

# ESR

Sipping Ciders

Lessons in  
Leftovers

Best Hotel  
Restaurants

Fiesta Spirits  
Surge

## The Food Purist

Chef Marcus Paslay uses whole, raw products to create truly scratch-made dishes at Clay Pigeon Food and Drink in Fort Worth, Texas.



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## Tots & Lamb Shawarma

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### The Passion

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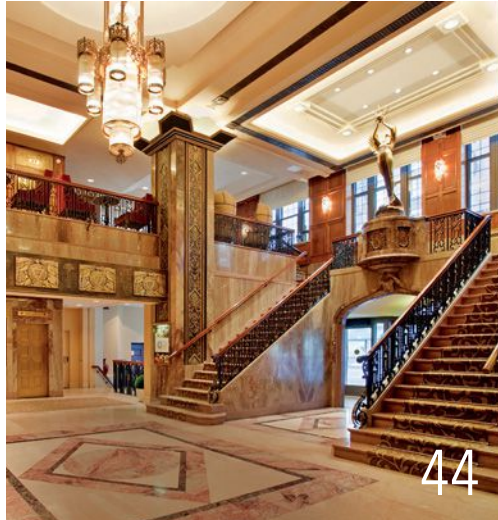
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# FSR

{October 2016} No. 35



44



52



17

CHEF MARCUS PASLAY OPENED CLAY PIGEON THREE YEARS AGO AND IS OPENING HIS SECOND CONCEPT NEXT MONTH.

## CONTENTS

### 17 The Food Purist

BY CONNIE GENTRY

At Clay Pigeon Food and Drink in Fort Worth, Texas, Chef Marcus Paslay keeps his kitchen real, using whole, raw products to create truly scratch-made dishes.

### 44 Staying Power

BY DANIEL P. SMITH

No longer just an on-site amenity, hotel restaurants have become destinations in their own right.

### 52 Wines with Local Color

BY KRISTINE HANSEN

Discovering local wineries from surprising terroirs can be a profitable experience for dedicated operators.

### 56 Lessons in Leftovers

BY AMANDA BALTAZAR

Chefs strive for zero-waste by repurposing food scraps.

CHEFS & INGREDIENTS

#### 20 Growing the Restaurant Family

The success of Clay Pigeon has allowed its acclaimed chef to launch a second concept.

LIQUID INTELLIGENCE

#### 33 Fiesta Spirits

The only thing hotter than Mexican cuisine are the spirits that share the same cultural heritage—tequila, mezcal, sotol, and raicilla.



# CONTENTS

FSRmagazine.com { October 2016 } No. 35



11



15



37

## FIRST COURSE

### 11 Study Guide for Ingredients

At Sixteen, Chef Thomas Lents lets the food write the narrative.

### 12 A Club for Networking and Learning

Journee unites restaurant professionals, and helps them learn the ins and outs of the business.

### 13 What's in a Name?

Thanks to a rebranding, Cheddar's Scratch Kitchen finally has a name that reflects its mission.

### 15 A Community Staple

**ONE YEAR IN** A James Beard finalist for Best New Restaurant, Staplehouse is living up to its renowned reputation, and building a heartfelt legacy.

## CHEFS & INGREDIENTS

### 24 Israeli Cuisine Simplified

Complex in history and culture, this cuisine exudes charm in its simplicity and the authenticity of ingredients and preparation.

### 30 Financial Planning Should be a Skill for Every Chef

**LESSONS FROM THE CIA** While balancing the books might not be as enjoyable as crafting a menu, it's an equally important job for every chef/owner and operator.

#### VENDOR Q&A

### 32 Making the Grade

How Australia is beefing up meat standards.

## LIQUID INTELLIGENCE

### 37 Falling for Ciders

The season's most popular fruits make the perfect beverage pairing for harvest dinners and holiday menus.

### 41 Sips Appeal

FSR beverage editors recommend the best in beer, wine, and spirits.

## RESTAURANT SMARTS

### 65 Going Global

As demand for ethnic cuisines heats up, guests are looking for more authentic global dining experiences.

### 66 Blurred Borders

### 70 Distinctly Spiced

### 72 Viva Avocado

### 74 Vendor Resources

## BACK OF HOUSE

### 61 The Spirit of In-House Competition

**CHAIN RESTAURANTS** An Applebee's franchisee channels its staff's creativity with a competition designed to boost employee morale and community engagement.

### 75 Forecast of Cloud Coverage

**OPERATIONS** Digitalized audits can help a multi-unit chain keep tabs on its locations, improving best practices and remedying mistakes in real time.

### 78 Mexican Brand Makes its Global Move

**EXPANSION** Texas-based Cantina Laredo shifted its focus from company-owned stores to franchising, and now sees its popular brand spreading throughout the Middle East.

### 80 Chefs Who Share

#### THE MENT'OR BKB FOUNDATION

Executive chef James Kent and chef de cuisine Brian Lockwood at The NoMad Hotel in New York City talk about challenging and inspiring young chefs in their restaurant settings and through national and international competitions.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE 4 Highlights from FSRmagazine.com 6 Events 8 Editor's Welcome 76 Advertising Index

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BURKE & WILLS

## Australian Food Invades New York City

In the Big Apple, Down Under eateries are thriving thanks to distinctive cuisine complemented by cheerful service. Restaurants like Burke & Wills, located on the Upper West Side, appeal to the city's multi-cultural environment and consumers' desire to celebrate the dining-out experience. [FSRmagazine.com/burke-and-wills](http://FSRmagazine.com/burke-and-wills)

### US FOODS CENTERS ON SUSTAINABILITY IN LATEST PRODUCT LINE

The distribution giant released a "Serve Good" line to help operators meet the rising demand for socially conscious food, where items that reduce food waste, respect animal welfare, and are antibiotic-free are key to boosting a restaurant's bottom line.

[FSRmagazine.com/serve-good](http://FSRmagazine.com/serve-good)

### BUFFALO WINGS & RINGS CONTINUES TO GROW WITH FRANCHISEES

In a competitive and often challenging sports-centric casual-dining segment, Buffalo Wings & Rings has enjoyed nine years of consecutive growth. Since a new ownership team took over in 2005, the brand has blossomed from four to 70 franchises around the globe.

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### CRACKER BARREL EXPANDS REACH WITH TARGETED CAMPAIGN

With the help of a new marketing team, the popular chain deployed a new strategy to promote its Campfire Meals limited-time offer. Using social media, Cracker Barrel relied on humor and targeting software to reach a younger, more engaged audience.

