

# sizzle

SUMMER  
2011

THE AMERICAN CULINARY FEDERATION QUARTERLY FOR STUDENTS OF COOKING



let's do  
brunch

vichyssoise  
on the menu

life as a  
hotel chef

shanghai  
street food



**Alton Brown**

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# sizzle

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Quarterly for Students of Cooking

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**on the cover:** Café Patachou's Omelette of the Day is a popular brunch pick among guests at the Indianapolis restaurant. Photo courtesy of Café Patachou.



# president's message

## Document the Present, Map Out Your Future

By Michael Ty, CEC, AAC

**W**ow! It seems like just yesterday I was sharing my thoughts and suggestions with you on what you could accomplish during your breaks from classroom learning, and here we are again.

During this past year, I have had many enjoyable experiences getting to know students and apprentices across the country. One that comes to mind is the first Be Like "Mike" Contest that took place during the 2010 ACF National Convention in Anaheim, Calif. The contest offered one lucky student the chance to shadow me during our national convention, from my meetings with industry

leaders to special meal events. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience of meeting new students, and I gained a better perspective of your feelings, beliefs and vision for the future.

Believe me when I say that my interaction with you, the chefs of tomorrow, has greatly impacted me and spurred deep personal reflection. I have remembered the days when I, too, was a student, wondering about my future and anticipating where my career would take me. I still remember a piece of advice given to me by an older, more mature chef. "Take the time to document everything happening, as it happens."

## sizzle

The American Culinary Federation  
Quarterly for Students of Cooking

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The project to do that developed into my personal history book, a chronicle of my accomplishments and shortcomings that, from time to time, I revisit. It also serves as a great review tool so that I can honestly assess myself and set goals in areas where I need improvement. On occasion, having this book has helped me easily recall specifics about a particular event. If ever a question comes up, I know I have immediate access to important professional records that cover who, what, when, where and why.

I'm sure many of you are wondering, "What kind of specific notes do you keep in your history book?" I am happy to offer insight. The answer is, anything and everything. I keep copies of any documents or stories I am featured in and copies of special recipes I have collected from working with others through the years. Sketches of how plates should appear, how buffets are to be presented and work/flow charts for specific occasions are also useful to keep, especially when preparing something different from the norm.



You've probably heard the expression, "Plan your work, and work your plan," many times. Mapping out your work does not require any special artistic skills. It is just another means of clearly showing how you desire your finished work to be presented. Drawing pictures is not a new technique. Even Neanderthals used simple cave drawings to teach one another how to hunt.

Taking time to map out the desired finished product brought me recognition early in my career. The chef I worked with at the time saw my sketches as a valuable tool, especially when plating for large parties, so he promoted this to others.

Other keepsakes in my history book include

awards, diplomas, other acknowledgements and records to prove my background and professional credentials. This type of documentation comes in useful when applying for professional awards and culinary certification.

In addition to the many reasons why you should keep a personal history book is this important one: It serves as a reminder of the good times, which are always within our grasp. Reflecting on my career by flipping through my book encourages me to keep going and inspires me to pursue new goals.

I encourage you to start a history book of your own and keep it handy throughout your career. And as you grow, make

sure you reach back and help others who may not be progressing as fast. Appreciate the instructors you currently have who may come off as demanding, because without them, it will take you much longer to learn the realities of what the culinary industry is like. This is a challenging, yet rewarding, industry. ■

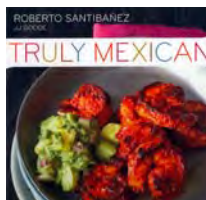
Sincerely,

Michael Ty, CEC, AAC  
National President  
American Culinary Federation

**above:** Michael Ty, second from right, and Henry Douglas, CEC, AAC, center, with students from Bishop State Community College, Mobile, Ala., at the 2011 ACF Central Regional Conference in New Orleans in April.

# amuse-bouche

## Bits & Pieces



### pennsylvania student wins cake competition

Katrina Snelgrove, a student at Pennsylvania College of Technology, Williamsport, Pa., took home the grand prize March 3 in the college's "Harry Potter"-themed sixth annual cake competition, sponsored by CalJava International. Terri Smith placed first, Robin Bingham, CPC, won the second-place prize, Brittany DeLousia, CPC, finished third and Heather Ferguson received the People's Choice Award. Winners received cake-decorating equipment and supplies.

### new reads!

Learn about volume cooking with a focus on nutrition and smart menu

planning in *Modern Batch Cookery* (Wiley Hardcover, 2011), \$65, by The Culinary Institute of America's Victor Gielisse, CMC, CHE, AAC, and Ron DeSantis, CMC, AAC. The 450-plus pages feature more than 200 healthy large-batch recipes, conversion charts, and a range of topics from stocks to brunch and from sandwiches to reception foods.

Want to learn more about chocolate work? Check out Ewald Nötter's new book, *The Art of the Chocolatier: From Classic Confections to Sensational Showpieces* (Wiley Hardcover, 2011), \$65. Learn basic ingredient information and common techniques and follow step-by-step instructions on creating small candies and large-scale chocolate showpieces.

In *Truly Mexican: Essential Recipes and Techniques for Authentic Mexican Cooking* (Wiley Hardcover, 2011), \$35, Roberto Santibañez identifies authentic Mexican cuisine, with its complex flavors and simple preparations. The book features more than 120 recipes, a "Sources" section to help readers find authentic Mexican ingredients and instructions for classic techniques, such as roasting chiles and making fresh tortillas.

**right:** Katrina Snelgrove and her "Harry Potter"-themed cake.



Postry Chicago

## chicago home to best scones in U.S.

Congratulations to Ian Regino, a student at The French Pastry School, Chicago, for winning first place in the First Annual Scone Competition, which took place at the school March 17 and challenged competitors to showcase their best California Raisin scone recipes. Regino won for his raisin and citrus scones. Carla Cubert took second place and Tabitha Jackson placed third.



## the soyfoods council names contest winners

Kudos to Cassie Miller, Amanda Pudlik and Elise Fiscus, aka the "Soy Sistas," for winning the Soy You Think You Can Cook contest, sponsored by The Soyfoods Council in cooperation with Iowa State University's Dining and the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition, in Ankeny, Iowa, in March. The competition challenged student teams to create made-from-scratch entrées and side dishes using soyfoods ingredients. The team won \$420 for its Sweet and Savory Monte Cristo Sandwich served with Creamy Winter Squash and Apple Soup.

## did you know?

Celiac disease affects one out of 133 people, yet 97% of those suffering with the disease go undiagnosed, according to the Celiac Disease

Foundation. In honor of National Celiac Awareness Month in May, spend some time learning more about the disease and how to cater to those in need of gluten-free foods. Visit [www.celiac.org](http://www.celiac.org).

## kendall college student wins national contest

Marco Bahena, a student at Kendall College, Chicago, was named winner of the ninth annual S.Pellegrino® Almost Famous Chef® Competition in March, following a three-day competition at The Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in St. Helena, Calif. He took home a total of \$13,000 and a year-long paid internship with the participating chef judge of his choice for his Mediterranean Lamb Loin, which also won the prize for signature dish. Jean-François Daigle from George Brown College Chef School, Toronto, Canada, won the Mystery Basket competition and \$3,000; Elizabeth Freer from the Culinary Institute of Charleston, Charleston, S.C., won the People's Choice Award and \$3,000; and Emma Louth from Drexel University, Philadelphia, took home \$3,000 for wowing the online audience.

## CIA honors chef paul bocuse

Paul Bocuse, considered the father of modern French cuisine, was honored as "Chef of the Century" by The

**top:** Ian Regino

**bottom left:** Marco Bahena

**bottom right:** The "Soy Sistas" winning Creamy Winter Squash and Apple Soup

Culinary Institute of America (CIA) at its fifth annual Augie Awards held in New York, March 30. Bocuse was one of the first chefs to emerge from behind the kitchen door, bringing the face and personality of the chef into the dining room and beyond. His L'Auberge du Pont de Collonges, near Lyon, France, has held three stars in the Michelin Guide for 47 consecutive years. He is also the creator of the Bocuse d'Or international culinary competition.

## RCA competition winners announced

The Research Chefs Association held its fifth annual Student Culinology® Competition in Atlanta in March, challenging teams to develop Southern-themed dessert concepts featuring peaches for a family-style restaurant chain. Stephanie Grau, Ashley Moore and Chad Woelfle from Southwest Minnesota State University, Marshall, Minn., won first place and \$5,000 for their entry, Good as Grandma's Peach Cobbler with Vanilla Buttermilk Ice Cream. A team from Johnson & Wales University, Providence, R.I., placed second, and a team from the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada, placed third.

## JWU building now leed certified

In April, Johnson & Wales University's Cuisinart Center for Culinary



Excellence, which opened in spring 2010 at the school's Providence, R.I., campus, was awarded LEED® gold certification, established by the U.S. Green Building Council and verified by the Green Building Certification Institute. The \$42 million facility, which includes 30 teaching labs and classrooms and nine hot kitchens, achieved LEED certification for energy use, lighting, water and material use, as well as for incorporating a variety of other sustainable strategies.



## duck recipe contest

Enter Maple Leaf Farms 2011 Discover Duck Recipe Contest for the chance to win the student grand prize of \$3,000 or the second-place prize of \$1,500. Create an original recipe featuring white Pekin duck by August 5, for your chance to win. For full details, visit [www.mapleleafarms.com/chefcontest](http://www.mapleleafarms.com/chefcontest).

## send us your news

We want to hear from you. Send us your news, including recipe contests, student accomplishments and school announcements, to [sizzle@acfcchefs.net](mailto:sizzle@acfcchefs.net).

**top:** Agnes Jones, representing National Starch Food Innovation, far right, congratulates faculty advisor Michael Cheng, far left, and the winning RCA student team, left to right: Stephanie Grau, KayLee Ryker, Ashley Moore and Chad Woelfle.

**bottom:** Johnson & Wales University's Providence, R.I. campus.

# slice of life

Lindsay Swinson



## age

22

## education

Culinary student, El Centro Community College, Dallas

## externship

Central Market, Dallas

## why there?

I wanted to go somewhere I would enjoy while developing my skills and learning something new, so I applied for a cheesemonger position at Central Market, and I got the job. Working here is a culinarian's dream.

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

Working hands-on with more than 700 different cheeses, I've learned about many new facets of the food industry, from food-and-wine pairing to taste profiles and the history of cheeses.

