to cook with performance salts.

Alton Brown's flavorful session

Alton Brown was one of the most anticipated speakers at this year's event. Within five minutes, the ballroom where his salt demonstration was held filled up with chefs and students eager to hear from the Food Network star. "Chefs scare the hell out of me," Brown admitted as he took the stage. His demonstration focused on kosher and other "coarse" salts, what he calls "performance salts." Brown kept the audience laughing and engaged as he took questions throughout the hour-and-a-half session. When asked his thoughts on molecular gastronomy, he said, "My worry about molecular gastronomy, especially with young cooks, is that they will try to use it to replace knowing how to cook food."

Brown also shared personal stories, from his childhood experiments with odd flavor combinations to not getting accepted into The Culinary Institute of America. His knowledge of food history and the science behind cooking applications was evident as he demonstrated three dishes: Stovetop Salt "Roasted" Shrimp; Beef Tenderloin in Salt Crust; and Microwave Salt Roasted Potatoes.

from the White House

Sunday brought another well-known chef to the stage as Sam Kass, White House assistant chef and senior policy adviser for healthy food initiatives, gave the keynote address during part two of General Session. Kass shared statistics about the obesity problem in the U.S.,

noting that one in three children is overweight or obese, and that the nation spends \$150 billion on obesity and obesity-related diseases. Obesity is also now the No. 1 disqualification for the military, he said.

Kass then focused on the positive as he discussed the role chefs can play in making a difference through programs such as Michelle Obama's Chefs Move to Schools. "We will not be successful without the help of chefs," he said.

He also took questions from the audience and shared a glimpse of his daily life at the White House, which includes getting to work at 7 a.m., wearing a suit during the day and working to support the first lady's mission, which often means meeting with business leaders, then putting on his chef coat at around 4 p.m. and heading to the White House garden. And, five nights a week, he can be found cooking dinner for the president and first family.

networking 101

On Monday, Gerry Fernandez, president and founder of the Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance and a 1976 Johnson & Wales University graduate, spoke about the value of networking and the do's and don'ts of social networking at the Johnson & Wales University Student Forum. "Start to think deliberately about where you want to go and what you want to be," he said. "Be prepared to recognize and seize opportunities." ■



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a look ahead to 2012

Didn't get to attend this year's convention? Plan for next year!

- Southeast conference: Winston-Salem, N.C., Feb. 20-22, 2012
- Western conference: Reno, Nev., March 12-14, 2012
- Central conference: Detroit, April 14-16, 2012
- Northeast conference: Niagara Falls, N.Y., April 28-30, 2012
- National convention: Orlando, Fla., July 14-17, 2012

CONVENTION
SNAPSHOTS

.....
Click here to check out photos from this year's convention in Dallas. And click here to see videos from each day's events.
.....

Stroke of Genius

Kendall College wins the 2011 Baron H. Galand Culinary Knowledge Bowl for the second consecutive year.



top: The team, from left to right: Jacob Clara, Gabriele Ausraite, Robert Baki, Paige Rogers and Dina Altieri, coach.

opposite: David Holloway, senior vice president, American Technical Publishers, far left, with the winning team.

Quick. If 28 percent of the desserts on a buffet are sugar-free and there are 150 dessert portions available, what is the number of desserts with sugar that will be served? (Don't be nervous, but you only have a few seconds before the other team buzzes in, and, the audience is watching.) Give up? Just ask the winning team of the 2011 Baron H. Galand Culinary Knowledge Bowl.

Kendall College, Chicago, took home the title of national champions July 24 at the 2011 American Culinary Federation National Convention in Dallas, after several rounds of "Jeopardy"-style questions against three other regional finalists. The team's victory marks the second consecutive year the team has earned gold.

"I'm the crazy captain who delayed graduation to come back to Knowledge Bowl for a second year," says Jacqueline Wallner, captain, and the only member

who was on last year's winning team. "I definitely think my role was setting the tone for a repeat of last year. The team would often look to me with questions about the game and what it was like, because they had never seen anything like it before."

building the team

The team was formed at the end of 2010, after two tryouts. Once the five members were selected—Gabriele Ausraite, Robert Baki, Jacob Clara, Paige Rogers and Wallner—they hit the six required textbooks and practiced several times a week, including many scrimmages.

"The experience was great fun," says Rogers, who got engaged and planned a wedding while going to school and preparing for the competitions. "If you love learning, which I do, then you love training for the Knowledge Bowl. It got to the point where my fiancé didn't want to talk about the competition over dinner anymore. But why not discuss what three attributes fungus lacks to truly make it a vegetable, or why Cheshire cheese is salty? The world is so complex, and the more I learn the more I realize how much I don't know."

test your buzzers

There was standing room only in the audience July 24 as family, friends, teachers and school administrators

gathered to watch. From daily doubles to mystery pictures, the competition kept everyone on the edge of their seats. The Kendall team was quick to buzz in, showing off their culinary IQ.

After more than 2 hours, with two teams eliminated, the final round came down to Kendall vs. Westmoreland County Community College, Youngwood, Pa. The last questions separating Kendall from another national win were a series of culinary math problems. As Kendall answered the final question correctly, the crowd erupted in celebration, with the team's coach Dina Altieri, CEC, CCE, leading the roar.