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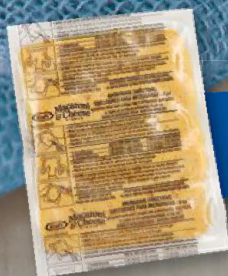
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# Events

## Conferences in the Full-Service Restaurant Industry

NOVEMBER 1

### WhiskyFest

**New York** The 19th-annual edition of the event heads to New York's Marriot Marquis in November. More than 350 whiskies from around the world will be available for tasting. Free seminars conducted by whisky experts and a gourmet buffet round out the experience. The grand tasting takes place from 6:30 to 9:30 P.M. while the seminars by master distillers and blenders are held at 7, 7:45, and 8:30 P.M. [whiskyfest.com](http://whiskyfest.com)

NOV. 4-13

### San Diego Beer Week

**San Diego** One of the West Coast's craft beer meccas, San Diego will play host to a weeklong celebration dedicated to local brews. The VIP Brewer Takeover, from 6 to 9 P.M. on November 4, will showcase the city's rare and specialty beers. The Brewers Guild Festival, from 2 P.M. to 5 P.M. on November 5, places craft beer alongside food from local restaurants, as well as food trucks and music from San Diego-based artists. [sdbw.org](http://sdbw.org)

NOVEMBER 8-10

### NAMA Coffee Tea & Water

**Nashville** The program aims to turn attendees into coffee experts and help operators learn to capitalize on the ever-growing sector. Of the more than 800 participants, around 75 percent will have purchasing power, including coffee-service providers, vending operators, and micro markets. Last year, 93 percent reported that participating was a strong value-add to their company. [coffeeteaandwater.org](http://coffeeteaandwater.org)

NOV. 13-15

### International Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Show

**New York City** HX: The Hotel Experience—Rooms to Restaurants helps generate leads, close sales, and offers the chance to learn about the industry from the 12,000-plus hospitality professionals. Dozens of informative seminars, special events, displays, and features will be available for the hospitality and restaurant industries. More than 85 percent of the attendees are key influencers and decisions-makers. [thehotelexperience.us](http://thehotelexperience.us)

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## Gig On!

**I WAS INTO THE GIG PHILOSOPHY** long before it became the hip lifestyle and economy wave of the future. I've valued it from both sides of the paycheck: Hiring talented contract columnists and freelancers to contribute to *FSR* and, years ago, as a footloose editor who preferred to write on the fly, sometimes in the midnight hours.

When I talk with someone like Chef Marcus Paslay and hear the adventures he and his wife had in the 10 years they spent gigging about the country, some serious twinges of nostalgic envy go through my mind. (Granted, Chef Paslay is an avid fisherman and hunter—as you'll discover in the story on page 17— but here I'm exercising poetic license to suggest that *gigging* has nothing to do with catching fish. Instead, it just might be the *googling* verb of 2017.)

Whether you want to be proper and say that many young chefs are seeking gigs as a way to experience various cultures and cuisines, or you want to run with me and say this is simply an industry ripe for gigging, the fact remains: We're in the throes of a robust Gig Economy.

And it's only going to escalate. Financial-services company Intuit, working with consulting firm Emergent Research, has predicted that, by 2020, more than 40 percent of the U.S. workforce will be independent contractors or engaged in non-traditional positions that fall within the definition of a gig.

The advantages of joining the gig workforce are obvious for chefs and restaurant professionals who want to travel the world—or even sample regional differences across the U.S. But there are equally compelling reasons for restaurant operators to embrace this staffing model.

For starters, it offers tremendous flexibility for staffing to seasonal demand and special events. And just as it positions workers to glean experience and knowledge from a variety of locales, it also allows operators to recruit temporary talent from other parts of the country. Maybe you're a New England chef eager to bring in some Southwestern influences for a spring LTO, or you're a Seattle operator who'd like to see if a sommelier from New York might visit with insights on East Coast vineyards. (Speaking of which, don't miss the feature on "Wines with Local Color," page 52.)

The most important characteristic to know about the people you might hire is that gigging is a proactive choice: According to another Intuit report, 56 percent of people working gigs do so because it's what they want. Another 26 percent choose to do it for extra income, and only 18 percent are gigging because a traditional job is unavailable.

If you haven't embraced the Gig Economy before, perhaps 'tis the season to do so.

Cheers,

*Connie*



**Connie Gentry**

EDITOR  
connie@fsrmagazine.com



### Page 56

There's beauty and flavor to be found in food scraps, as chefs explain in their comments about using leftovers to achieve zero-waste.

### Read Online

**WOODS HILL TABLE MAKES GOOD ON THE FARM-TO-TABLE PROMISE**

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### On the Cover

Chef/owner Marcus Paslay at Clay Pigeon Food and Drink in Fort Worth, Texas.

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# First Course

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NEEL BURGER

MENU INNOVATIONS }

## Study Guide for Ingredients

At Sixteen, Chef Thomas Lents lets the food write the narrative. *By Danny Klein*

The fact Chef Thomas Lents majored in philosophy won't come as a surprise to anyone who has sampled his cuisine. In the past four years since taking the reins at Sixteen, the Michelin two-star restaurant in Chicago's Trump International Hotel & Tower, Lents' menu has displayed a narrative and ingenuity worthy of a master storyteller.

One example was his "History of Chicago" menu, which included a trio of courses inspired by Windy City architects. In another course, broth brewed at the table was siphoned to change its direction, all in an effort to mimic the city's famed flow reversal of the Chicago River. There was also a section on immigration, day and night themes, and

Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*.

"I try to inspire," Chef Lents explains. "I really try to showcase the meaning behind why we're doing something in the restaurant. And I think that's an important part of dining that people forget about. I think a lot of people go out to be fed. But at this level, I think it needs to be a little bit more than that."



Chef Lents admits, however, that the last few menus have been a tad heavy on the thematic side. When 2016 approached, he decided to bring the restaurant back to its core.

While there's nothing simplistic or scaled back about his current premise, "A Study in Ingredients," it strikes a more pure tone. Given how much time Chef Lents spends on sourcing and on cultivating relationships with producers, not to mention nursing Sixteen's own rooftop garden, he wanted to step out of the food's path and simply let its inherent quality shine. "I'm a big believer that you're never going to make an ingredient better. You have to start with the perfect ingredient or else everything is going to fall apart," he says. The menu is presented in four courses with multiple options in each: To Begin, To Continue, To Follow, and To Conclude. In the summer, they were split into "current ingredient studies," including: The Family of Lobster; A Study of Legumes; The Season's Thistles; Corn: The Arrival of Summer; and The Field of Flowers and Herbs.