## career plans

I would like to branch out into food journalism, writing and blogging. I'd also like to teach nutrition, life skills, English or culinary arts in a high school one day, and eventually start my own catering company.

11 am 12 pm

11:00 a.m.

My day, no matter what the hour, always starts with the wailing of my alarm to "Bohemian Rhapsody," followed by a hazelnut latte and time spent with my feline companion, Toast. Sometimes my externship calls on me in the wee hours of the morning, and other times, in the afternoon, so this "routine" is anything but. The gourmet grocery world never sleeps.



12:00 p.m.

In my uniform of thermals, wool socks, chef pants and a heavy fleece coat, I traipse into the 35°F production room, "the cheese cave," to begin a long day's work. Mornings are dedicated to organizing the current 752 cheeses into an approachable catalog for our customers, and pulling out any damaged or out-of-date products. This helps us address any ordering needs. The cheese department has dozens of local and international suppliers, allowing us to stock our shelves with cheeses from Central Europe, Spain, Italy, France, England, Ireland, Mexico, etc.

## 1:30 p.m.

A looming 1,000-pound wheel of Henning's Wisconsin cheddar dominates the floor display for our demos, making the tower of 20 85-pound wheels of Parmigiano-Reggiano look miniscule. Each day the cheese crew selects different cheeses to showcase and use to teach customers. Today, we have Green's raw milk—a full-flavored cheddar with a slightly spicy undertone and edible blue veins—and Tavoliere, an airy Italian cheese rubbed with tomato paste to bring out its meaty flavor, which pairs well with spicy salami and

Chardonnay or Prosecco. The demos also give us a chance to exhibit the versatility of cheese. Have you ever tried white Stilton studded with candied lemon zest on a gingersnap cookie? Or grilled cheese made with brie and turkey, or an applewood-smoked cheddar? All of these experimental concoctions are dreamed up by the staff, and are demonstrated for passersby in hopes that we can transfer our enthusiasm.



1 pm

2 pm

3 pm

4 pm

5 pm

6 pm

7 pm

## 3:00 p.m.

It's finally lunchtime. Like our department, there is something to be savored everywhere in our store. I might as well let them keep my paycheck. Ever since the garde manger class I took at El Centro, I have been fascinated with charcuterie. My lunch hour is usually dedicated to gathering inspiration for my next bout at sausage making or pâté assembling, or just enjoying the premade artisanal versions I can buy here.



## 6:00 p.m.

Floor sales are an integral part of our job. Our purpose is to communicate our ever-expanding knowledge of cheese to our clientele. Much like the New York delis you see in movies, we suggest our favorite cheeses, and, using a cheese plane, scrape off the most perfect, tantalizing sample. Southern hospitality is an inherent part of our business, and it's why we have so many repeat customers. From catering companies coming from Oklahoma, to families making their regular visits, our customers count on us to stock their favorite delicacies that only we carry.



## 5:00 p.m.

Inside the cheese cave, we begin cheese production, which is quite possibly the most important and monotonous task we face. Production is a mechanical, architectural task involving saws, huge knives, large equipment, wire cutters and a vast amount of knowledge. The majority of our day is spent shaping hundreds of wheels of cheese into half-pound pieces to sell to the average household consumer.

## 7:30 p.m.

The time has arrived to grab a warm cup of coffee on my way out. The sense of accomplishment and learnedness I walk away with after a long day makes me look forward to the next day I get to come back to my stinky, delicious world of cheese.



# classical v. modern



**top:** Elaine Taubin, CEC  
**bottom:** Michael Wright

From broths to purées and from creams to bisques, what’s not to love about soup? Whether the precursor to a great meal or enjoyed as a standalone dish, soups offer a canvas for chefs to display their creativity.

As temperatures rise, Elaine Taubin, CEC, executive chef at Loews Vanderbilt Hotel, Nashville, Tenn., and Michael Wright, a student at The Art Institute of Tennessee–Nashville, who also works at the hotel, explore the traditional puréed soup vichyssoise, a creamy potato and leek soup. Served cold, it is a wonderful summer soup for students to learn to

make and add to their classical recipe collection.

“Soups are so interesting. They can tell a story about places and times from the past or convey the mood of the present,” Taubin says. “Vichyssoise is a hearty soup, but has a certain amount of lightness to it, and it is versatile.”

Classically prepared, vichyssoise is a simple recipe, with leeks, potatoes, butter, chicken stock, cream, salt and parsley as the ingredients. Taubin’s modern interpretation, Local Duo Vichyssoise, demonstrates how chefs can go a step beyond the traditional and add their personal or regional touch to a dish.

Taubin features ingredients from Tennessee, and adds sweet potatoes, an onion, and mascarpone cheese/ blood orange purée.

Like many classical recipes, vichyssoise’s origin is often debated. Many claim it was first made in the early 1900s in the U.S. by Luis Diat, a French chef who worked at The Ritz-Carlton, New York. Others argue that the recipe originated in the mid/late 1800s in France. Regardless of where or when this classical soup came to be, chefs have been preparing it for more than half a century. It is a simple, yet delicious, recipe that complements many other dishes. So, go ahead, give it a try.



## classical

**VICHYSOISE 1.** Classical vichyssoise soup is chilled overnight and best served at 50-60°F in a cool bowl. **2.** Vichyssoise is a simple recipe, prepared with leeks, potatoes, butter, chicken stock, cream and salt. **3.** To obtain a smooth consistency, this recipe was puréed with a Bermixer. **4.** A touch of minced parsley adds a burst of color and flavor to this pale soup.



## modern

**LOCAL DUO VICHYSOISE 1.** For the modern version, all local ingredients are used, including potatoes and leeks grown in Tennessee and cream from a local dairy. **2.** Like its classical interpretation, this hearty soup is served chilled, and is light enough to enjoy in the summer months. **3.** Sweet potatoes complement the flavor of the Kennebec potatoes and add a vibrant contrast as the two versions swirl together. **4.** A quenelle of blood orange/mascarpone cheese purée adds a hint of acid that cuts through the richness of the soup.

## classical

Born and raised in Tennessee, Wright has been cooking for most of his life. A third-generation cook, he says he chose the culinary arts because it was in his blood. He finds fulfillment in cooking for others, as it often puts them in a better mood. As a student at The Art Institute of Tennessee–Nashville, Wright has prepared vichyssoise once before, but says this version supersedes the previous one.

Using Julia Child’s vichyssoise recipe as the base of his soup, Wright worked with Taubin to slightly alter it, adding stock and cream that wasn’t used in Child’s recipe, but was featured in other versions.

“The main techniques used in this dish that you will use again are the knife cuts,” Wright says. “I consider them to be the foundation of everything else one is expected to do in a kitchen.”

Wright says vichyssoise is “easy to make” and will be easy for first-timers to master. His one word of caution is to watch the soup’s consistency and seasoning. “The consistency is the trickiest part, because it often thickens after being chilled overnight,” he says. “You may have to thin it out some before serving. Also, make sure you don’t over-season the soup.” ■

## Vichyssoise

Yield: 6 portions

**Michael Wright**  
Student  
The Art Institute of  
Tennessee–Nashville  
Nashville, Tenn.

### Ingredients:

4 leeks  
3 60-count Idaho potatoes  
1 oz. butter  
32 oz. chicken stock  
8 oz. heavy cream  
Salt, to taste  
1 oz. minced parsley

1. Cut leeks, starting at white part and removing roots. Using only white part, slice ¼-inch thick. Let leeks soak in water to remove all sand.
2. Peel potatoes; cut into 1-inch cubes. Hold in cold water.
3. Place butter in pot on medium heat; melt. Add drained leeks; cook until softened. Add drained potatoes, stock and heavy cream. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer for about 20 minutes, or until soft.
4. Purée with Berrmixer until smooth.
5. Taste; adjust seasoning. Chill overnight.
6. To plate: Pour into serving dishes. Garnish with minced parsley.



## modern

Searching for a classical soup recipe, Taubin and Wright decided to feature vichyssoise because it is quick to prepare and is served chilled, which is “perfect for hot days when long-cooking soups heat the kitchen.”

Taubin has worked with many young cooks and interns throughout her career as a hotel chef. She often reminds them how important it is to build a culinary foundation on classic recipes and basic techniques. “Each cook can then apply his or her style, but it all stems from mastering the classics,” Taubin says.

For the modern version of vichyssoise, Taubin uses Kennebec potatoes, plentiful in the South, because they are hearty, have a well-balanced flavor, hold together well and do not become mealy. For a contrast in color, and to complement the sharpness of the leeks, she adds sweet potatoes.

The yin-yang design in the soup shows that each soup has its own identity while melding well together.

To achieve this, pour the sweet potato first, starting in the middle, and then pour the white soup. Using the back of a spoon, pull the sweet potato into the white.

Although a simple recipe, pay close attention to ensure that the potatoes are cooked soft so they purée smooth, and that the soup is cooked at a simmer, not a boil. “The trick to working with thick soups is not to let your heat source be too high,” Taubin says. “Thicker soups can scorch easily. Make sure you stir often. You may also need to adjust the consistency with a little extra cream or stock once the soup has chilled.”

Once you have a strong grasp on the classical, explore the many modern variations, such as using a purple Peruvian potato with a white potato, or leaving the soup chunky and rustic, adding a pancetta crisp. With a strong classical foundation and respect for the recipe, the rest is up to you. ■

## Local Duo Vichyssoise

Yield: 6 portions

Elaine Taubin, CEC  
Executive Chef  
Loews Vanderbilt Hotel  
Nashville, Tenn.

### Ingredients:

2 Tennessee **sweet potatoes**  
2 Kennebec **potatoes**  
½ Vidalia **onion**  
2 **leeks**  
2 oz. **butter**, divided  
32 oz. natural **chicken stock**, divided  
16 oz. **heavy cream**, divided  
**Salt**, to taste  
3 oz. **mascarpone cheese**  
1 oz. **blood orange purée**

1. Peel both kinds of potato; cut into 1-inch cubes. Keep separate. Hold in cold water.
2. Julienne onion. Slice two leeks ¼-inch thick. Use white part only; reserve green part for garnish. Soak in cold water to remove all sand.
3. Place two pots on medium heat. Place 1 oz. butter in each; melt. Sauté leeks in one pot until soft. In the other, sauté onion until transparent.
4. Add Kennebec potatoes to leeks. Add 16 oz. stock and 8 oz. cream. Simmer. Add sweet potatoes to onion. Add 16 oz. stock and 8 oz. cream. Simmer.
5. When potatoes are soft, remove from heat.
6. Purée with Bermixer. Keep potato mixtures separate. Taste; adjust seasoning. If too thick, add a little more stock. Chill overnight.
7. Prior to service, check soup for consistency. If too thick, add cream.
8. Prepare garnish: Blend cheese and blood orange purée. Thinly slice reserved green parts of leeks. Clean thoroughly; dry.
9. **To serve:** Pour into serving bowls with sweet potato on one side and white potato on the other. Garnish with a quenelle of blood orange/mascarpone cheese purée and leeks.