"The students really are an inspiration, because they try so hard to be better than they were the day before," says Altieri. "They genuinely care about increasing their knowledge, not for the sake of winning, but just to be better, more competitive. They didn't surprise me. I knew they would do well. They were amazing."

Rogers says, "We were extremely hopeful and proud of our hard work, but there's always that fear that you should have worked harder, learned more, learned it better."

But all the doubt and anticipation melted away as the team celebrated

its win. First, they indulged in a bonus round against their coaches and other chefs. The lighthearted competition allowed Kendall's talent to shine, as the team hardly let the experienced chefs buzz in.

six gold medals

The awards presentation took place July 26 at the President's Grand Ball. There, the team found one more reason to celebrate when Altieri was named 2011 Chef Educator of the Year. In her acceptance speech, she thanked the Knowledge Bowl team. "They are the smartest students ever, and if that doesn't inspire you as a teacher, I honestly don't know what does," she said. "When we got off the plane in Dallas from Chicago, our goal was six gold medals, and I think we proved that practice makes perfect."

Team members of this year's championship team left Texas with many memories and lessons learned, but would they do it all again?

"Of course," says Ausraite. "We all left the competition on such a cloud, but by the next day, we were all itching to get back to the books. Something was missing. We needed a new goal. For the past two weeks we have been asking chef what the new book assignments are for the 2012 competition. We can't wait to compete again." ■



a word from our sponsor

"I thought all the teams did an excellent job this year," said David Holloway, senior vice president of American Technical Publishers, the competition's sponsor. "It was exciting to see the students' excitement and interest in the field from regionals to nationals. We love to support the Knowledge Bowl because we firmly believe students are the future of the profession, and we enjoy being able to support their academic development."



PUBLISHERS SINCE 1898

silver medalists

Congrats to Westmoreland County Community College, Youngwood, Pa., for earning a silver medal.

Small-Town Champions

Joliet Junior College brings home the school's and state's first ACF Student Team National Championship title.



Five friends. Five dreamers. Five hard workers. That describes the student team from Joliet Junior College (JJC), Joliet, Ill., that took home gold medals and the title of American Culinary Federation (ACF) Student Team Champions following a national cook-off at the annual ACF convention in Dallas in July.

“We were a group of friends and eager cooks who wanted to learn as much as possible,” says team member David Basile. “We are like family. We weren’t just five teammates cooking four dishes, we were five friends all cooking in sync with one another.”

a strong foundation

The team formed in August 2010, and although some had competition experience, they had never worked together as a team.

“On the weekends, Bob [team captain Robert Belanski] would have all the culinary students over, and every single

night we hung out, all we would talk about is how awesome it would be if we actually went for it [and competed as a team],” remembers Basile. “We had all been hanging around the previous teams, and before the 2010 team even went to nationals, we were begging to start practicing together. We would actually go out and buy chickens to cook and potatoes to tourn e at each other’s house to practice as much as possible.”

The foundation of friendship allowed team members to be honest with each other in the competition kitchen, a contributing factor to their success, according to Belanski.

just another day

After a year of practice and winning the regional competition in April, the team prepared for “just another practice” on July 25, Belanski says. “Except, this one was for all the marbles.” They arrived on the convention trade show floor at 6 a.m., and by 8:30 a.m., they were cooking. Mike Shannon made the

left: Michael Shannon, left, and Laura Korte compete for the championship title.

right: The winning team, left to right: David Basile, Aaron Guajardo III, Laura Korte, Robert Belanski and Michael Shannon.

appetizer; Basile prepared the salad; Aaron Guajardo III, who competed the previous day for the national title of Student Chef of the Year, cooked the entrée; Laura Korte made the dessert; and Belanski, the alternate, kept everything running smoothly.

Teams had 3 hours, 20 minutes, to prep and cook, and 1 hour, 20 minutes, to plate and serve 24 portions of their four-course meal. The three other regional finalists cooked in adjoining kitchens. A crowd of spectators and supporters watched as teams carefully plated each dish, which judges evaluated at random.

At 1:40 p.m., the JJC kitchen was spotless and the competition was over. Now, the only thing left to do was wait. It was a long 30 hours. “From the minute we walked out of the kitchen, we agreed not to talk about it,” says Belanski. “The funny thing is, 20 minutes later, the competition became the only thing we talked about.”

a part of history

On July 26, after numerous replays and critiques, it was time to find out their fate. Not long into the President’s Grand Ball, the awards video rolled and judges took the stage to present teams with their medals. First was fourth place, then third, and, after a long pause, second. When the team realized their name wasn’t called, it hit them: They were the national champions, the first team from their school and the first from Illinois to win the title. As they took to the stage to accept their gold medals, the 800-person crowd stood to applaud them.

“I was frozen from fear at first,” says Belanski. “They try to hesitate for suspense, and it works really well. It was the best exhale of my life. Tears of joy are so much easier to deal with.”

And there were plenty of tears to go around.

“My heart fell,” says coach Kyle Richardson, CEC, CCE, CHE, ACE, AAC. “After 12 years of student competitions, we made it to the top.”