One example of a plate, featured in the To Follow section, included Sea Buckthorn, Lavender Poached Langoustine, and Petit Pastoral Salad.

In the fall, the menu turned to autumn flavors that arrive with the season. Lents' experience as a hunter, and the time he spent abroad, led to game meats assuming a central role, as well as mai-take mushrooms. Just like with past iterations, such as the one in winter, which relied heavily on proteins, Chef Lents' goal has remained focused on the source. "One of the movements we wanted to do as an entire restaurant was to return to the plate," he says. "In the process, we've created something that's more approachable to the guest and still allows us as cooks and chefs to put as much thought as we did into the other ideas." ■



AT JOURNEE, ASPIRING RESTAURANT PROFESSIONALS CAN LEARN FROM SOME OF THE INDUSTRY'S MOST SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS.

## A Club for Networking and Learning



**AFTER ASCENDING TO GENERAL MANAGER** of Chef Thomas Keller's acclaimed New York City restaurant Per Se in 2009, former maître d' Anthony Rudolf was learning on the job. "I knew how to run the dining room and I knew how to run service, but from a financial standpoint I did not know how to run the business," recalls Rudolf, who felt fortunate to have a support system that allowed him to learn. But he knew many like-minded peers who did not have such a luxury. After he left the Thomas Keller Restaurant Group in 2013, Rudolf created Journee, a club that unites education and networking, and cultivates a sense of community in a profession where it can be hard to get a leg up given the long hours and isolation inherent in the restaurant industry.

Journee opened its 3,000-square-foot community for restaurant professionals (the physical space is called the Co Lab) in Manhattan's Flatiron District on June 20, 2015. It has produced a meeting space, conference room, library, and classes that have been recorded for an expanding online education forum through its Journee TV site. Fees are \$1 per day for membership and start at \$8 per month for access to [journee.tv](http://journee.tv). It serves as a culinary school and networking arena for people who cannot afford to accrue tens of thousands of dollars in debt. Journee also has the Co.Create division, which allows it to work on unusual promotions with major brands, the first being a quick-serve café in New York City that features a menu crafted from Kellogg's products. Rudolf would like to bring Co Labs to Chicago, San Fran-

cisco, London, and other cities. “The Co Lab is meant to connect people locally, to bring together the community, and from that we bubble up all the content that takes place there and share it on *journee.tv*,” he says. As of July, *Journee* had nearly 800 members, and within the first week of its launch that same month, *journee.tv* had more than 1,000 users accessing dozens of online

classes. The plan calls for four to five new classes per week. Educators have included Christina Tosi, Jonathan Benno, Enrique Olvera, and Camilla Marcus Siegel. Rudolf reports that the club’s median age is late 20s to early 30s, and the overall range spreads from age 23 to 60. J.D. Nasaw, dining room manager at famed Eleven Madison Park, began using *Journee*’s facili-

ties and services when it opened. Nasaw says *Journee*’s membership fee is “insanely generous. The way I pitched it to my friends is even if you’re taking none of the classes and are barely using the space, if you go to Starbucks or a coffee shop five times a month, you could go to the space and get that coffee for free and that would pay for your membership.” {BY BRYAN REESMAN



CHEDDAR'S

BRANDING }

COLORFUL DISHES LIKE THIS SALMON STRAWBERRY SPINACH SALAD ARE A STAPLE OF CHEDDAR'S SIGNATURE SCRATCH-MADE COOKING.

July 1 with a name that lays claim to its intent: Cheddar’s Scratch Kitchen.

“It’s an opportunity to reiterate what we’ve always been,” Baines says of the revised name, which now graces the 96 company-owned and 67 franchised locations. And that signage forces the casual café to stay true to its mission: “When you put Cheddar’s Scratch Kitchen on all of your buildings, there’s no going back.” The revised Cheddar’s branding scheme is a positive point of differentiation for the brand and will likely placate millennials, which is important to Baines. “Millennials are very demanding in a good way,” he says. The food-conscious generation pushes the entire restaurant market to employ respectable food sourcing and preparation practices. Cheddar’s’ modified brand name exemplifies these millennial preferences.

As the rebranding process continues, Baines looks forward to growing the Cheddar’s brand more qualitatively versus quantitatively. “For us, it’s less about growing the numbers of locations,” Baines says. “It’s more about growing our people.” Through a robust training program, Cheddar’s offers staff members the opportunity to move upward, rather than hiring all new leaders from outside the company’s walls. “I just feel fortunate to be involved in guiding [Cheddar’s] through this next part of its journey,” Baines says. {BY JILL WATRAL

## What’s in a Name?

**WHEN AUBREY GOOD** and Doug Rogers opened the first Cheddar’s Casual Café in 1979, they never considered serving guests anything but scratch-made meals. For the past 37 years, the brand has prioritized preparing dishes the “right way,” versus the “easy way.”

But when Cheddar’s leadership began surveying guests this past year, the team quickly realized it was missing a huge marketing opportunity: Many consumers had no idea

they were eating scratch-made meals.

“We started to talk to our guests and consumers, and they were surprised,” says Cheddar’s president and CEO Ian Baines, who has 15 years of experience as a fine-dining chef. Guests reported visiting Cheddar’s because they love the food. They had no idea, however, that cooks begin working at 6 A.M. to prep slow-cooked meats, freshly baked pies, and more. In light of the discovery, Cheddar’s rebranded on





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# One Year In

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**OPENED:** September 2015

**LOCATION:** Atlanta

**OWNERS:** Kara Hiding, Ryan Smith, and Jen Hiding

**DESCRIPTION:** Seasonal New American cuisine that benefits the city's restaurant community.

STAPLEHOUSE'S 40-SEAT DINING ROOM OFFERS TWO MENUS—A PRIX FIXE, FIVE-COURSE TASTING MENU, AND À LA CARTE ITEMS THAT ARE TYPICALLY SHARED.

## A Community Staple

A James Beard finalist for Best New Restaurant, Staplehouse is living up to its renowned reputation and building a heartfelt legacy. *By Ellen Koteff*

There is more to Staplehouse than meets the very admiring eye. Even as the accolades and glowing reviews continue to rush in, the Atlanta newcomer has always stood for more than acclaimed tasting menus and celebrated New American cuisine.

Located in the heart of Atlanta's Old Fourth Ward, right around the corner from where Martin Luther King Jr. was

born, Staplehouse is serving creative takes on seasonal dishes using the best local and regional ingredients. It's also a for-profit subsidiary of The Giving Kitchen, a nonprofit organization serving the city's restaurant community.