# COOKIN' TO compete

Win or lose, culinary competitions provide experience you can't learn in the classroom.

By Rob Benes



Culinary school training involves three main components: classroom instruction, student-run dining rooms and culinary competitions. Each part is vital in preparing students to be well-rounded chefs, but culinary competitions provide added benefits that push students to achieve true culinary excellence.

“Culinary competitions were a magnificent tool that propelled

my career into orbit,” says American Culinary Federation (ACF)-approved culinary judge Jill Bosich, CEC, CCE, AAC, chef-instructor at Orange Coast College, Costa Mesa, Calif. “You get great experience by working in various restaurants, learning from others and going to school, but taking the leap of faith to throw your hat into the competition ring will distinguish you from others in the hospitality industry.”

**above:** Michael Kurowski, left, from Pulaski High School, Pulaski, Wis., fabricates a chicken under the watchful eye of judge Mark Molinaro at the 2010 National ProStart Invitational in Overland Park, Kan.



NRAEF



## going for gold

Mike Chrostowski, culinary instructor at Olathe North High School, Olathe, Kan., has gained a reputation as the ProStart team coach to beat. He has coached six consecutive winning state ProStart Invitational teams, including the 2010 National ProStart Invitational winner. His teams have earned more than \$900,000 in scholarships to attend two-year culinary schools.

From a high school perspective, culinary competitions provide a wide variety of opportunities for students, such as learning patience, developing math skills, working with others in a team environment, writing ingredient lists, developing complex menus, managing unexpected obstacles,

balancing school and personal responsibilities and cooking high-quality food.

“On the first day of class, I review my expectations with students and start thinking of who will be part of the Olathe North High School competition team,” Chrostowski says. “Students slouched over in their chairs, ones who come late to class or those who wear dirty uniforms may not make the team—let alone pass the class.”

Chrostowski forewarns students that practice is held before or after school every day and sometimes on the weekends. During practice, he often adds obstacles to see how students will respond. “At the National ProStart Invitational a few years ago, a television crew was

interviewing a parent when the boom microphone knocked over some of the kitchen equipment,” Chrostowski says. “It’s not uncommon for me to knock a spatula off the table and observe students’ reactions. Do you look for someone to blame? No. Do you make excuses? No. You pick up the spatula, sanitize it, put it away and get back to work like nothing happened.”

## winning isn't everything

Timothy Meyers, CCC, CCE, chef-instructor at the College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, Ill., has mentored students in ProStart, SkillsUSA and other student team competitions. He sees winning as the icing on the cake. “The entire competition experience, from preparing

to competing, is a learning exercise,” Meyers says. “Yes, if students don’t win, there is disappointment, but each day their habits change and their desire to succeed grows.”

Regardless of the outcome, one prize all competitors earn is networking opportunities. The hospitality industry is large, but interrelated. Chefs cross paths many times throughout their careers because of school, competitions, work and involvement in professional organizations.

“Chefs often compare notes regarding potential hires, so it’s important to build relationships during a competition and not burn bridges,” Meyers says. “I have had several students develop professional relationships through competitions that resulted in jobs offered based on their work ethic and merit alone.”

Entering competitions teaches students how to deal with the pressure that gradually builds as each week draws closer to the competition. From anxiety about performing to finding solutions when things go wrong during the competition, learning to manage stress is a skill students will have with them throughout their careers.

“You get great experience by working in restaurants, learning from others and going to school, but taking the leap of faith to throw your hat into the competition ring will distinguish you from others in the hospitality industry.”

—Jill Bosich, CEC, CCE, AAC

## five ways to lose points

Before students enter the competition arena, they must be mentally and physically prepared, Bosich says. She advises paying close attention to these top five ways to lose points, so you can avoid common pitfalls:

### 1 don't serve food on cold plates.

The first thing a judge does is touch the plate. When it’s cold or not as hot as it should be, it forces them to take a closer, more critical look at the elements to taste, because already the most commonsense rule of hot food hot, cold food cold, has been compromised.

**Solution:** Designate a warming oven, bring a heat lamp and figure out how to deliver your food on dishes that are the correct temperature.

### 2 don't over-complicate the dish.

Go with what you know. If you are not an expert on a particular type of cuisine or competent in a specific classical cooking technique, then leave it to others.

**opposite left:** Demonta Brown and Ricky Butler from Wando High School, Mt. Pleasant, S.C., at the 2010 National ProStart Invitational.

**opposite right:** Olathe North High School students celebrate their first-place finish in the 2011 Kansas ProStart Invitational.



**Solution:** Write menus and execute dishes that come naturally to you. If you are proficient at filleting a round fish rather than deboning a leg of lamb, then knock the judges' socks off with your fish skills.

### 3 deliver the goods.

Many competitors do not have a sound understanding of classical cooking and techniques. As a result, when menus are submitted, classical terminology is used that is simply wrong. For example, a competitor will submit a menu that states "bouillabaisse," but instead of preparing what judges expect—a classical French seafood stew—a whole new interpretation of it is served.

**Solution:** Unless you are going to prepare that true recipe, call the dish something else, such as "chef's seasonal fish stew," so you have room

to serve a dish that you, the competitor, are the expert on.

### 4 don't plate late.

There are many reasons competitors run late, but it is often because of lack of preparation. For every minute over, you lose points.

**Solution:** Invest in a digital timer, and before you step into that kitchen, be sure you have practiced each step several times. The competition kitchen isn't the place to wing it.

### 5 season properly.

Go beyond the obvious salt and pepper and recognize that your dish might need a small amount of sweetness or acid, or a balance of bitter, just to bring out the dish's best.

**Solution:** Taste your food. Make sure it makes judges crave that second or third bite.

## five ways to earn points

ACF-approved culinary judge Timothy Bucci, CEC, CCE, CHE, associate chef-instructor at Joliet Junior College, Joliet, Ill., is an avid competitor and coach. He says students who compete grow faster than those who don't. Here are his top five ways to earn points during a competition:

### 1 get organized.

Before entering any culinary competition, work on becoming organized. The cart you practice with should be clean, neat and organized, so it doesn't look cluttered. Your table space should be meticulously clean. Only keep what is really needed on your table, such as tasting spoons, timer, salt, pepper and gloves. Organize your recipes, making sure the ingredients are in order of use and the verbiage



of procedures is clear and concise. Think, if someone looks at this recipe packet, would he or she be able to produce the dish without questions?

## 2 master the basics.

Solid technique is one area where you can earn many points. You don't have to recreate the wheel when entering a competition. There is nothing wrong with a perfectly executed dish, such as a sautéed chicken breast with a natural reduction, herbed potato purée, sautéed spinach and glazed tournéed carrots.

## 3 keep it simple.

If you're new to competitions, start with a simple but good dish and build from there. You do not have to have 15 components with drizzles, emulsions, foams or faux caviar. A simple, clean dish crafted with solid techniques that has great flavor and components that blend well and do not compete with each other will do very well. As you progress and become more confident and experienced, then you can start to raise the bar.

## 4 understand work flow.

As you practice and compete, focus on the work flow at your station. There should be a smooth transition from task to task, all the way to plate up and cleanup.

## 5 be professional.

Choosing to compete should be thought of as an honor—you are representing yourself and your place of employment or school. People will judge you every step of the way. From the minute you walk in the door until you exit, there should be a high level of professionalism.

Gold or bronze, win or lose, competitions provide students with experience that cannot be gained in the classroom, unmatched networking opportunities and skills that will be used throughout one's career. ■

Rob Benes, a Chicago-based journalist, was previously the editor of *Chef* and *Chef Educator Today*. He has more than nine years of experience writing about chefs, food, wine and spirits for trade and educational publications.

## hit the books

Want to learn more about culinary competitions? Here are some reads that will put you on the road to success:

- *American Culinary Federation Guide to Competitions* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005) by Edward Leonard, CMC, WGMC, AAC
- *Coaching Culinary Champions: You, The Team and Competition* (Seriouslyono Press, 2008) by Frank Leake, CCC, CCE, AAC, and Marrina Lynde
- *Food Presentation Secrets: Styling Techniques of Professionals* (Firefly Books, 2010) by Jo Denbury and Cara Hobday

## for more information

Don't just read about competitions, get involved. Learn more about some of the organizations mentioned in this article and ask your culinary instructors about competitions happening in your area.

- American Culinary Federation: [www.acfchefs.org](http://www.acfchefs.org)
- ProStart: [prostart.restaurant.org](http://prostart.restaurant.org)
- SkillsUSA: [www.skillsusa.org](http://www.skillsusa.org)

**opposite:** ProStart teams compete for top honors and \$1.4 million in scholarships at the 2010 National ProStart Invitational in Overland Park, Kan.

# LET'S DO brunch

From tried-and-true to smorgasbord,  
brunch is a growing all-day phenomenon.

By Karen Weisberg

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Few of us describe the perfect brunch as being “three flat tires,” a “pair of headlights” and a “pair of running boards,” roughly translated as three pancakes, two eggs sunny side up and two slices of bacon. For some folks, that’s perfect, but most restaurant guests today are seeking something a bit more elegant when they go out for brunch, traditionally on a Saturday or Sunday.

In fact, some savvy operators, noting the increasing fondness for this hybrid breakfast/lunch meal, are offering it all day, every day. Jim Phillips, CEC, executive chef at Barona Resort & Casino, Lakeside, Calif., is one of them. Not only does Barona offer brunch seven days a week—Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.; and Sunday, 10 a.m. to midnight—they are thinking of expanding both the offering and hours because of its popularity with casino guests.