“This will put Joliet Junior College on the map with some of the best culinary schools in the nation,” says Tim Bucci, CEC, CCE, CHE, CCJ, the team’s other coach. “Since the beginning, the team had only two things in sight: to win the Student Team Championship and for Aaron to win the Student Chef of the Year award.”

While the elated team members were still heading to their seats, Guajardo’s name was called as the national Student Chef of the Year winner. There couldn’t have been a better ending to the night.

“This was truly one of the best times of my life,” says Shannon. “All the work that we put into the competition was all worth it, because it didn’t just make us better cooks, it made us better people.”

The next day, the news was still surreal as the team started its 15-hour drive back to their Chicago suburb. They would return to their regular lives, jobs and activities, only this time, they were national champions. ■

on the menu

Appetizer: Sautéed salmon with chive and whole-grain mustard butter sauce; shrimp and salmon mosaic with slow-cooked fennel and shellfish foam; semolina dumplings, leeks and asparagus; and warm asparagus cream with a shaved fennel salad

Salad: Wind N’ Oaks farm field greens with sherry vinaigrette; roasted petite tomatoes; goat cheese and grape with pear/celery salad; artichoke with lemon aioli; and whole-wheat buttermilk cracker

Entree: Loin of Midwestern suckling pig with Bratwurst and housemade bacon; braised pork croquette, pork broth with cured jowl and glazed onion; glazed wild mushrooms; sauté of corn, carrot and kohlrabi; and carrot purée, potato pavé, and Broccolini

Dessert: Strawberry and sour cream mousse with lime gelée; pistachio cake; soft-centered chocolate fritter with raspberry cream; marinated fresh berries with lime spheres; and pistachio ice cream and mixed berry sauce

congrats

Kudos to the other teams that all earned silver medals. Here’s a look at the final standings.

- **2nd:** ACF Bay Area Chefs Association of Oregon, Oregon Coast Culinary Institute, Coos Bay, Ore.
- **3rd:** Mid Hudson Culinary Association, The Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, N.Y.
- **4th:** ACF Western North Carolina Culinary Association, Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, Asheville, N.C.

thank you!

The ACF Student Team Championship is sponsored by R.L. Schreiber Inc.



Juggling Act

Two national competitions, two days apart. This year's Student Chef of the Year Aaron Guajardo III shares how he beat all odds.



above: Aaron Guajardo keeps calm under pressure as he competes for the Student Chef of the Year title.

Aaron Guajardo III didn't grow up dreaming of becoming a chef. After high school he went to college, but describes himself as "undisciplined" at the time, ending up "in a lot of trouble." He returned to his home, Joliet, Ill., and enrolled at Joliet Junior College (JJC), but "for what" was still the question. There was chemistry, business and engineering, but he found himself switching majors often. A relative suggested culinary, and after his first baking/pastry class, he was hooked.

"Baking and pastry showed me firsthand that there was more to cooking than what meets the eye," says Guajardo. "There is a science to it, physics, chemistry, biology—it's everywhere. My instructor told me about a book called *On Food and Cooking* by Harold McGee, and the rest is history."

on the right track

Outgoing, adventurous, competitive and focused, Guajardo spent his years at JJC as a lab assistant and member of the school's competition team. He also assisted Tim Bucci, CEC, CCE, CHE, CCJ, as he prepared to try out for American Culinary Federation (ACF) Culinary Team USA, the official U.S. team that competes internationally.

In 2010, Guajardo was nominated to compete for the title of ACF Central

Region Student Chef of the Year. At the conference in April, he not only won that competition, but the JJC team he was on also won the regional student team title, meaning he would be preparing for not one, but two national competitions in July.

a full-time job

After graduating with an associate of applied science degree from JJC in the spring, Guajardo focused on the competitions ahead. "I was in the kitchen six days a week, starting at 6:30 a.m. until I was done," he says. "On average, these were 12-hour days. Two days a week were team practices; two were individual practices spent making stock, processing proteins, etc. One day a week was mise en place, and the other was spent reworking recipes and procedures."

The hard work was made easier with the help of his team and apprentices who took notes during his practices, helped with mise en place and, most importantly, encouraged him.

"I can handle the physical part of the competition by taking care of myself with sleep and good food," Guajardo says. "However, it is very easy to lose it mentally. Without the support of friends and family, I would have had a mental breakdown, for sure."

competition complications

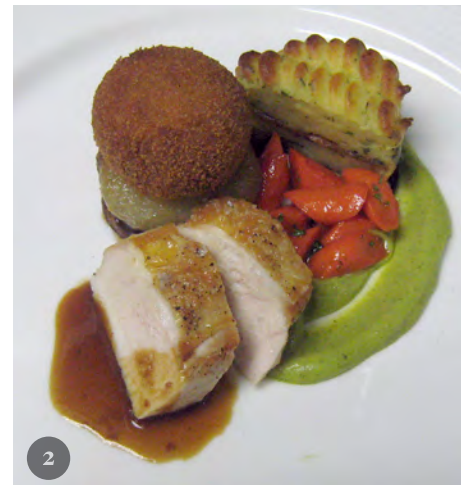
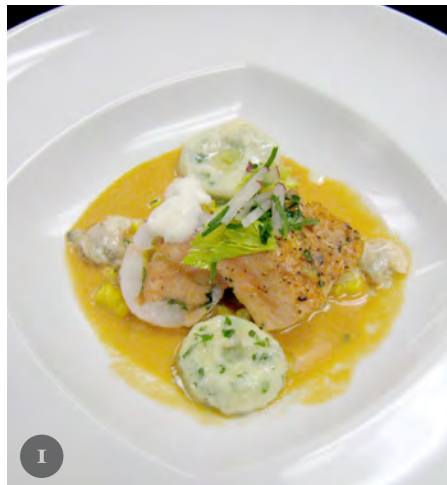
July 24, at the 2011 ACF National Convention in Dallas, Guajardo and the three other regional finalists had 2 hours, 10 minutes, to prepare, cook and serve two portions of their two-course menu using a market basket of ingredients and items from the pantry.