The restaurant's inspiration is rooted in its past. Staplehouse was once the dream of Chef Ryan Hiding, who was diagnosed with Stage 4 gallbladder cancer in December of 2012 and

died seven months later. After his passing, his wife, Jen Hiding, sister, Kara Hiding, and her husband, Chef Ryan Smith, embraced the vision—first imagined during ticket-only dinners at the Hidingers' house—and made sure the restaurant became a reality. And they didn't do it alone.

Ryan Turner, Chris Hall, and Todd Mussman—partners at Atlanta-based Unsukay Community of Businesses and



## One Year In

restaurant operators—ultimately created The Giving Kitchen in Ryan Hiding-er's honor. Before the organization's launch, the first event, dubbed "Team Hidi," along with roundup requests in area restaurants, raised \$275,000 in a mere four weeks for his cancer treatments.

Since then, the 501 (c) 3 organization, which got its official start in January 2014, has granted more than \$750,000. Part of the money has come from Staplehouse's profits as well as from restaurant guests who want to make additional contributions when they pay their tabs. The Giving Kitch-

Opened in September 2015, the 40-seat dining room offers two menus—a prix fixe, five-course tasting menu for \$85, and à la carte items that are typically shared.

Hidinger says about 75 percent of diners choose the prix fixe option. When wines and beverages are added, average tickets for the tasting menu run about \$115, while the à la carte menu typically brings in about \$55 per person. The restaurant, which is open Wednesday through Saturday night and Sunday for brunch, encourages reservations.

"Staplehouse's cuisine is a creative and adventurous approach to food," Hidinger

evenly split between the front and back of the house.

It was always part of the Hidingers' dream to name their restaurant Staplehouse.

"We wanted to signify the things you love and crave [staples] and the place that you go to get those things [home]," she explains.

Aside from the dining room, Staplehouse can also seat eight people at the bar, up to 30 on the patio, and another 24 in a second-floor private-dining room.

The building is zoned commercial but was a private residence for many years. Staplehouse's interior features a warm and welcoming ambience that is anchored with a completely open kitchen.

The restaurant has received widespread press that has boosted its popularity. "When we first opened, it was much quieter than we anticipated," Jen Hidinger notes. "Once we received the James Beard nod, it completely shifted our business."

Most recently, Staplehouse, which is frequented by guests from the neighborhood as often as by destination diners, earned a four-star review from Corby Kummer in *Atlanta Magazine*, where he told readers the restaurant was worth the trip, even if it meant getting on an airplane.

While Jen Hidinger acknowledges Staplehouse is contributing regularly to The Giving Kitchen, she declines to offer specifics but says, "It is a pay-it-forward approach. We have to cover our taxes, rent, staff payroll, and our loan, but anything beyond that goes into The Giving Kitchen."

And the trio behind the restaurant wouldn't have it any other way. As an added bonus, the giving message also makes guests feel good about eating at Staplehouse.

"There is a growing trend of socially conscious spending," Jen Hidinger says. "Staplehouse allows diners to connect in a deeper way, and that is extremely important to what we are building here. It is the perfect example of how food and culture and community can relate." ■



**STAPLEHOUSE'S MENU FOCUSES ON CREATIVE AND ADVENTUROUS FOOD, LIKE THIS SMOKED LAMB, ROOT VEGETABLES, AND CELERY DISH.**

en's mission is to provide crisis grants to members of Atlanta's 230,000-strong restaurant community who are facing unanticipated hardships.

"Staplehouse is in honor of our backstory. It supports the dream that Ryan and I shared together," Jen Hidinger says. "This restaurant furthers his legacy and provides a lighthouse for The Giving Kitchen."

In its first year, Staplehouse was a James Beard finalist for Best New Restaurant and named the Best New Restaurant in America by *Bon Appétit*.

says. "We focus 100 percent on quality. Ryan's food is beautiful and inspired, not simplistic."

While Ryan Smith's tasting menu is the clear winner with guests, when it comes to à la carte options there are fan favorites as well.

Grandma Lillian's potato bread for \$5, a burnt onion puff for \$7, and a chicken liver tart with fermented peach, dandelion greens, and radish for \$10 are best-sellers.

Food costs routinely run around 30 percent, and there are 20 employees,



# Chefs & Ingredients

THE CHARM OF ISRAELI CUISINE // CHEFS LEARN FINANCIAL PLANNING

## The Food Purist

Chef Marcus Paslay keeps his kitchen real, using whole, raw products to create truly scratch-made dishes.

By Connie Gentry

There aren't many chefs I'd send into my grandmother's kitchen, but Marcus Paslay is one she would have loved. That's because they'd see eye to eye on what it means to be cooking from scratch. Unlike chefs who say scratch-made simply means they are making homemade dishes by combining ingredients—even if those ingredients include prepared foods—Chef Paslay takes a purist's stance on the subject.

"To me, what it means is that we are buying whole, raw products; they're not prepared or tampered with in any way until they get here," Chef Paslay explains. "Then we're taking these whole raw products and cutting them, cooking them, curing them, butchering them, whatever we need to do to turn it into food. That's what I mean when I say scratch-made."

AT CLAY PIGEON, CHEF/OWNER MARCUS PASLAY BRINGS HOSPITALITY LESSONS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY HOME TO FORT WORTH, TEXAS.

HUTTON



## Chefs & Ingredients

Clay Pigeon Food and Drink, the restaurant he opened three years ago in Fort Worth, is all about translating pure food preparation into a polished dining experience—a philosophy that has earned him accolades as one of the Lone Star State's top chefs. It doesn't hurt that he's an avid hunter as well, and Paslay agrees analogies can be drawn between his passion for hunting and his food philosophy.

"Yeah, I think with my style of cooking there are parallels: We do everything in-house. We make all of our bread and ice cream, and we do our own butchery, make our own bacon and sausage. If you look at the industry as a whole, I don't think a lot of restaurants do that anymore, that from-the-ground-up kind of food—all scratch-made food," he says. "I think there's a parallel to that and hunting, because you are closer to the product in its original state when you do food that way, and two steps before what we do is the killing of the animal."

His skills as a hunter run the gamut from hunting big game with a bow, to shotgun sports (basically for bird hunting—think dove, pheasant, duck), to fishing. Laws prohibit bringing any of

his trophy catches into the restaurant to serve, but the spoils of his hobbies come home to feed family and friends. "We use the whole animal, it's pretty fun," he says.