At Barona, the line between breakfast fare and brunch is sometimes blurred, as guests graze freely among nine distinct stations, plus a specific breakfast satellite station that’s set up until 1 p.m. in the common area in front of the other buffet stations. “Lately, we’ve

“Lately, we’ve noticed the breakfast thing is popular at all times of the day”

—Jim Phillips, CEC

noticed the breakfast thing is popular at all times of the day,” Phillips says.

When it comes to eggs, Phillips and his staff have switched to pasteurized shell eggs to avoid salmonella contamination. The pasteurization process involves creating a paraffin wax coating over the eggs to mitigate the transfer of bacteria. “You can’t do sunny side up or over-easy with liquid eggs,” Phillips says. “Once you go to all pasteurized eggs, it eliminates 80 percent of your foodborne illness risk; it’s a good thing for the health of your guests.”

### all you can eat

Barona’s 850-seat Big Buffet, located on the casino level, is believed to be the largest in Southern California and boasts more than 200 items. The nine demo stations—seafood; rotisserie; Mexican; Mongolian; American barbecue; Chinese; salad; dessert, with its own authentic Parisian crêpe station; and dim sum, which is a mini-

kitchen on wheels that offers traditional items such as pot stickers—are all available for brunch. At the Mexican station, for example, huevos rancheros and beef tongue tacos are perfect fits for this crossover.

Each Saturday and Sunday, Barona also does a traditional buffet brunch for 3,600-4,000 people at \$20.99 per person. “We’re conscious of using sustainable produce, and many of our items change seasonally,” Phillips says. “Our sausage is from locally raised pigs, and we’ve continued to make our own pancetta in-house.”

### sunday best

At Longwood at Oakmont in Verona, Pa., an upscale continuing care retirement community (CCRC) about 14 miles from Pittsburgh, executive chef Paul Bates knows his approximately 400 Sunday brunch customers (independent living residents and their guests) appreciate the rotation of standards he and his foodservice



staff provide. Selections are set out at various stations, mostly self-serve, within Commons Grille, a casual dining location.

Omelettes top the popularity list, with the standard portion prepared from liquid pasteurized eggs to the equivalent of three shell eggs, although some residents request a half-omelette. “We’ll go through about 15 dozen pasteurized liquid and shell eggs (also pasteurized), so we can offer over-easy and other eggs-to-order,” Bates says. “Pasteurized shell eggs cost about \$5 to \$6 more per case, but it’s in our best interest, and the state and local boards [of health] love us.”

Working on a five-week menu cycle at this Cura Hospitality, Orefield, Pa., account, the brunch always provides one or two

breakfast meats, perhaps bacon, Canadian bacon or sausage; one potato-based dish, such as hash browns or home fries; a huge platter of fresh berries; and sliced fruit (more than 50 pounds of fruit is served here daily); as well as a platter brimming with assorted pastries and baked breakfast breads—fresh raisin bread with icing being a favorite. The fruit, pastries and yogurt are set out on one side of a salad bar, with traditional salad fixings on the other.

Brunch at Longwood is “absolutely cost-effective,” Bates says, since he is able to cross-utilize various items. If, for example, he has an extra eight- or nine-pound piece of filet from the previous day, he can prepare 50-60 orders of filet mignon medallion with poached egg on top, plus



**top left:** Café Patachou’s Omelette of the Day, \$9.50, comes with a cup of fresh fruit and choice of toast.

**top right:** Paul Bates, executive chef at Longwood at Oakmont, serves Sunday brunch to 400 customers each week.



Dustin Homen

**top:** Many chefs use pasteurized shell eggs to avoid salmonella contamination.

**bottom:** Francisco De La Toba works at the dim sum station at Barona Resort & Casino, which serves brunch seven days a week.

béarnaise sauce, allowing him to bring his restaurant creativity to this retirement community venue. The challenge, but one Bates handles with aplomb, is the attendance factor, with its irregular peaks and valleys.

“This is a fee account, with each resident on a meal plan. We work off a budget, with so much to spend per resident, per plate. So into weeks three and four, some residents haven’t used up their plan,” he says. “Some may have 15 or 20 meals left, so they’ll bring in family and guests to dine, which means that, especially in week four, we’re very busy. But we do have history to look at as an indicator.”

all day,  
every day

In 1989, when Martha Hoover, a criminal trial attorney and mother of two, decided to

become a restaurateur, she had no formal front- or back-of-the-house training. She knew it would be hard work, but with passion and dedication, she figured she could succeed. Now, with eight Indianapolis locations in operation—and a slew of satisfied repeat customers—she knows she’s been consistently hitting the mark. Hoover’s empire—five Café Patachou restaurants; two Petit Chou by Patachou venues; and Napolese, an Artisanal Pizzeria by Patachou—all serve what she deems “brunch.” Actually, they all serve “breakfast all day until 10 p.m. closing time, seven days a week,” Hoover says.

Eggs are a prominent feature of her menus, even at Napolese, which only serves pizzas. “Some pizzas are topped with eggs, even quail eggs, and all are Indiana produced,” she says. “We get them within 24-48 hours from the time they’re laid. We’ve bought our chickens and all our eggs from the same family farm since 1991.”

farm-fresh  
eggs

Not only does Hoover make it her business to know what the chickens who lay her restaurants’ eggs are fed, but she and her team periodically inspect the farmer’s operation,



which, in turn, inspect hers to make sure refrigeration and product rotation are more than acceptable.

“We don’t use raw eggs. All are cooked because they’re not pasteurized, but when we say we’re using ‘farm-fresh eggs,’ we mean they’re farm fresh,” Hoover says. “During a nationwide salmonella scare about two years ago, our sales of egg-based dishes actually increased, because people had remarkable faith in the level of quality we’re committed to—that [commitment] creates the culture of the restaurants.”

Three signature omelettes (\$11.25 each) offered at all Café Patachou locations rank as the top sellers overall: The Hippie with a Benz (think Mercedes) is a combo of spinach, fresh tomatoes, mushrooms and imported feta cheese; The Overachiever features bacon, cheddar cheese, sour cream, plus a pop of freshly grated horseradish; while The Omelette You Can’t Refuse boasts bacon, cheddar, sour cream and sautéed potatoes. Each omelette order is served with a cup of fresh fruit.

## mess of goodness

There’s also a fried egg sandwich, as made by Hoover’s mom years

ago. “It was novel here 15 years ago when we started featuring it for brunch,” she says. “It takes buttered toast—all our breads are made from my recipes by one bakery we’ve used since 1989, and made exclusively for me each morning—plus perfect fried eggs. Then, there’s a choice of ingredients, perhaps avocados, phenomenal baked salmon, Indiana bacon or cheddar cheese. It’s a fork and knife sandwich ‘cause that yolk is runny; it becomes a soupy mess of goodness.”

The Café Patachou brunch lineup also includes, among other items, bacon, crispy salads with made-in-house vinaigrettes, corned beef hash, freshly baked gluten-free breads (a recent addition) and waffles, such as a ricotta cheese waffle with lemon-scented crème anglaise. There’s also an array of French toast creations, including a unique Pear French Toast (\$8.75) featuring homemade brioche as a base. “We poach fresh pears in vanilla-scented sugar water, then top the brioche French toast with warm pears, warm maple syrup, plus fresh sugared pecans.” Definitely, light years away from “flat tires.” ■

New York-based award-winning journalist Karen Weisberg has covered the issues and luminaries of the food-and-beverage world for more than 25 years.

## brunch numbers

Industry research and experts point to brunch’s profitability:

- According to NPD Group, which continually tracks consumer use of commercial and noncommercial foodservice outlets, brunch amounted to 924 million visits out of the 59 billion visits made to U.S. restaurants for the year ending in December 2010. Total restaurant visits were down 1 percent last year, as were brunch visits.
- Looking at profit margins, the National Restaurant Association (NRA) doesn’t have specific brunch data. “It’s tricky to research, because it’s in between two dayparts,” notes NRA spokesperson Annika Stensson. “Restaurants typically have slim profit margins at 3-5 percent.”
- Martha Hoover, owner of Café Patachou, Indianapolis, suggests, “Higher-end restaurants, such as ours, can figure on 10-12 percent profitability from brunch.”

# ROOM TO grow

Hotels provide cooks with a platform to learn new skills and mature into a position that's right for them, while offering first-rate benefits.

By Suzanne Hall





Lila Photos



**previous:** The Ahwahnee Hotel, located in Yosemite National Park, Calif.  
**top left:** Desserts at The Breakers.  
**top right:** The Breakers, Palm Beach, Fla.  
**opposite:** Pork belly served at Meritage, located in The Claremont Hotel, Club & Spa in Berkeley, Calif.

No smile. No job. That’s Jeff Simms’ motto when it comes to hiring culinarians to join him in the kitchens of The Breakers. The executive chef of banquets at this upscale property in Palm Beach, Fla., doesn’t necessarily look for highly experienced people, but he does want them to be naturally friendly. “Cranky cooks talk to servers, and eventually their attitude affects our guests,” he says.

Yes, once again, it’s all about attitude. “Personality is equally as important as skills. We can take anyone with a great attitude who’s willing to work hard, and turn them into an excellent culinarian,” says Myk Banas, executive chef and director of food and beverage operations at the Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile.

“Desire and determination are what I look for,” says Josh

Thomsen, executive chef of The Claremont Hotel, Club & Spa in Berkeley, Calif. “I can teach medium-rare versus rare. I can’t teach someone who’s had an awful day to still want to come back the next day.”

And there can be some awful days in hotel kitchens. For instance, a group of 1,000 arrives with a couple hundred extra people. Or a tour bus pulls up looking for lunch on the same day that there are 10 private parties. Those are the times when good attitudes kick in as everyone pulls together as a team.

The team at The Breakers caters to a well-heeled, well-traveled clientele. “They look for us to set the trends,” Simms says. He does that with a group of 65 employees, including a garde manger chef, a banquet chef and four assistant or sous chefs. The team served 275,000 banquet meals last year. That may sound

intimidating, but it's all in a day's work at The Breakers. If the banquet team gets slammed, the restaurant team, led by executive chef of restaurants Anthony Sicignano, helps out. And the fast-paced atmosphere provides ample opportunity to learn and participate in creating a wide variety of dishes.

## not your typical hotel

Banas runs no ordinary hotel foodservice operation at Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile. For starters, nearly everything for Harvest restaurant, Starbucks and room service is made from scratch, even in the bakeshop led by Cheryl Brookhouzen, executive pastry chef. "That's unusual for a hotel our size," Banas says.