“The comfort of knowing that all I had to do was what I had been doing all season was an incredible high,” Guajardo says. “Cooking on electric burners was a low. I had never used them before, and it was very difficult to adjust.”

Staying focused when obstacles arise helped him in the competition. When his plating window opened at 2:15 p.m., he was behind, but thanks to an adrenaline rush, he finished on time.

On July 26 at the President’s Grand Ball, after his team won the title of Student Team National Champions, Guajardo got the shock of his life when he was named the national Student Chef of the Year award winner. His team, coaches and family encircled him in ecstatic celebration.

“There was so much stress and so many sleepless nights that to simply have nothing to do was a pretty good celebration,” he says.



what’s next?

Now that his time at JJC and preparing for the competitions is over, he plans to use the \$1,000 prize to transition into the next chapter of his life: a career. His goals include earning ACF’s Certified Sous Chef® (CSC®) designation and one day becoming an ACF-approved culinary judge, which means there are plenty of other competitions in his future.

And for those who, like him, may not be sure what their future holds, or if becoming a chef is the right path for them, he offers this advice, “If cooking is something you want to do, get a job in a kitchen somewhere. It doesn’t matter what you’re hired to do, every position in the kitchen is important. This will let you know if culinary school will be a good fit. There are only two phrases you will need to know, ‘Yes, chef,’ and ‘No, chef.’” ■

winning menu

Aaron Guajardo III won the title of 2011 ACF Student Chef of the Year with these dishes:

- 1. Appetizer:** Sautéed lake trout with sweet-and-sour red pepper sauce; shrimp and lake trout roulade; summer vegetables; ricotta dumplings and littleneck clams; horseradish foam and micro-herb salad
- 2. Entree:** Pan-roasted chicken breast with natural reduction; crispy chicken meatball, braised onion and glazed oyster mushrooms; Yukon gold potato; zucchini purée and carrots

thank you!

The Student Chef of the Year Award is sponsored by Custom Culinary, Inc.



Learning by Example

2011 Be Like “Mike” contest winner Kristin Swaggart on her unconventional path to the kitchen, her No. 1 accomplishment and the highlight of the 2011 ACF National Convention.



Kristin Swaggart

age
40

hometown
Pendleton, Ore.

resides
Kennewick, Wash.

best place traveled to
Ireland

favorite local restaurant
Taverna Tagaris, Richland, Wash.

education
Graduated with associate degree in culinary arts from Walla Walla Community College, Walla Walla, Wash., in June

chef you most admire
The “old school” chefs who paved the way for culinarians like me

favorite culinary book
The Professional Chef (Wiley: 8th edition, 2006)

My family moved often when I was young. I went to five or six elementary schools, two junior high and two high schools. With working parents, our family was always busy, and like most mainstream American households, there wasn't a big focus on preparing meals. Growing up, I was interested in becoming a teacher, but I changed my mind often and ended up with a first career in finance. I didn't consider the culinary field an option, and it's fair to say that I was a pretty awful cook when I got married in 1996. I was focused on my career, and put very little, if any, time into preparing meals.

trial and error

I quit my job to be at home when I had my first son. When my second son was born, my life changed forever. He was very sick, and it took more than a year to figure out the cause was food allergies. I immediately changed my approach

to cooking. I submerged myself in books to learn as much as I could about preparing foods in an allergy-friendly way. I taught myself how to bake without dairy or eggs. My son grew healthier, and through the years, I discovered a passion for cooking. In 2009, with the support of my family, I enrolled in culinary school. That was the best decision I ever made. Graduating with a 4.0 in June is my greatest accomplishment to date.

While at Walla Walla Community College, I was a member of the school's Culinary Club, participated in leadership workshops and competed in the 2011 ACF Western Region Baron H. Galand Culinary Knowledge Bowl. My favorite classes covered international cuisine. I loved learning about Indonesian, Greek and other foods I had never been exposed to.

and the winner is...

Although I was a member of ACF Northwest Wine Country Chapter, I didn't know much about how the organization as a whole worked. I attended meetings when possible, but underestimated the opportunities because I was so focused on school. I first read about the Be Like “Mike” contest in the winter 2010 issue of *Sizzle*, when Trisha LeBlanc shared her experience at the 2010 convention. I entered the contest because I wanted the chance to be surrounded by so many

successful chefs. I knew that spending time with the president at such a critical event would be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn and network.