The same whole-animal approach applies to Clay Pigeon as well, and while there's not a separate butchering room at the restaurant, he explains, "We have a good-size kitchen, so we're fortunate in that regard, but we don't have infinite space or resources. However, being dinner only, we have all morning and afternoon to get things done."

### The Road Home

As committed as Chef Paslay is to the quality and integrity of the food he's serving, what originally attracted him to the industry was the business aspect. "I've always been attracted to the restaurant business—how transparent it is and how immediate the feedback is. I can't think of another business where someone can order a product from me and within 10 minutes I can have feedback from that order," he says.

Ironically, he didn't consider being a chef as a viable career option until his junior year of college. He was pur-

suing a business degree at the University of Oklahoma, but decided to chuck that route and follow the dream. "I was starting to think about restaurants more, and the business of restaurants, and the [cooking] hobby turned into an obsession. It just became one of those itches I felt like I needed to scratch—so I dropped out of college, applied to culinary school at the CIA, got in, and moved up to New York."

That was the first of many moves along his journey to opening a restaurant. After graduating from The Culinary Institute of America, Paslay and his wife—both adventuresome spirits—traveled and worked around the country. "We were in Alaska briefly—I was the chef at a hunting and fishing lodge in the middle of nowhere, it was a great experience. And from there we came back to Texas and my wife went to UT Southwestern Medical and got her doctorate," he says. But they hadn't come back to stay; they hit the road again, spending time in Seattle, Colorado, and Hawaii.

He's not going to pick a favorite, but says Seattle "certainly ranks way up there. It is such an amazing town, with



THE CLASSIC FRENCH POT DE CRÉME SPEAKS TO THE VERSATILITY OF CLAY PIGEON'S CUISINE, WHILE THE DIVER SCALLOPS SHOW AN INVENTIVE SIDE WITH FLAVORFUL GARNISHES OF CAULIFLOWER, HOUSE BACON, AND GRAPES.

HUTSON

lots of culture, a great food scene, and natural resources. You're near ocean, near mountains, and you have a great growing climate, so produce is amazing."

But splitting time between seasonal gigs in Colorado and Hawaii had plenty of perks as well. "In Colorado we lived in a town called Frisco, right next to Breckenridge, and our back porch was at 9,000 feet—so we were up in the mountains pretty good. And the lifestyle—in terms of being able to go hiking at any time, or fly fishing—I really loved that kind of accessibility to the wilderness."

Easy to see how a hunter turned chef could love such an idyllic, footloose lifestyle—what's harder to imagine is how he made it all come together. "Luckily, with my wife's profession as a physical therapist and mine as a chef, we're pretty marketable in just about any town," Paslay says.

Their strategy was to send out résumés and start building contacts in places they wanted to live, but often they made moves on blind faith. They worked hard and traveled light. "We lived cheaply—and if we could fit it in the back of the truck, we moved with it, and if not, it didn't make the trip," he quips. "I remember when we first got married, I was in school in New York, and we joined together all of the money we had—it was maybe \$900—and rented this tiny apartment for \$950 a month. Then my wife worked three jobs, and I went to school and worked two jobs."

As for traveling light, there were just a few necessities that always got loaded onto the truck: "For our wedding we got some really nice All-Clad pots and pans—and, of course, those will last you a lifetime if you take care of them—so those were always the first thing in the truck. And then, of course, my knife roll went in."

Their travels around the country lasted about 10 years—then the urge to nest set in, and along with it the hankering to head back home. "I guess my heart never really left Fort Worth," Chef Paslay says. "It was time to put down some roots, start building for the future, and

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<sup>1</sup>Technomic, Healthy Eating Consumer Trend Report, 2014

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a week after we decided to come home to Fort Worth we found out we were pregnant with our first kid.”

That would be their now-four-year-old daughter, who was joined two years ago by baby brother—and the entire family gathers once a week at Clay Pigeon for dinner where dad works.

There’s still the occasional travel; he and his wife spent 10 days touring Italy last year, a perfect prelude to opening his next concept, Piattello Italian Kitchen. Next on the travel bucket list is Spain; he’s not sure when, but it’s the trip he’s dreaming of.

For now, he’s thrilled to be back home in Texas. “Fort Worth is really booming,” he says. “It’s great to be on this tidal wave of new and improving restaurants ... and to bring the things I learned in other states back to everyone I know here.”

Perhaps the aspect that has surprised and delighted Paslay most has been the opportunity to become a vital part of the community. “We’ve been welcomed by the community and the surrounding neighborhoods—and we have a loyal following of regulars. We’ve gotten to know them really well. We know their names, their kids’ names, when and where they go on vacations—it’s that ongoing rapport we have with them that makes a difference.”

And those relationships have helped pave the way for opening his second concept, the Italian restaurant that’s due to open next month. The other unexpected lesson learned from restaurant No. 1 is what he calls “the yin and yang to the employee question,” referring to the great team he’s managed to build as well as the occasional disappointments with staffing that inevitably occur.

Within the past year, he explains, his approach to hiring has undergone a fundamental shift. “In the beginning, I hired experience. Now, I hire personality. I’ve really begun adopting Danny Meyer’s 51 percent mentality where you hire the personality and teach the skill. We’re looking for the right people, and when we find them, we find a place for them to work and train them our way.” ■



## Growing the Restaurant Family

A strong team at Clay Pigeon frees Chef Paslay to open a second concept. **By Amelia Levin**

**I**t’s easy to compare opening a second restaurant to having a second child. Having the first is one thing. But even though you think you have things down pat, going from one to two successfully takes even more planning, hard work, and patience.

In anticipation of opening his second concept, Piattello Italian Kitchen, Chef Paslay says, “Going from one to two is a big jump. It takes nine months of planning and developing, and then when you open a new restaurant, it’s really intense for the first

three months and starts to slow down closer to a year in.” Sounds an awful lot like birthing a baby.

Paslay credits his strong team at Clay Pigeon with giving him the flexibility to be able to take the time to develop and open another restaurant, an opportunity that came about rather fortuitously, when a real estate developer and frequent customer began looking for a restaurateur to open at his new property. Conveniently, the developer approached Chef Paslay at a time when he was considering expanding his business.



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## Chefs & Ingredients

“Any time you decide to grow a business, it’s a reflection of good employees,” Paslay says. “If you have a quality team in place, it frees you up as an entrepreneur to explore new things. I have an amazing team at Clay Pigeon, so it allowed me to be able to take the time to see what our town needed, what’s missing, and to determine if we could realistically provide that.”