Although his hotel is part of the Marriott chain, which means employees can move from one hotel to another throughout the country, and perhaps the world, he is free to run his kitchens and create menus as he pleases. "We have no standardized menus, just some guidelines that really are common sense."

What his staff does have are opportunities to grow their own vegetables, make wine and cheese, tap maple syrup and take educational field trips to learn new things. In the



bakeshop, where Brookhouzen and her staff of 10 create everything from muffins to wedding cakes, there's also plenty of room for creativity. Staff members may create dessert menus and recipes and move up as their skills increase. "I want to nurture people and help them grow," Brookhouzen says.

## learn as you go

It's sink or swim at The Claremont Hotel, with its three restaurants, room service, 33,000 square feet of banquet space and an employee cafeteria. Thomsen keeps it all going with a staff of 72. "There's always something going on. If there isn't a party today, there are 10 tomorrow," he says. "You never get ahead. My office looks like that of an air traffic controller." Thomsen, who was described as a "future chef" in his sixth-grade yearbook,

notes you have to be married to the job, and that he can't think of anything else he'd rather do.

## on the menu

If you like rustic, you'd probably love working for Percy Whatley, CEC, who has a dual position with Buffalo, N.Y.-based concessionaire Delaware North Company. He is corporate chef for the western region, including Yosemite National Park, Wuksachi Lodge at Sequoia National Park and The Queen Mary in Long Beach, Calif. He's also executive chef at Ahwahnee Dining Room, Yosemite's three-meals-a-day restaurant inside The Ahwahnee Hotel. The area is scenic, and employees are often seasonal. There's nothing rustic about the mainly from-scratch food that Whatley and his 60-member staff prepare, though. In the evening, it ranges from pasta to prime rib and duck to fresh fish.



**top:** Myk Banas, executive chef/director of food and beverage operations at Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile, says when it comes to hiring, personality is as important as skills.

The menu is equally eclectic in Orchids at Palm Court in the Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza. Todd Kelly is the hotel's executive chef, overseeing service from Orchids as well as the hotel's grill, bar, coffee kiosk and room service operation. Kelly supervises a team of 30. "We keep busy, but it's always something different. We're not making the same donuts every day," he says. Instead, they're doing everything from grab-and-go breakfast to fine dining. And an average day's task at work for Kelly is a good example of the various tasks an executive chef does. In addition to his supervisory and management duties, "I can cut fruit, make bread, work the line or do anything I want in the kitchen," he says. That variety keeps him fresh and provides opportunities for his staff to learn and move up, or, if they prefer, out, to another hotel or another city.

## need to know

So what does one need to know to succeed in a hotel kitchen? Everything you can learn is the short answer. Good basic cooking skills are the price of admission. The higher up the chain of command you want to be, the better and more advanced the skill requirements are. But the nice part about

hotel kitchens is that as your skills improve, you can move up. There's almost always a job to grow into.

Hotel chefs need more than just good culinary skills, though. "A lot of chefs could use a class in grammar and spelling, especially culinary spelling," Banas says. When you're doing a presentation for a client, you can't count on the hotel sales manager to know how to spell crème brûlée. "Misspelled words make people wonder how you can make a dish if you can't spell it," he adds. In the same vein, a public speaking or speech class can help put you at ease when running or participating in department meetings and greeting groups of customers.

"Dealing with customers is often part of the job," Brookhouzen says. "We represent the hotel and present its services to customers. You need good written and verbal skills to do that." Those skills also help when doing employee evaluations and other paperwork.

Basic math is another must. "My chefs and sous chefs manage the numbers for their areas," Banas explains. If you can't add, subtract, multiply or divide, you're going to have trouble with budgeting, costing, scheduling and many other tasks required



to do the job properly. While you're at it, consider taking an accounting class. It will teach you about spreadsheets and other accounting tools and take your math skills to the next level.

If you're hoping to get ahead in a hotel kitchen, management skills, especially people management skills, are essential. A hotel kitchen has multiple ethnic groups and languages. Each group needs to be dealt with differently. "Some groups are affectionate, others are standoffish. It's a cultural thing," Thomsen explains.

Anything marginally related to cooking should have a place in your curriculum. You don't have to know how to make wine, but you should know something about wine, beer and spirits. "When you're the chef in a hotel kitchen, you're the go-to guy or gal about everything," Banas says.

## what's in it for me?

It takes time and patience to become the go-to guy or gal, but in a hotel kitchen, it certainly is possible. And along the way, there are a lot of benefits. Although most hotel foodservice operations are fairly large, they're also usually divided into departments or teams. So you

don't have to be a little fish in an enormous pond. There's ample opportunity to learn as much as you want to, whether it's seconding as a line cook or staying after your shift to learn about the butcher shop.

The work is hard and the hours can be long, but they're stable and regular. Although emergencies can, and do, come up, "My people always know what shift they're working," Brookhouzen says.

The pay is competitive and the benefits are great. "A pastry cook who has been on the job for five or six years can make \$20 an hour," Brookhouzen says. The national average for hotel executive chefs is \$60,374, according to careerbuilder.com. The top salary is more than twice that. Add health insurance, profit-sharing, paid vacations and sick leave, and 401K contributions, and the prospects of hotel employment look better and better.

Finally, there's room in a hotel kitchen for many different kinds of people. Not everyone wants to be the top toque. If you just want to be a member of the team, hotels are a great place to work. ■

Suzanne Hall has been writing about chefs, restaurants, food and wine from her home in Soddy-Daisy, Tenn., for more than 25 years.

### getting ahead

These skills, although not necessarily culinary focused, are a must-have for those hoping to one day work as an executive chef in a hotel.

- Accounting
- Basic math
- Grammar
- Management
- Nutrition
- Public speaking and verbal

# by degrees

## Making Veal Osso Buco Milanese

By Robb White, CEC, CCA, AAC

Photography by Mark Smith



rich flavor and nice body for the accompanying sauce.

One of the best things about braising is that meats actually get better if you let them rest overnight before serving. Once the dish is finished and cooled in the braising liquid, the fat will rise to the surface of the sauce and can be easily removed. Most importantly, as the dish rests, the sauce's flavor mellows and deepens. The meat reabsorbs some of the liquid and stays moist and tender. You can reheat braises in the oven to keep the main ingredients from falling apart. Just be sure to keep a lid on the pan before it goes into the oven.

Braising is one of the most complex and underutilized cooking methods, so pay attention to our step-by-step demonstration. Soon, you'll be braising meats, fish, poultry, game and vegetables to help retain the product's moisture or break down the connective tissues. With this cooking method, you can turn just about any tough, inexpensive cut of meat into a comfort-food masterpiece. ■



**Robb White,**  
CEC, CCA, AAC,

is dean of culinary at The Culinary Institute of Michigan, Muskegon, Mich., where he teaches menu planning and food and beverage management. He has more than 24 years of experience and is president of ACF West Michigan Lakeshore Chapter.

**B**raising is a traditional combination cooking method that is best suited to larger cuts of meat, such as the veal shanks used in this recipe. The long-simmering braise helps break down the connective tissue (collagen) and make this dish rich in flavor and the meat succulent and tender.

In braising, the meat is usually seared first, and then simmered with mirepoix, aromatics and liquid in a closed vessel. Simmering results in flavor extraction and helps in the tenderizing process. When meat is cooked in a moist environment, the collagen is converted into gelatin, which lends itself to a deep,

## step 1

Preheat oven to 350°F. Season veal shanks with salt and pepper. Dredge in flour, shake off excess.



## step 2

Heat large heavy bottomed casserole pot over medium-high heat; add olive oil. When oil is hot, add veal shanks; sear until rich brown on all sides, about 5 minutes each side. Remove; place in hotel pan. Cover; keep warm.



## step 3

Pour off excess fat from casserole pot; add onion. Turn down heat to medium; cook onion until golden-brown. Add carrot and celery. Cook, stirring, until nicely browned. Add 1 T. garlic, cook another 2 minutes. Lower heat; add tomato paste until vegetable mixture turns a darker color. Add white wine; deglaze bottom of pan. Bring to a boil; reduce liquid by half.



## step 4

Stir in tomato and veal stock. Bring to a boil; reduce by half.



## step 5

Place veal in casserole pot; bring to a gentle simmer. Make sure veal is two-thirds covered with liquid. Add more stock, if needed. Cover; put in preheated oven. Braise in oven for 2-2½ hours, or until meat is tender. While braising, prepare gremolada: Combine remaining garlic, lemon zest, parsley and anchovy.



## step 6

When veal is tender, remove from pot. Cover; keep warm. Degrease sauce; adjust consistency with cornstarch slurry, if needed. Taste; adjust seasoning. To plate: Place veal in appropriate serving vessel; ladle 2-3 oz. sauce over top. Sprinkle on gremolada; serve.



## ingredients

yield: 6 servings

- 6 veal shanks, trimmed, cut about 1½-2 inches thick
- ½ t. kosher salt
- ¼ t. fresh ground black pepper
- 2 oz. flour
- 2 oz. olive oil
- 4 oz. diced white onion
- 3 oz. diced carrot
- 3 oz. diced celery
- 2 t. (2 cloves) minced garlic, divided
- 2 T. tomato paste
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1 Roma tomato, peeled, seeded, chopped fine
- 1½ qts. brown veal stock
- 2 t. lemon zest
- 2 T. chopped flat leaf parsley
- 2 anchovy fillets, chopped

## equipment

- 4-inch deep half hotel pan
- Chef's knife
- Cutting board
- Heavy bottomed casserole pot with tight-fitting lid
- Kitchen towels
- Sanitizing bucket with sanitizing solution
- Wooden spoon
- Zester

## helpful hints

- Make sure the cooking vessel is covered tightly.
- Braising is best done when the liquid is at a slow simmer, not a boil.
- Gremolada, a traditional accompaniment for this dish, can be served atop the veal or stirred into the sauce just before service.
- When searing veal shanks, do not overcrowd the pot. If you do, you'll generate steam that will inhibit the veal from browning.

# grill

## Rachel Bradley

By Becky Marmorato



The American Culinary Education Foundation (ACFEF) Apprenticeship Program, through a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, recently developed an online portal that allows apprentices, supervising chefs and program coordinators to track training, review resources, validate training and update logbooks, a process that is being piloted in four programs nationwide. Additionally, sustainability competencies were incorporated to enhance awareness of these initiatives in the culinary industry. Here, Pennsylvania apprentice Rachel Bradley shares her perspective on the perks of the new technology and added initiatives.