The interview process made me a nervous wreck. ACF National President Michael Ty, CEC, AAC, asked tough questions about my goals, and pressed me for solid reasons why I deserved the opportunity. I was shocked to be a semifinalist, let alone the winner.

chance of a lifetime

I was intimidated at the thought of attending the 2011 ACF National Convention in Dallas, but everyone was warm and welcoming. The convention schedule was jampacked, from early morning breakfasts to competitions and educational opportunities. For me, it was all of that and more. I attended behind-the-scenes meetings with board members and sponsors. I was thrilled to interact with amazing chefs who took the time to talk with me and offer sound advice and encouragement. I observed important leadership characteristics in action. Chef Ty spent a great deal of time listening to people, whether a member he had never met or a board member he had known for years. But more than anything, I appreciated his commitment to embracing students within ACF.

The highlight of the convention for me was the Chefs Outreach to the



Community Day in a low-income neighborhood in Dallas. Seeing children and their parents have “aha” moments as they stopped by each station and learned about healthy eating was rewarding. Children look up to chefs, and we have a responsibility to use that stage for their benefit, not ours.

confidence boost

Since the convention, I have an even stronger sense of urgency to pursue my goals. Attending the convention was like getting an IV of motivation and confidence. In the future, I'd like to work with younger generations to help them develop skills and confidence in the kitchen. And I'm always on a mission to create delicious recipes that are not only allergy-friendly and healthy, but support local growers and producers. My top priority, however, is certification. ■



apply for the 2012 contest

Don't miss your chance to walk in Kristin Swaggart's shoes by applying for the 2012 Be Like “Mike” contest. Details will be posted on www.acfchefs.org/belikemike in the coming months. One lucky winner will win a trip to the 2012 ACF National Convention in Orlando, Fla., July 14-17, 2012, to shadow Michael Ty, CEC, AAC.

opposite: Kristin Swaggart at the 2011 Chefs Outreach to the Community Day in Dallas, July 22.

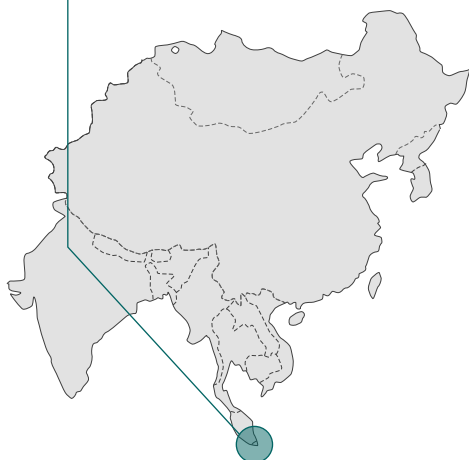
above left: At the 2011 Chefs Outreach to the Community Day with ACF National President Michael Ty.

above right: Kristin Swaggart and Michael Ty at the 2011 President's Grand Ball, July 26.

international flavors

Singapore

In a country filled with fine-dining restaurants and celebrity chefs, Lindsay Hancock takes *Sizzle* on an off-the-beaten-path tour of Singapore's hawker-style cuisine.



As a product-development chef living in Singapore, I am privileged to travel throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Whether I am venturing through the streets of China, Japan or Thailand, I love to immerse myself in the country's culture. I have found that as I familiarize myself with the cuisine of a country, I am granted an intimate understanding of its customs, culture, history and religion.

In my experience, the best way to become familiar with the unadulterated cuisine of a country is by traveling off the beaten path, beyond the tourist attractions and

outside the concierge's recommended restaurants, submerging myself where the locals reside and eat. Although the Michelin Guide is a great source for discovering brilliant gastronomic fare, I have found that taxi drivers, housekeeping staff and local chefs often provide the best and most authentic recommendations for where to get local cuisine. The only problem is that sometimes, my weak American stomach and food-safety-conscious mind don't always agree with the conditions in which my food is prepared.

So if you are an adventurous eater like me, but prefer to explore truly

authentic cuisine in a clean, well-kept environment, Singapore is the place for you.

migrant nation

In Singapore's early days, migrant workers, especially from China, Malaysia and India, flocked to the country to find riches, but what they didn't realize is that they already possessed riches—their heirloom recipes from home—that would soon fuel their livelihood. These entrepreneurial immigrants began to understand the value of an authentic meal and started selling their foreign dishes from small food carts and trolleys throughout the city. There were so many settlers from different countries with varying cuisines that the streets of Singapore were quickly flooded with hundreds of rickety food carts selling Chinese dumplings, Indian curries and Malay satay.

As this “first world” nation emerged and high-rises replaced tin-roofed shops and dirt roads were paved over, the Singaporean government decided to build hawker centers where food vendors could rent stalls to safely sell their prized regional cuisine. Today,

there are thousands of food stalls hidden in hundreds of hawker centers around this booming metropolis.