When he opened the 115-seat Clay Pigeon in December 2013, it quickly became a destination restaurant in an industrial area that is now becoming revitalized. At Clay Pigeon, Chef Paslay has become known for his mussels with bacon, fennel, leeks, white wine, and sour-dough, and his wood-roasted bone marrow with cured fennel, parsley, and radish.

The restaurant’s name came about because of his affinity for shotgun shooting, a sport that uses clay discs in prac-



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tice. Combine that with the happenstance that many of the men in Paslay's family are named Clay, and the name was practically a given.

Given his commitment to house-made fare, it's no surprise he plans to continue the scratch-made tradition at the Italian-inspired Piatello. "Italian cuisine lends itself to homemade preparations like homemade pizza and pasta dough, which is in my style of cooking," he says. "With Italian, it's easy to have really good food but in a more simple, casual way."

Tucked in a new residential and retail development in Fort Worth called Waterside, Piatello has a "more family-friendly, casual-eating experience" compared to the finer-dining Clay Pigeon, Paslay says. (Coincidentally, *Piatello*, which translates to "little plate," is what Italians call the clay pigeons used for shooting practice in Italy.) A more casual

format was also preferential and intentional from an operational standpoint: It will help Paslay balance the labor intensity of his work at Clay Pigeon.

A large wood-burning oven serves as the focal point for the new restaurant and as the primary cooking medium for the pizza and al forno dishes. Aside from the variety of housemade pastas and pizza, there will be a handful of seafood dishes and classics like lasagna that will be presented on different days to keep things fresh for regulars. In the morning, the bar at Piatello will transform into a coffee bar with pastries and grab-and-go breakfast items to accommodate onsite residents and others on their way to work.

One of the most important lessons Paslay says he learned from his first restaurant was how to set up systems that would eventually guide and help manage

the second restaurant. "In the long-term, having good systems in place saves you a lot of time, effort, and money," he says, referring to standard operating procedures like accounting, payroll, and service training. "Over the years, we've been able to fine-tune those systems, which has helped us start off on the right foot in developing our second concept."

Perhaps the main pitfall of operating two concepts is the can't-be-everywhere, stretched-too-thin syndrome that can cause the first—or even the second—concept to become neglected. But, as with children, it takes a village. As confident as he is in his original team at Clay Pigeon, Paslay is also confident in the team he has assembled for round two. On the cusp of opening Piatello, Paslay is already contemplating additional concepts, and yes, he says there will definitely be more to come. ■

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### *Sopa Seca de Fideo*

University of California, Santa Cruz Executive Chef Wade Garza's rendition of the classic Sopa Seca de Fideo is Latin comfort food at its best, with toasted pasta cooked in a thick liquid of pureed tomatoes, chicken stock, onions and spices, and often served topped with queso fresco and avocado. The pasta absorbs all the liquid – hence "dry soup" as the name translates– resulting in a soft, flavorful and hearty dish.

*Sopa Seca de Fideo, Executive Chef Wade Garza, University of California Santa Cruz*





SHAKSHOUKA FROM NEW ORLEANS' HOTSPOT SHAYA.



MARIANNA MASSEY

# Israeli Cuisine Simplified

Complex in history and culture, this cuisine exudes charm in its simplicity and authenticity of ingredients and preparation. **By Amelia Levin**

**W**hen British chef and restaurateur Yotam Ottolenghi's *Plenty* cookbook, a hardbound tome with gorgeous, colorful photography, quickly sold through thousands of copies in its first release, the world began to pay more attention to the foods and traditions of Israel.

Since then, certainly chefs in the States seem to have paid more attention to this complex cuisine. Last year in New Orleans, acclaimed Chef Alon Shaya of the John Besh group opened his eponymous eatery, Shaya, paying homage to

his heritage cuisine with modern twists and the use of both local and authentic ingredients.

So why Israeli cuisine, and why now? "People are always looking for new and more now, and there are so many cultures that make up Israeli food," says Michael Solomonov, chef/owner of Zahav in Philadelphia. Eight years ago he devoted his attention to Israeli cuisine after his brother was killed in a military campaign in Israel on Yom Kippur, the holiest Jewish holiday of the year. "Israeli cuisine is almost what it's not; it's not only Middle Eastern or Mediterra-

nean or Jewish, it's all of those and more. There are also influences from Bulgaria, Hungary, Turkey, Greece, Russia, Yemen, and now Ethiopia and Georgia because of all the people coming to the country and the blend of cultures. And then you have Palestinian cuisine in the West Bank, which is closer to Galilean cuisine from Northern Israel."

To simplify the complexities, here are some of the top foods and cooking techniques that identify Israeli cuisine.

### Skewered Meats

In Israel, the main methods of cook-





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### Ingredients

- 1 Head of Lettuce
- Olive Oil
- Kosher Salt
- 8 Strips of Bacon
- 1 Medium Onion
- 4 Eggs
- Black Pepper
- 1 Cup Président Feta Crumbles
- Dried Cranberries

### Directions

Light grill or heat grill pan over medium high heat. Slice lettuce into four wedges and brush lightly with olive oil. Grill lettuce wedges on both sides until they start to brown.

Sprinkle with salt. Grill bacon and onions on both sides. Fry eggs in a little olive oil until the whites are cooked but the yolks are still runny.

Season eggs with salt and pepper.

Place each lettuce wedge on a plate, and top with two slices of bacon, some onion, an egg, and ¼ cup of Président Feta crumbles.

Garnish with cranberries.

ing are actually quite primitive, Solomonov says. Meats, fish, and vegetables are primarily grilled over live charcoal, and often on skewers. At Zahav, he uses Japanese fireboxes to recreate the open charcoal, or “ash,” cooking technique used in Israel. Specially trained cooks man the equipment, which cooks meat, whole fish, and vegetables suspended about two inches above the charcoal.

“There’s a stereotype that Israel food is only falafel and shawarma, but there is more to it than that,” he says. The spiced, ground lamb and beef kufteh (kabob) comes from Bulgarian influences. In another dish, Solomonov marinates chicken thighs cut into cubes in onion, garlic, mango, pickle, and fenugreek in the cooking style of the Iraqi Jews, who then grill the meat over the charcoal.