### **tell us about your apprenticeship and where you work.**

**rb:** I am an apprentice through ACF Laurel Highlands Chapter at Westmoreland County Community College (WCCC), Youngwood, Pa., and work as a line cook at DeNunzio's Italian Restaurants in Jeannette, Pa. I began my apprenticeship in fall 2010, and plan to graduate in spring 2012.

### **have you always been interested in the culinary field?**

**rb:** Since I was little, I have enjoyed cooking with family and friends. I began to consider it as a career option after spending more time in the kitchen with my father and staying at my grandmother's home for weeks at a time.

### **who are your mentors?**

**rb:** I have the opportunity to work under WCCC professors Cindy Komarinski, CCC, CCE, and Mary Zappone, CEC, AAC, and

Patrick Conway, executive chef at DeNunzio's. They are very helpful. You really get the feeling that Chef Komarinski and Chef Zappone want to see each and every one of their students succeed.

### **which of the station rotations do you find most interesting so far?**

**rb:** The sauté station seems to be my favorite, and the most challenging. You need to be experienced and great at multitasking, especially during the challenging dinner rushes. I also enjoy the expeditor and grill station.

### **what do you like about the new online apprenticeship portal?**

**rb:** I like being able to have my apprenticeship records, logbook

and ledger all available in the same location. Although I am new to the portal, it seems like the easiest way to develop an apprenticeship résumé and records for future use.

**is it helpful having your supervising chef update your progress online?**

**rb:** Yes, it's nice that my chef can log into the portal to check my status, update and approve logbooks, and make suggestions to help me along the way.

**how do you think learning about sustainability will help you in the future?**

**rb:** Many restaurants and companies are incorporating more sustainability commitments. Adding this subject to the apprenticeship program is a huge benefit. We will already be established and have a better background in sustainability by the time we start our careers.

**what are your plans for the future?**

**rb:** After graduation, I will further my education by going to school to study nutrition. I also hope to one day open my own restaurant, focusing on traditional Italian dishes and offering a selection of healthier menu items. Through the ACF program, I can also become certified in two years. ACF is already helping me achieve my goals.

**would you recommend the ACFEF Apprenticeship Program to others?**

**rb:** Yes, I would highly recommend the program to students who are considering a career in culinary arts. The advisors are hands-on and want to see you succeed. My program is small, which means I receive personal attention. Learning while going to school and working is beneficial, and gives me a better understanding of what to expect later.

**what do you think are the biggest challenges in the culinary field today?**

**rb:** As a chef, you need to do what's best for the environment, your business and the consumer. The culinary field is often demanding and hectic. You need to be organized and well-equipped. One of the biggest challenges will always be trying to satisfy consumers. Everyone wants something new and exciting. But all of these things are also what makes culinary arts so interesting.

**what aspects of the apprenticeship program will new apprentices find most useful?**

**rb:** If someone is completely new to culinary, like I was, I suggest they take the opportunity to become an apprentice. I regret not attending a vocational school in high school, but the opportunity I have now is one I couldn't pass up. Once you get involved with ACF, the possibilities



**for more information:**

To learn more about the ACFEF Apprenticeship Program, visit [www.acfchefs.org](http://www.acfchefs.org) and select "schools" then "apprenticeships."

# taste test

## Toiling the Soil for Sustainability

West Virginia Northern Community College's Green Initiative paves the way for school-wide sustainability efforts.

By Gene Evans, CEC



As it nears its 40-year anniversary, the culinary-arts program at West Virginia Northern Community College (WVNCC) has matured. The program that once used rented space and borrowed equipment has a newly renovated facility with state-of-the-art equipment and amenities. Now, the program is going back to the earth, engaging the latest in green technology to recycle, reuse and create locally grown produce.

Located in Wheeling, W.Va., the largest city in the state's northern panhandle, WVNCC's culinary-arts program offers Associate in Applied Science degrees and certificates. Upon graduation, students can earn the American Culinary Federation's Certified Culinerian® designation. The program is one of only 48 in the nation to hold "exemplary" status from the American Culinary Federation Education Foundation.

### one of a kind

For decades, the school's culinary-arts program was the only one of its kind in the state. As culinary arts became a more popular career path, similar programs were created at other institutions. But in 2010, WVNCC once again forged ahead by capitalizing on the organic movement and making steps to save energy. With enthusiastic assistance from students, professors and school administration, the culinary-arts department created a three-phased "Green Initiative." Even Dr. Martin J. Olshinsky, the school president, took a special interest in the project.

The phases were to install a garden on college grounds, embark on a formalized recycling program and identify sources of funding to enable the purchase of a composter to turn culinary waste into fertilizing material for the garden. The intent was to give

students a hands-on education while helping the culinary-arts program become more environmentally conscious.

## working in stages

The first challenge was to find enough space on campus for the garden. After much thought, the school decided to use space in front of an underutilized amphitheater. Soon, concrete in the pit area was removed, the space was filled in and the dirt was prepared for a garden. In 2010, the spring and summer growing season proved the garden was a success, with a harvest of seven different heirloom tomato varieties, peppers, sweet potatoes and herbs.

The school had an established paper and newsprint recycling program in place, but no established effort for the culinary-arts program. To reduce waste, students and professors added large donated plastic bins for students to discard glass, cans and plastic. So far, they have collected several hundred pounds of glass, aluminum, plastic and cardboard. Now, the school barely fills one small dumpster a week, compared with two in the past.

At first, finding funds to cover costs associated with the garden and composter seemed daunting. However, with the help of the WVNCC Foundation and its executive director Emily Fisher, the project's budget was met quickly. A \$5,000 grant was presented to the culinary-arts department from the Elizabeth Stifel

Kline Foundation, a local philanthropic organization, and by the end of 2010, the Green Initiative was accomplished.

## teach as you grow

As a chef who is passionate about using locally grown products, the first year of the Green Initiative provided me with countless teaching opportunities. Respect for the program has also grown in our area, which is well populated with farmers' markets and people concerned about the food they eat, the energy they use and the waste they produce.

The Green Initiative is just getting started. Recently, the WVNCC Foundation awarded the program an additional \$10,000, enabling us to research ways to extend our garden's growing season. After talking with several farmers, the program has its sights set on a high tunnel greenhouse capable of holding temperatures above 80-90°F. This would provide an additional three months of growing time in the spring and three months after fall to grow kale, arugula, cabbages and herbs to use in school kitchens.

Being at the forefront of these new sustainable efforts is gratifying. As a result of the program, WVNCC students now have proof that "going green" is a dimension of culinary arts that's here to stay. ■

Gene Evans, CEC, lives in Steubenville, Ohio, and is a chef-instructor at West Virginia Northern Community College. To learn more about the school, visit [wvncc.edu](http://wvncc.edu).



**opposite:** Audra Bowman, a second-year student at the school who helps with planting and garden maintenance, makes sure to recycle used items.

**top:** Amanda Doty, a second-year student who helped develop the recycling project, at the school's compost area.

**bottom:** Produce abounds in WVNCC's Culinary Arts Garden.

# events

## ACF National Convention

Students gear up for ACF's annual event in the Lone Star State.



The American Culinary Federation (ACF) Regional Conferences come to an end this month. Up next is the ACF National Convention, one of the most anticipated culinary events of the summer. Taking place at the Gaylord Texan in Dallas, July 22-26, 2011, this year's convention includes more student opportunities than ever. Get ready for live cooking demonstrations from some of the country's leading chefs, educational seminars, networking opportunities, meal and entertainment events, a trade show and live competitions. Here's a look at what awaits in the Lone Star State.

### this just in

There are several new events happening at this year's convention that you won't want to miss. General Session will take place over the course of two days, and will feature a snapshot of the state of ACF, a Year in Review, award presentations, several surprises and a cooking demo featuring Brad Barnes, CMC, CCA, AAC, and Kevan Vetter.

Last year, ACF held its ACF National Championship featuring the Freedom Chef Challenge. This year, on Sunday, July 24, healthcare chefs will take center stage as they compete, preparing healthy menus that can be used in their facilities and throughout the healthcare industry.

Nutrition remains the focus Monday, July 25, during the finals of Recipes for Healthy Kids, a partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services. Three national finalists will compete, preparing their healthful menu suggestions. The winner will be announced that evening.

### learn from the best

Get ahead of your classmates by signing up for one of four hands-on workshops offered twice on Friday, July 22.

Choose from sessions on Indian cuisine, charcuterie, marzipan or chocolate.

The cost for each session is \$25 for members with full registration and \$75 for nonmembers or those without full registration.

This year's presenter lineup will be outstanding, as always. Alton Brown,

**above:** The 2011 ACF National Convention takes place at the Gaylord Texan, Dallas.

**opposite:** Daniel Gorman competes and wins the title of 2010 ACF Student Chef of the Year in Anaheim, Calif., August 2010.

author/host of Diamond Crystal Salt's [www.salt101.com](http://www.salt101.com), is one of many anticipated speakers, and will discuss kosher and other course salts and their role in the professional kitchen.

## all about students

There are many student-focused events to look forward to, including the first Student Culinarian Invitational (and there's still time for teams to apply). On Saturday, July 23, five two-person student teams from across the country will prepare a sampling of their region's cuisine for hundreds of guests. Tickets to the reception are \$40.

And don't forget to root for your region's finalists in the Student Chef of the Year competition, Student Team National Championship and Baron H. Galand Culinary Knowledge Bowl. During the trade show, guests can taste the student teams' menus for \$35, but get your tickets early, as they always sell out. View all regional finalists [here](#).

## what's it going to cost?

To attend the entire conference and all the events, the full-registration



package is your best bet. The Early Rate (deadline June 3) for ACF student members is \$550. Student members staying at the Gaylord Texan for a minimum of four nights can enjoy the Rewards Rate of \$425 (same deadline applies). For those not looking to attend the entire conference, a la carte options are available, and the cost is \$125 for each day, and includes one meal.