It is under these humid pavilion roofs that travelers and locals alike can find the best and most authentic Southeast Asian cuisine. There are no chefs overcomplicating their menus with new discoveries, fad ingredients or vying for the latest food critic's attention. These culinary artists choose a handful of recipes that have been handed down from generation to generation, and perfect them. To this day, most people use the same recipes, ingredients and techniques that once fed this developing nation. Don't get me wrong, I love degustation menus, molecular cooking and fusion cuisine, but there is nothing quite like savoring a seemingly simple dish that has been perfected over hundreds of years of meticulous preparation.

don't eat alone

When I was first shown a Singapore hawker center, I was captivated, but mistakenly assumed this primitive food court couldn't be the place for me. Not because of the lack of linens



opposite right: A steamed basket of dim sum dumplings featuring shrimp, tofu and vegetables.

above: These dumplings, made fresh daily, are stuffed with succulent pork, green onions and a little bit of seasoning.



or perfectly positioned flatware, but because I don't usually like to consume copious amounts of one dish. Although hawker centers offer large portions, these dishes are not intended to be eaten alone. This food lover's paradise is designed for families and friends to join around a communal table and share their bounty, which includes a collection of dishes that each individual has carefully selected, inspected and haggled for. This act is very much a similitude of the Asian culture, which teaches individuals to share their food and experiences with family, friends and neighbors.

signature dishes

So what are some of the famous dishes that make up a Singaporean feast? Here are some local favorites:

hainanese chicken rice:

This unofficial national dish consists of succulent chicken that has been poached with garlic, lemongrass and pandan leaf. It is religiously served alongside stock-steamed rice that has been glazed in savory clarified chicken renderings.

carrot cake:

This traditional Singaporean dish is made with a savory steamed radish ("Chinese white carrot"—hence, the name of the dish) cake, which is stir-fried with sweet black soy and chili sauce, eggs, green onions and bean sprouts. It is nothing like your grandmother's carrot cake (unless she is Singaporean).

singapore chili crab:

This is another unofficial dish, made by steaming fresh crabs in a hearty concoction of chilies, garlic, ginger, onions, sesame oil, black rice vinegar, sugar and tomato paste. The sauce is then finished with freshly cracked eggs, which gives the gravy a rich, satiny finish. Chili crab is served in a large communal pot with steamed and fried Chinese bread (*mantou*), which is used to mop up the delicious sauce.

xiao long bao:

This Shanghai originating dish of soup-filled dumplings is a must-have that is perfectly crafted by thinly rolling dumpling skins and filling them with a frozen cube of consommé. The dumplings are sealed, steamed and served piping hot.

chinese noodles:

Whether these perfectly glutinous and chewy noodles are topped with a minced pork and savory bean sauce or boiled in a rich broth, you can't go wrong. If you haven't seen these noodles being made, you are missing a phenomenal culinary spectacle.

popiah:

This snack is prepared by filling a thin rice-flour skin with chili and garlic paste, lettuce, braised turnips and carrots, chopped boiled eggs, julienned cucumbers, bean sprouts, peanuts and fresh cilantro. It is a perfect light, refreshing wrap, especially in such a hot, humid city.

top: Dishes served in Singapore's hawker centers have been perfected over generations.

bottom: Lindsay Hancock, center, and her husband, Ben, right, get a lesson in Chinese noodle making.

opposite: A typical food stall in a hawker center in Singapore.

roti prata:

This is one Indian-influenced dish that, as a bread connoisseur, I have come to love. The chefs begin preparing this flatbread by pressing the wheat-based dough with the palms of their hands. As the disk gets larger and larger, the chef picks it up and whips it around in a swift figure-eight motion, like a matador's cape. The savory paper-thin dough is then cooked on a flat top and folded, with several layers of ghee painted between. The result: a miraculously crispy laminated flatbread that can be filled with both sweet (bananas, durian and sugar) and savory (mutton, curry, etc.) fillings.

eating out: a national pastime

It is true that Singapore is home to countless James Beard award-winning, Michelin-star-rated and celebrity chefs, but it is the local hawker-style cuisine that truly defines this country's palate. Singaporeans' love to eat; in fact, it has been said that "eating out" in Singapore shouldn't be classified as such, but should, rather, be classified as just "eating." Why? Because "out" is where Singaporeans eat. They wake up in the morning and run to a hawker stall beneath their building to grab breakfast. They eat lunch with their colleagues near the office and dine with families and friends at hawker centers for dinner. On weekends, they visit restaurants, more hawker centers and coffee shops. Very few Singaporeans cook



at home, but when the food is so delicious, plentiful and cheap, why should they?

The now native population of Malay, India and China—not to mention the thousands of expatriates like me—have successfully found a way to harmoniously blend their respective cuisines to develop this culinary cultural melting pot. I have merely skimmed the surface of the plentiful food scene in Singapore. With a country that has claimed eating as the national pastime, you can only imagine the bountiful foods, ingredients and techniques this country has to offer. ■

Lindsay Hancock is currently working in Singapore as a product-development chef for Leprino Foods Company, Denver. She holds associate degrees in culinary arts and baking/pastry arts and a bachelor's degree in nutrition from Johnson & Wales University, Denver.

did you know?

- Singapore was founded in 1819 as a British trading colony.
- It is located in Southeastern Asia between Malaysia and Indonesia.
- With a land area of about 710 square kilometers, it is one of the smallest countries in the world.
- Singapore boasts a population of 4,740,737 (July 2011 est.)
- The Singapore dollar is the official currency.
- Singapore's political system is a parliamentary republic, centered on democracy.
- Mandarin, English and Malay are the official languages.
- The economy revolves around exports, including consumer electronics, information technology products and pharmaceuticals, as well as a growing financial-services sector.