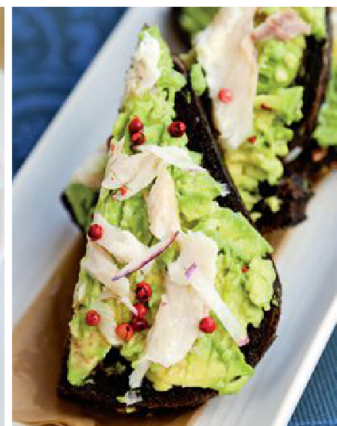
Lamb shoulder that’s been brined for two days, smoked for four hours in the charcoal boxes, and braised for six hours in pomegranate juice pairs with Persian rice that has been spiked with pistachios

“Because of the topography and fertile soil, there are many different types of fruits and vegetables growing year-round, and everything is local because there is no trade. Israel is essentially like an island, so all of the produce is grown in the country and [sourced] from that week, not traveling more than 100 miles sitting on a truck or train.”

The most recognizable Israeli foods, perhaps, are tomatoes and cucumbers, which are often combined with chopped parsley, salt, olive oil, and lemon juice as a salad and garnish for many meals and dishes.

Zachary Engel, chef de cuisine at Shaya, who participated in the research and development that went into opening the restaurant, also points to the local, seasonal vegetables that characterize Israeli cuisine as the foundation for many of the dishes.

“I worked in Sonoma for a couple of years, and it was amazing to be able to pick our own vegetables in the gar-



POPULAR DISHES AT SHAYA INCLUDE MATZO BALL SOUP AND AVOCADO TOAST WITH SMOKED WHITE FISH, PINK PEPPERCORNS, AND RYE BREAD.

and currants steeped in tea and then cooked in a cast iron Dutch oven so the bottom crisps up like popcorn.

### Fresh Vegetables

As Ottolenghi’s book showcases in its recipes and photography, Israeli cuisine revolves around fresh, seasonal vegetables, making it well-suited for today’s culinary obsession with healthier eating.

“Israel is basically the birthplace of modern agriculture,” Solomonov says.

den growing right on the estate, so any chance when we can use the best, seasonal ingredients or work with local farmers, we do.”

At Shaya, Engel works with a local hoop house to get tomatoes and cucumbers for the ubiquitous salad year-round. He stuffs pickled hot peppers grown in Louisiana with goat cheese, just like the Greeks and Armenians do at Levinsky Market in Tel Aviv. He roasts whole eggplant in the wood-burning oven and







Feta-Topped Fried Egg Salad



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fills it with summer beans. He and Shaya source only local, fresh parsley for their tabbouleh so it has a “really beautiful, vegetable crunch and doesn’t taste like a generic herb.”

In the fall, he’ll take acorn squash and roast it whole in the wood oven until it becomes super soft, and then fills the insides with a mixture of black-eyed peas and bubbly Israeli couscous in a twist on mujadara, a Lebanese lentil and rice dish.

### Spices and Flavorings

Spices are important in Israeli cuisine and dominated by za’atar, a blend of herbs like cumin and oregano, salt or sumac, and sesame, that are found all over the Middle East and used in many dishes, according to Solomonov. Israeli olives and olive oil lend a fruitier, peppery bite to salads and vegetables.

At Shaya, Engel uses urfa biber, a smoked, mild pepper from Turkey—similar to an Aleppo pepper—that’s dark and purple in color, with chocolate and tobacco notes. “We don’t cook over charcoal in the restaurant, so this is a great way to add that smoky flavor,” he says.

In the winter, Engel prefers Hawayej, a Yemenite spice blend with turmeric, cumin, black pepper, coriander, and fenugreek used to season chicken, fish, rice couscous, and salads. He uses the spice primarily for curried cauliflower, which is deep-fried and then becomes the topping for the house-made hummus.

For sweeteners, Engel turns to date molasses sourced from Israel to balance out vinaigrettes, and also in a more savory, braised lamb dish with pomegranate glaze and whipped Feta. “That caramelization you get with the dark date molasses balances out the high sugar content with nutty notes and makes the spices in the lamb and tabbouleh on top really pop,” he says. Sometimes, Engel uses carob molasses, which is made in a similar fashion as the date molasses, but has a more chocolate flavor that pairs well with the foie gras dish.

### Fruit and Cheese

Aside from dates, Israeli cuisine is known

for its use of figs, persimmons, and apricots, which Engel is lucky enough to buy locally during the summers in Louisiana. He’s cut the inside out of a persimmon, hit it with olive oil and salt, and thrown it in the pita oven to roast. He then pairs the fruit with fresh Labaneh, a thick, tart, and creamy yogurt-like cheese often enjoyed with a drizzling of olive oil, a sprinkle of za’atar, and plenty of pita to mop it all up.

“Some of the beauty of cooking Israeli food is we can easily put stone fruits on the menu in savory dishes because that lends itself to the Moroccan and Turkish influences,” Engel says. “While we might be limited in the scope of what we’re cooking, this allows us to do more than what people might expect.”

Engel pairs plums roasted with that dark date molasses and puréed with beets for a sauce that’s drizzled over haloumi. “It took us three months to source this particular type of Greek haloumi, which is very different than haloumi made in Wisconsin in its taste and mouthfeel,” he says, noting the cheese is more grassy, nutty, and creamy in flavor and texture because the sheep feast on the grasses in the Cyprus hills. “If we can’t get something locally, we try to get the best ingredient we can get locally.”

### Plenty of Pita

Perhaps the most important bread product in Israeli cuisine, the pita pairs with hummus and dishes of all types.

At Zahav, Solomonov makes an Iraqi-style pita—a laffa, that’s slightly thicker and chewier—fresh-to-order in a wood-burning oven. Shaya also uses a pecan wood-fired oven to bake pita and other foods like corn that’s charred and used in hummus.

Engel says he’s excited to see others becoming more excited about Israeli cuisine. “It’s a relatively young country with tons of history and cooking traditions shaped by many different cultures and religious customs,” he says. “We try not to be preachy and just try to make people feel comfortable trying everything and discovering this unique cuisine.” ■

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# Lessons from the CIA

BY CAMERON RABE

## Financial Planning Should be a Tool in Every Chef's Skill Set

**T**he restaurant industry is a notoriously difficult place to do business in. There are many reasons why first-time operators fail, but one of the most overlooked factors might just be the simple day-to-day bookkeeping. Understandably, most aspiring professionals, especially those chefs who want to open their own restaurant someday, don't approach the subject of financial planning with exorbitant enthusiasm. It can be cumbersome work, and a talented culinary leader would probably rather be working on his menu than tracking expenditures. But there's little doubt it's a crucial tool for employees at all levels of the industry if they want to survive.