To learn more about this year's convention, including hotel and travel discounts, and to register to attend, visit [www.acfchefs.org/convention](http://www.acfchefs.org/convention). ■

## 20 years of knowledge

This year, the Baron H. Galand Culinary Knowledge Bowl celebrates its 20th anniversary. Since the first competition in Washington, D.C., in 1992, the "Jeopardy"-style game has helped students sharpen their culinary knowledge and has provided confidence and discipline. But how much do you know about the game's namesake? Herewith, five facts about Baron H. Galand:

- Nicknamed "the Baron," Galand was born in Dunbar, Pa., and worked in Pennsylvania his entire career.
- For nearly 20 years he hosted a radio show, "The Back Burner with the Baron," on WMBS, Uniontown, Pa.
- Two of Galand's greatest passions were speaking with chefs around the U.S. and judging culinary competitions.
- He coached the 1980, 1984 and 1988 U.S. "culinary Olympic" teams, and was senior advisor to the 1992 team.
- He worked in the restaurant industry more than 50 years, as an executive chef, chef/owner of Galand Enterprises and as a culinary instructor.

Learn more about the game's history and read past articles about the competition at [www.acfchefs.org/KnowledgeBowl20](http://www.acfchefs.org/KnowledgeBowl20).

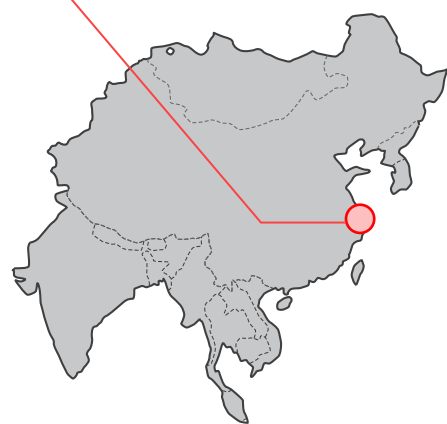


# international flavors

## Shanghai

Executive Chef Matthew David Ona, CEC, explores street food and open-air markets in one of the world's largest cities.

Photography by Fan Shi San 范石三



In the beautiful port city of Shanghai in Eastern China, ancient traditions combine with economic strength, making the city a bellwether of China's newfound global identity. Over many centuries, Shanghai has grown from a small farming community to China's financial and social hub and its largest city, with more than 16 million residents today and 23 million expected by 2015.

### my adventure in shanghai

It was a privilege to live and work in this incredible city for 13 months, serving as executive chef of Napa Wine Bar & Kitchen, a 120-seat

restaurant in downtown Shanghai. I also oversaw the opening of Chalet Suisse, an affiliated restaurant featuring classic Swiss cuisine. Our clientele included members of the international business community and Shanghai's upper class. What brought me to Shanghai? Simply put, my professional network kicked in, and I found myself in one of the premier cities on the planet.

I lived in Luwan District, located in the heart of the city. From the balcony of my condo on the 21st floor, I observed the early morning bustle of a metropolis coming to life, and at night, I was treated to the stunning

**top left:** The Shanghai skyline.  
**top right:** Shanghai's street markets.

displays of Shanghai's modern skyline. Inventive lighting on hundreds of new skyscrapers provided an unrivaled spectacle. I also had a bird's-eye view of the World Expo 2010, which attracted more than 70 million visitors. Another bonus of my location was that major attractions, such as People's Square, the Shanghai World Financial Center, the upscale Bund neighborhood and others, were only a quick subway or taxi ride away.

As if the allure of the city wasn't enough, I also had the opportunity to travel to outlying areas in search of the best local meats and produce. I was introduced to a wide array of fruits and vegetables that are not available in the West. These newfound ingredients offered a delicious challenge in terms of menu creation.

The Shanghainese people and culture are full of surprises. Holidays and family celebrations are punctuated by fireworks—lots of them—at any time of the day or night, ignited on any street, sidewalk or small patch of grass. The people's enthusiasm matched that of the pyrotechnics. Far from being subdued, I found them to be warm, loving and dedicated to their families and friends, and, believe it or not, loud talkers. Another surprise came when I discovered how easy it was to order foods from other countries. It was a breeze to get high-end Australian beef, French unpasteurized butter and cheeses, and upscale Swiss ingredients. The ingredients of the world were at my fingertips.



## rich history, growing population

Located at the mouth of the Yangtze River, the world's third-largest river, Shanghai's history is rich. Historians trace ownership of the area to various governors as early as 221 B.C. According to the Shanghai Municipal Government, during the Jin Dynasty of the fourth and fifth centuries, local fishermen living along area rivers and the coast of the East China Sea created a fishing tool called "hu." By combining the name of the fishing tool and the term for "estuary of big rivers," they coined a Chinese character, "hu," which came to designate the mouth of the Yangtze River.



**top:** Purveyors sell small river fish, ocean fish and seasonal crabs.

**bottom left:** Tofu in many forms: fried squares and unfired raw, with assorted pickled greens.

**bottom right:** Markets offer an array of eggs, including chicken and duck. Some eggs have significant meaning and are colored for special occasions as gifts.



Starting off as Huating County, the area was established as an administrative district in 751 A.D. In 1267, Shanghai Town was set up on the west bank of the Huangpu River. In 1292, the central government approved the establishment of Shanghai County in this area, which is recognized as the official beginning of the city of Shanghai. Since liberation in 1949, the city has seen rapid growth.

A tribute to the city's international influence, the World Expo 2010 provided a stage for the nations of the world to showcase contributions to an increasingly global culture. While the exhibits paraded a cornucopia of food, from fondue from Switzerland to hamburgers from America and paella from Spain to curries from India, visitors needed to get beyond these glamorous exhibitions to understand how the average Shanghai resident procures food.

## where locals shop

In America, there are large grocery stores, such as Kroger, IGA, Stop & Shop and even Sam's Club, but nothing like that existed in greater Shanghai where I lived. Why? The answer is simple: space. Shanghai is packed with a jumble of businesses and housing, all connected by busy streets and narrow alleyways. The people were close to one of the thousands of neighborhood markets that seemed to be tucked into nooks and crannies on every block. Many are so tightly packed into an assortment

of stores and housing that they remain unnoticed to everyone but the locals. The compact lifestyle and close proximity to markets in Shanghai means that most families purchase food five or six times a week at markets usually operated by a friend or family member.

These small stores stock most of the basics needed for authentic Chinese cooking. However, what typical Westerners consider "Chinese" food would be quite foreign to the citizens of Shanghai. Here, the food is not similar to what you would find at Panda Express or other fast-food Asian franchises. While the menus at these restaurants may have been inspired by classic Chinese dishes, the true flavors, textures and aromas of Chinese food are, for the most part, lost in translation.

On a trip to a local market, you'll see all sorts of interesting things—and a few you might not want to see. Open-air displays of meats and poultry are common, as are large fish tanks where the big fish eat the little fish. If you want really fresh chicken, just grab a live one from the cage and take it "to go." If you want it killed and plucked on the spot, that is not a problem.

Hygienic practices in many of these markets are not for the faint of heart. Fresh produce is piled on the floor, meat may be outside, literally, hung out to dry, and other goods can be found on the storefront sidewalk. I once asked my sous chef why people

**top:** A man bags seasoned meat, such as spicy beef, marinated chicken thighs and pork intestines, that is often used in stir-fry.  
**bottom:** Matthew David Ona heads back to the kitchen to prepare noodles after a day at the market in Luwan District, Shanghai.

don't get sick from street food more often. His response was typical, "You know ... Chinese stomach is strong, can eat anything... no problem."

## name your price

Before heading to a market, be prepared to bargain. No self-respecting person would dare buy anything without bargaining or haggling down the suggested price. Ten renminbi (RMB) (\$1.49 U.S. dollars) for 500 grams of noodles? Act disinterested and put an incredulous look on your face. Then say someone else is selling them for 8 RMB. Settle on 9 RMB, and head back to the kitchen.

## on the menu

In Shanghai, the cuisine includes fried noodles reminiscent of what Westerners consider chow mein noodles. However, to make a great Shanghaiese fried noodle, you must start with fresh noodles. Begin preparation by drying them in the oven until they harden. Then, blanch them. Stain with Chinese soy sauce (which shares almost none of the flavors of Japanese soy sauce). In a large wok, start with XO sauce—a spicy seafood-based sauce commonly used in China—garlic and oil. Add sliced meat and greens. Once browned, toss with noodles and finish cooking.

Another common observation of Shanghaiese cuisine, which is considered sweeter than that of the rest of China, is the role pork plays in

everyday cooking. *Xaolongbao*, small steamed dumplings, uses ground pork, rendered pork fat that has been slowly cooked in the oven with water, and pork skin that has been torched, ground and cooked to a paste. All parts of the pig are considered a treat, from pork soup to barbecue pork spareribs, and even a special preparation of pork intestine stuffed with pickled cabbage. One classic local dish is slow-cooked pork belly.

To cook an authentic Shanghaiese pork dish, start with a fatty pig (the skin should remain; singe off any hair). Cut into large pieces and place them in a large pot. Add Chintao Beer, Chinese soy sauce, brown sugar, star anise, cinnamon sticks, bay leaves and thyme. Boil until tender. If done correctly, there should be copious amounts of fat with a little meat attached. Typically, this is served in a bowl, many times with rice added, and consumed in its high-calorie condition with delight.

The Chinese often comment that opportunity and luck can bring happiness to people. I have come to agree. It was my good fortune to live among these remarkable people, learning from them and developing a fondness for the progressive diversity that characterizes modern Shanghai. ■

Matthew David Ona, an ACF certified executive chef (CEC®), attended The Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, N.Y., and St. Helena, Calif., campuses, and is a graduate of Tokyo Sushi Academy, Shinjuku, Tokyo.

## did you know?

- China is home to 1,336,718,015 (July 2011 estimate).
- The official language is standard Chinese or Mandarin.
- The country's currency is the renminbi.
- China is in Eastern Asia along the East China Sea, Korea Bay, Yellow Sea and South China Sea.
- The country shares borders with 14 countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Vietnam.
- China is slightly smaller than the U.S., and is the fourth-largest country in the world (behind Russia, Canada and the U.S.).
- The climate is diverse, ranging from tropical in the south to subarctic in the north.
- The terrain is mostly mountainous, with high plateaus and deserts in the west, and plains, deltas and hills in the east.
- Since the late 1970s, China's economy has moved from a closed, centrally planned system to a more market-oriented one with a global role.
- In 2010, China became the world's largest exporter.

Source: *The World Factbook* by the Central Intelligence Agency

**MORE ON THE WEB**

Click here to view more photos of Matthew David Ona's exploration of Shanghai's food markets.