Source: Singapore Tourism Board; The World Factbook by the Central Intelligence Agency

MEET THE AUTHOR

Click here to learn more about Lindsay Hancock's culinary journey from the U.S. to Singapore.

the interview

Ana Sortun

By Ethel Hammer



Kristin Chalmers

born
Seattle

resides
Sudbury, Mass.

learned the trade

Dishwasher at age 14, The Sante Fe Cafe, Seattle, 1983-1988; degree from La Varenne Ecole de Cuisine, Paris, 1988-1990; pastry assistant and rounds cook, Cafe Sport with Tom Douglas, Seattle, 1990-1991; executive chef at Moncef Meddeb's Aigo Bistro, Concord, Mass., 1993-1996; executive chef, 8 Holyoke, Cambridge, Mass., 1996; executive



chef, Sari Abul-Jubein's Casablanca, Cambridge, 1997-2001; first trip to Gaziantep and Istanbul, Turkey, 1997; executive chef/owner, Oleana, Cambridge, 2001-present; opened Siena Farms, Sudbury, Mass., with husband/farmer Chris Kurth, 2006-present; co-owner, Sofra Bakery and Cafe, Cambridge, 2008-present.

awards/achievements

Oleana nominated "Best New Restaurant in America," James Beard Foundation (JBF), 2001; Oleana awarded "Best AI Fresco Dining," *Boston Magazine*, 2001-2007; Best Chef, Northeast, JBF, 2005; *Spice: Flavors of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Regan Books, 2006) nominated for "Best International Cookbook," JBF, 2006.

She was a shy girl from the Pacific Northwest, born into a reticent Norwegian family but endowed with a driving will and a curious stubbornness that early on made her extraordinary. At age 19, she became the first woman to attend La Varenne Ecole de Cuisine in Paris earlier than the normal admission age. Meet Ana Sortun, chef/owner of Oleana and co-owner of Sofra Bakery and Cafe, both in Cambridge, Mass, a girl who grew up eating salmon, king and Dungeness crab and the wonderful produce from Washington. So, how did she emerge as the preeminent American chef offering a modern interpretation of the food of Turkey and the Eastern Mediterranean, worlds she initially knew nothing about?

"I didn't grow up in an Italian household with tons of crazy pastas and multicourse meals," Sortun says.

Instead, her grandmother, a good, simple cook, used pure ingredients, and both her parents were raised on family farms. "Early on, I knew that if I wanted to eat really good food, I needed to know how to cook."



By age 14, the driven girl who was sometimes so shy she could barely speak up for herself, was working as a dishwasher at The Sante Fe Cafe, a small Seattle New Mexican restaurant where, after nine months, the owners realized they had talent on their hands. With their backing, soon she was cooking authentic New Mexican/Pueblo Indian food. Next, Sortun attended a tiny cooking school in the basement of a Seattle department store, and as luck would have it, her mentor was a woman who had gone to La Varenne.

When she told her father that she, too, had to go to France, he was baffled. “Why go to cooking school in France? You can learn technique anywhere,” he said.

With determination, she bypassed college, studying French at a private school for two years, five days a week, so she could pass La Varenne’s language requirement. Too young to enter, her mentor worked her magic, and soon Sortun was enrolled, learning in France what how the French put ingredients on a platform, how they respect nature and are

sticklers for ingredients. Now she was a true apprentice, a *stagiaire*, working in exchange for her tuition by helping other students with their French homework, running errands, doing prep work, too busy to hang out in cafes or gallivant around the city. “Early on, I knew if I wanted to go into this, I had to be willing to work hard for the rest of my life.”

Of course, it wasn’t easy. “I was crying every day. I hated the French. I wasn’t charmed by the people but by their culture, and I say that in a loving way,” Sortun says of the difference between people in Seattle, where everyone smiled and was so friendly, too friendly, and the emotionally distant French.

So how did this introverted, determined girl grow into a vibrant woman with a James Beard Foundation award, two restaurants, a husband and daughter, plus an astounding ability to interpret and modernize Eastern Mediterranean food from Turkey, Greece, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Cyprus? Let’s ask Ana.

spice it up

Want to add flavor and depth to your dishes? Before you do, take the advice of Ana Sortun, author of *Spice: Flavors of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Regan Books, 2006):

- Spice blends are complicated, so get to know a blend as simple as curry.
- Buy many different curries and find one you love. Or, start with a few ingredients, perhaps ground fennel, ground cumin and saffron, and let them into your life and start cooking with them.
- In *Spice*, I teach about spices in groups or families, such as cumin, coriander and cardamom or saffron, ginger and vanilla. Start simply and build your palate. The more you learn, the more you realize how little you know.

above: Diners at Oleana enjoy Arabic influenced foods of the Mediterranean with a strong leaning toward Turkish cuisine.



how hard was it being a student at La Varenne?

as: The teachers were men and were very hard on me, but I never considered what it might be like if I were a male student. And I never felt handicapped by being a woman. My Norwegian family was very quiet. Here, the teachers were yelling and screaming, calling me bad names, but I understood it more as a style of teaching that I now laugh about, not as abuse.