# the interview

## Gosia Pieniazek and Artur Wnorowski

By Ethel Hammer



### born

**Gosia Pieniazek:** Kwidzyn, Poland

**Artur Wnorowski:** Rzeszów, Poland

### reside

Chicago

### path to restaurateurship

**Pieniazek:** Hostess, Busy Bee, Chicago, 1993-1994; waited tables in Chicago at Mitchell's, Stanley's Kitchen and Tap, and Corosh, 1994-1997; B.A. in theater, Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, 2000; four-month internship in Zambia, cooking and educating others about HIV/AIDS, 2001; real estate agent, 2001-2008.

**Wnorowski:** Investment banker in Chicago at Chase, City Bank and

PNC, 1999-2004; founding member, keyboardist and award-winning song writer, Animate Objects, 1999-2009; B.A. in finance, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, Ill., 2004.

### awards/achievements

Wnorowski's group Animate Objects wins Independent Media Award for Best Hip-Hop Group, 2005; Animate Objects wins *Chicago Tribune* Metromix's Rock 'N' Vote Champion, 2007; Wnorowski's song "El Dorado" wins Best Hip-Hop Song award, Independent Music Award, 2008; LOKaL voted one of Chicago's Best Breakfast Cocktails, CBS Chicago, 2010; LOKaL wins Chicago's Best Potato Pancake award, Chicago's Best TV, 2011.

Sometimes, when the chemistry of boy meets girl ignites into a restaurant, appetite and lusciousness meld. Still, it was a long time before our hero, Artur Wnorowski, award-winning Polish song writer, indie rock star and keyboardist, met our heroine, Gosia Pieniazek, a spirited Polish girl with a strong dramatic streak. But when their fates collided, love came furious and fast. Now as partners in life as well as at LOKaL, their hip Chicago restaurant, this lively artistic couple fire up a surprising, sophisticated take on the Polish cuisine of their childhoods.

Who would imagine that Polish food could embrace the cuisines of Western Europe, and could include dishes such as three-mushroom strudel with buckwheat, Dutch parrano cheese and romesco sauce? Or bison-grass cured salmon with lemon preserve and cookie flakes? Or bone-in pork chop brined in beer, cooked in honey wine and topped with date musztarda?

Both Pieniazek and Wnorowski were born in Polish towns with strong intellectual heritages and sorrowful histories. But the Nazi

occupation and forced labor camps occurred long before their births. Their own early references center around Poland's time behind the Iron Curtain, when Polish cuisine was forcibly diminished from the complex, gourmet traditions that existed before and after the curtain came down.

The 1989 fall of the Iron Curtain, initially prompted by Polish resistance, was a great moment of freedom for both Pieniazek and Wnorowski, who journeyed to Chicago, separately, as young adults, each when they were 19. "I came on Halloween in 1993," Pieniazek says. "My mother picked me up at the airport with a friend who was dressed in a rabbit suit, her child done up as a witch. I didn't know about Halloween, and said to myself, 'My mother has weird friends.'" And when Wnorowski came to Chicago in 1999, he was flabbergasted on the ride into the city through the extensive industrialized area, thinking, "Where are the skyscrapers?"

But before long, both Pieniazek and Wnorowski had assimilated and were experimenting, separately, with American life. Soon Pieniazek was working as a hostess at the legendary and now defunct Busy Bee, a Polish restaurant famous for its stuffed cabbage and homemade pierogi. And as fate would have it, her job exposed her to the independent music scene, where her husband-to-be would soon be making his way.

“You need a good partner and a good relationship with your partner. And you need to realize that nothing in life is easy when you are not backed by big investors.” —Gosia Pieniazek

"I was introduced to the grunge era of Nirvana and the Smashing Pumpkins, some of whom came into the Busy Bee," Pieniazek says. Next, she was on to theater school, where she was cast in plays as Eve and a Polish princess. Then it was on to a four-month stint in Zambia, where she cooked and helped educate people about HIV/AIDS. After that, she worked in real estate for seven years.

Meanwhile, after studying finance, Wnorowski went into banking, but continued to pursue his music career as a songwriter, keyboardist and member of Animate Objects, a hip-hop group he helped start while a student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, Ill. The group started winning contests. They toured U.S. military installations in Honduras and Cuba, including Guantánamo Bay.

By 2008, Wnorowski would be an award-winning songwriter for his hypnotic hip-hop song "El Dorado," which starts, "We don't know where we're going, but we know we found a ride." But that was after boy met girl.



**opposite:** Gosia Pieniazek, left, and Artur Wnorowski, opened LOKaL in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood in October 2009.

**top:** The Natasha B: pepper vodka, fresh tomato juice and fresh lime, garnished with olives.

**bottom left:** Three mushroom strudel with buckwheat, Dutch parrano cheese and romesco sauce.

**bottom right:** Bone-in pork chop with date musztarda, parsnip purée and roasted vegetable medley.



#### how did you meet?

**aw:** At a Polish hip-hop concert in Chicago in ... when was it, Gosia?

**gp:** January 2007. We were married in 2008, had our first child Yulie Rose in February 2009, and opened the restaurant that year on Halloween. Our second child Marcel was born in October 2010.

#### was it love at first sight?

**both:** Yeah, yeah.

**aw:** I saw this girl and asked my friend, "Do you know that hot blonde over there?"

**gp:** And I thought, "Oh, what a nice Polish guy."

**aw:** We moved in together the next day, and started working together right away on a song Gosia wrote called, "I am your reflection." It ended up No. 2 on Billboard. Only kidding.

**gp:** We were married a year later at an old-time Italian restaurant, the first and last time they ever allowed vodka on the table. And from the start, we talked about opening a restaurant together.

#### how did you open a restaurant with so little experience?

**aw:** We just said, "Let's open a restaurant and see what happens." It was kind of like the lyrics of El Dorado: "We don't know where we're going, but we know we found a ride."

**gp:** It was like "Restaurants for Dummies." We got the money from family and friends and said, whatever happens, happens. Since I was in real estate, I found our place on the MLS real estate database and waived my commission to get a better deal. We built the whole place from scratch, adding things as we went along. Now, I am a waitress and Art does the accounting, paper work and PR.

**aw:** I also work as a waiter and am one of our bartenders, along with our third partner Piotr Hermanowski. And I put the microgreens on the plate.

**gp:** We all wash dishes and mop floors.

**aw:** She's the boss.

#### so how would you describe the concept?

**gp:** I call it Pan-European Polish, infused with lots of influences from France, Germany, Hungary, even Russia. It is not Eastern European food, since we never saw ourselves as Eastern Europeans. We always felt European. Most people know Polish food from 1945 through the Iron Curtain, when politics created a reduced lifestyle. Pre World War II, Polish cuisine was very sophisticated and hip, with a gourmet tradition.

We both come from educated backgrounds. Both of our families were landowners. I remember braised duck with apples from my

childhood. I'm sure my grandmother was familiar with truffles pre WWII, but from 1945 to 1988, I don't think truffles were widely available. At LOKaL, we eat as we have eaten our entire lives, but in a way most people don't know about. For example, our herring is put on the plate in an aesthetic way. And we brine it not in vinegar, but in white wine.

**aw:** And when we do potato pierogi, we pair it with bourbon/date sauce. If people think Polish food means stuffed cabbage, they are not going to get our concept.

#### can you give us some dishes that represent LOKaL?

**gp:** Lobster pierogi, which we ate at home in Poland and also eat here in Chicago. We love lobster. And putting it in pierogi means it's more affordable than a \$30 tail. Tuna tartare, since we love raw meat and use sushi-grade tuna. Our chef Ruben's choice of spices is very Polish and not Asian at all—salt, pepper, capers and mustard. Are scallops Polish? No. But we just like scallops, so the dish is served with Polish klushi noodles, Polish peppered pears and Polish tomato jam.

**aw:** Farm smoked kielbasa. I have to eat it every day. Our kielbasa is smoked for 16 hours at a low temperature, just like my grandmother would make it. And it's all natural pork made from the kind of pigs we were raised around. And 20 percent of the sausage is pork belly.

#### how does chef Ruben Torres fit into the picture?

**aw:** Gosia and I work as "virtual chefs." We come up with the ideas



together, then turn them over to Ruben. For example, in our bone-in pork chop, at first we talked about adding figs to the sauce, but since we had dates in-house, we said, “Let’s use them.” Then, Ruben decided to add mustard, so that’s how our date musztarda sauce evolved.

#### what about flavoring with spirits?

**aw:** The roasted vegetable medley accompanying our bone-in pork chop has honey wine, which we also use in the caramel for our desserts. Our rabbit is braised in honey wine, then finished with a splash of cherry vodka. And in our mussels, we use beer, which also makes our potato bread fluffier. We brine our pork chop in beer, too, and our salmon is cured in vodka flavored with bison grass. The proportions vary on whatever is left over from what we drink.

#### with two small children and a restaurant, how can you keep a music career going?

**aw:** It’s almost impossible. It was too difficult continuing with the band after we opened the restaurant.

We’d come home late at night, and people would be waiting for us in the studio. So, now, I am writing songs independently and, best of all, I get to decide when we have band practice.

**gp:** You need a tolerant wife.

#### what do independent restaurants need for success?

**aw:** You cannot be afraid to work at your business. Both of us are getting our master’s degrees at Roosevelt University, Chicago. Gosia is studying hospitality, I’m studying business management. For us, it is key to reach our demographic— independent thinkers—using social media. We currently have more than 3,000 followers on Twitter.

**gp:** You need a good partner and a good relationship with your partner. And you need to realize that nothing in life is easy when you are not backed by big investors. ■

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

#### tips for aspiring restaurateurs

- People will always tell you they know better, but stay true to yourself.
- Don’t listen to anyone. You can do the impossible.
- People can be vicious, but don’t be offended. If their advice is good, take it in.
- Opening a restaurant is a long-term investment.
- If you’re after money, go work for a bank.
- Get up early and go to sleep late, and wait before you have babies.
- Focus on what you’re doing, and stay true to your craft in whatever you do.

#### connect with LOKaL

- Visit [www.lokalchicago.com](http://www.lokalchicago.com)
- Follow them on Twitter: @LOKaLChicago
- Find them on Facebook: LOKaL Restaurant & Lounge

**opposite:** LOKaL’s flounder with sunchokes, asparagus and tomato fricassee.

**above:** LOKaL is a Pan-European Polish concept, infused with lots of influences from France, Germany, Hungary, even Russia—and did we mention they have a DJ booth?

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