There were two main older male chefs and two younger ones. We had to major in something, and I chose tarte Tatin. It took me 14 hours to work on it, and I kept messing it up. I didn't tell the main chef. Instead, I spoke to one of the assistants about my problems: the first tarte was underdone, the second one was overdone and the third didn't work. Then, one of the older male chefs came up to me and screamed, "Are you stupid? I can't believe you had to do it three times. If you want to know the answer, would you go to God or Jesus Christ? You should have come to me."

Then he pulled me right up to his face, like he was going to kiss me, and told me the recipe. He said he would call me at 7 a.m. the next morning, and if I screwed it up, he'd kick me in the ass so hard I'd never walk again. It was a hard way to learn. In the end, they adored me and I adored them. And they didn't do that because I was a woman. They did it to everyone. To this day, I know I can make tarte Tatin, and I haven't done it in 10 years.

what came next?

as: After coming back from France, I worked with Tom Douglas at Cafe Sport. Then I got a job on a private yacht in the Mediterranean. It was the best job I have ever had. No food cost. No labor cost. They would fly in prosciuttos on a private plane. There I was, only out of school a couple of years, spending four months cooking and traveling to the South of France, docking in Menton, Nice and Antibes, going to Barcelona in Spain and to Puglia in Italy. I went to markets, consulted cookbooks and worked on my own. Then when I came back to America, I met and started working with Moncef Meddeb, a Tunisian North African chef in Concord, Mass., who taught me the food of the Central Mediterranean and Tunisia and also how to taste, memorize and appreciate food in my head—a big turning point for me.

how did you get involved with Turkish food?

as: I was working at a place called Casablanca, and a friend of a friend said she'd love for me to learn from her friend in Gaziantep, Turkey's gastronomic center. I said, "Oh, my God—flying carpets and genies!" I had no clue about the food or the culture. That first trip to Turkey changed everything.

I arrived, and Ayfer Unsal, a journalist and cookbook author, organized a potluck prepared by 30 women from their home repertoires. The tastes blew me away. I realized that I had tasted 30 things, and instead of feeling like crap, I felt great. I started wondering why the food

tasted so rich, but not heavy. It became a personal quest for me. Most chefs think: No. 1, it's important that something tastes great. No. 2, how does it look? When they get to No. 3, they think about texture. Then, they stop. Nobody asks how people are going to feel. I started to investigate the alchemy of spices in Mediterranean food, which is different from Indian or Thai cuisine. In Middle Eastern cooking there is a blending and layering that is complicated and much more subtle. Of course, there are occasional big whams of cumin, but Turkey, with its Western techniques from the palaces of the Ottoman Empire, is where East meets West. This was my initial inspiration for doing a modern interpretation of Eastern Mediterranean food.

what dishes did you try in Gaziantep?

as: The potluck had lots of vegetable-based dishes, such as salads with thick, hardy purslane, a succulent green, mixed with cucumber, mint and lots of fresh herbs, which stays firm when dressed with pomegranate molasses, which is a lot like balsamic vinegar. In the restaurant, we use a lot of red chilies from Aleppo, Syria, that resemble the maraş peppers found in Gaziantep. There were grape leaves stuffed with meat, and either rice or bulgur braised with unripe plums, which are used almost like lemons. Meat is only used as flavor for dishes rich in yogurt and pistachios, which are used on pilafs and as fillers along with bulgur and meat. There was eggplant with tahini, baba ghanoush, fresh green parsley



and tomato salad with fresh ground allspice and black pepper, which are really great together. And lamejun, a stuffed flatbread—oh my God!

besides traveling to the source, what is your best advice for becoming a success?

as: There are no shortcuts. Try to learn a few things very well. You have to start with focus. There are a lot of distractions these days, with so much information and instant feedback. You have to have strong filters to stand up to all the critics, who can be random and cruel. If I listened to everything people said, we would never be where we are. Opening Oleana, a Middle Eastern restaurant, during 9/11? Or opening Sofra Bakery and Cafe, originally a completely new concept with Eastern Mediterranean mezze, stuffed flatbread sandwiches and lots of sweets? Originally, nobody knew what it was, but I stuck to it. I knew it would succeed. Success depends on a team of people. Remember, good things take time. ■

Ethel Hammer is a writer, lecturer and cartoonist based in Chicago.

Mediterranean on the menu

At Oleana, a culinary tour of the Eastern Mediterranean includes these aromatic offerings:

- **From Turkey:** Lightly breaded fried mussels served with tarator sauce of whole blanched almonds, garlic, olive oil, blended until it turns white and looks like mayonnaise—a classic street food found in Istanbul.
- **From Greece:** Trout *spanakopita* stuffed with spinach, feta, parsley, mint and dill.
- **From Egypt:** A modern interpretation of carrot *dukkah* with nuts, seeds and spices, mixed with olive oil, coconut and almonds.
- **From Syria:** Feta cheese with lots of tomato, seasoned with allspice, black pepper, sumac, a trio very close to what they do in Lebanon. And tuna *kibbeh nayeh* mixed with bulgur, allspice, red pepper paste, tomato paste and cumin is the restaurant's version of Lebanese raw lamb *kibbeh nayeh*.

opposite top: Tasty fare from Oleana.

opposite bottom left: Haloumi is sheep's milk cheese from Cyprus.

opposite bottom right: Oleana's gazpacho.

above: Skewered beef with spinach.



They call me stubborn...
I thank them for the compliment.



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