When students walk into my class at The Culinary Institute of America, I challenge them with what sounds like a simple task at first glance: For the next 30 days, financially speaking, track everything that comes in and out. This can be difficult for a lot of people. However, it's the first step toward setting an honest budget. And having legitimate financial benchmarks can make or break any career, especially one as dynamic as the restaurant profession. In this industry, you can watch the bottom line soar and plummet with alarming regularity. This is true of all workers, from a tenured restaurant owner to a first-day server. Given the myriad of fluctuating factors tied to success, such as seasons and sourcing, there are going to be bountiful weeks, and there are certainly going to be difficult ones. With that in mind, understanding how much money is flowing in



**"IT MIGHT NOT BE THE FIRST THING OPERATORS THINK OF," CAMERON RABE SAYS. "BUT BALANCING THE BOOKS PROPERLY COULD BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A RESTAURANT FAILING AND SUCCEEDING, ESPECIALLY EARLY ON."**

each direction is vital to developing the foresight to understand what needs to be saved. Patience is another critical factor. Trying to do too much, too soon, can be a recipe for disaster. Instead of attempting to open a restaurant right out of college, it might be better to accrue some real-world experience and develop a network of mentors. I think the perception that most restaurants fail because they don't have enough start-up capital is misguided. I believe most falter because the owners involved are not paying close enough attention to day-to-day finances. It's the budgeting and planning part that turns out to be their downfall, not necessarily lacking a stellar bank account.


If this all sounds daunting, the reality is that operators don't have to be accountants. There are software and third-party options available. Approach with caution and be sure to stay on top of the books, however. No business owner should ever know less about his operation than the accountant does.

Alternative financing is another hot topic. There are relatively new options, like crowdsourcing and Kickstarter, as well as more traditional methods. I look at it this way, though: Chances are, if a bank turned down your request for a loan, you should re-evaluate your finances. Being denied credit is a chance for reflection. I encourage operators to stay away from the quick, high-interest options that will step in when banks shut the door. In that scenario, it might be best to ask yourself, "Is this the right time to do this?" instead of seeking out other lenders.

Like we say at the CIA, it all comes down to *mise en place*. This applies to finances as well as kitchen prep. Keep everything in order, develop proper habits, and the rest will take care of itself. Then, in line with the original goal, chefs can get back to doing what they love most: making food, making guests happy, and, of course, making money. ■

**Cameron Rabe** is an assistant professor of business management at The Culinary Institute of America. He teaches the Personal Finance, Corporate Finance, and Intravention Planning courses in the CIA's Food Business Management major.





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# Making the Grade

## How Australia is beefing up meat standards.

**G** rass-fed beef is growing in popularity in U.S. restaurants as consumer demand rises for healthier meats and more environmentally sustainable options. The surprising result, however, is much of that demand for grass-fed beef used in American restaurants is supplied by Australia.

Last year, 917 million pounds of beef used in the U.S. came from Australia, with the majority being made up of grass-fed products, according to data from the Australian Department of Agriculture. Eighteen percent of that beef was high-quality, chilled product, such as the loin cuts and inside and top sirloins, which shows growth of 2 percent, or 25 million pounds, over 2014.

With all this Australian beef in U.S. restaurants, the question is why U.S. operators are so excited about Australian beef. *FSR* spoke to Catherine Golding, business development manager of foodservice for MLA, about this trend.

### WHY IS AUSTRALIAN GRASS-FED BEEF ON THE RISE IN THE U.S.?

Consumers in the U.S. are seeking out grass-fed beef because they see it as a more sustainable, healthier option. A 'better for me, better for the planet' choice, if you like. And Australia is in a great position to supply this demand—the majority of the beef we produce in Australia is 100 percent grass fed and finished. It's a delicious menu alternative for those diners looking for something a bit different on the menu that also meets their philosophical outlook, and we're finding more American chefs and diners like the natural flavor of grass-fed beef.

U.S. operators also gain some as-



**CATHERINE GOLDING, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER OF FOODSERVICE FOR MLA, DISCUSSES HOW MEAT STANDARDS AUSTRALIA HELPS U.S. OPERATORS.**

surance from purchasing Australian beef—whether it is grass-fed or grain-fed because of Meat Standards Australia (MSA), the Australian grading system.

### WHY DO OPERATORS APPRECIATE MSA?

Meat Standards Australia is a grading system that is able to provide an accurate eating quality grade on grass-fed beef. The USDA system was built for corn-fed products, so much of the scoring out of USDA is based on marbling. With grass-fed beef products, you aren't getting that high level of marbling in the beef, but that doesn't mean that the beef won't eat really well.

### WHAT MAKES MSA UNIQUE?

First, the system was developed from a consumer taste perspective. We've

undertaken the largest sensory panel research with over 100,000 consumer taste tests around the globe to work out the unique factors that contribute to the eating quality on a piece of beef. We started with what consumers like when they are eating beef and worked back to determine what characteristics in the beef contributed to what they liked.

What our research came up with was a system based on cuts and cooking method. Under MSA, we grade each cut of beef, not the whole carcass, and that is a really unique part of our system. You're not buying a whole carcass with one grade; you are buying cuts of beef with an individual grade—so you could get three different grades from one carcass.

### HOW DOES THIS HELP U.S. OPERATORS?

Operators get consistency. When they buy a cut of beef with an eating quality grade, they know that cut will eat according to the quality they selected. It's one less thing to worry about. Operators have a ton of things that they are stressed about, but if we can take one more issue off that pile and let them serve grass-fed beef with confidence, we are helping them out.

*Catherine Golding joined Meat & Livestock Australia in 2000 and has worked in a number of roles, including marketing communications, magazines editor, and, more recently, R&D communications manager before taking up her current role of business development manager—foodservice in the North American region. In these roles Catherine became passionate about sustainable food production—food production that is good for the environment, good for communities, and good to eat.*

# Liquid Intelligence



AT WESTBOUND IN LOS ANGELES, SPIRITS FROM MEXICO ARE SURGING.

## FIESTA SPIRITS

The only thing hotter than Mexican cuisine may be the spirits that share the same cultural heritage—tequila and mezcal are still rising, but so are sotol and raicilla. *By Alia Akkam*

When Thomas Kelly first opened Mexicue, it was a simple food truck dispensing tacos and burnt-ends chili sliders to hungry New Yorkers on the run. His Mexico-meets-barbecue concept proved such a hit that it has now spawned a burgeoning collection of brick-and-mortar establishments where diners settle in with spicy brisket enchiladas washed down with Grapefruit Palomas. So strong is the connection between Mexican food and drink that Kelly has also amassed a list of 50 tequilas and 11 mezcals for thirsty patrons who want to linger.

Likewise, the latest restaurant from powerhouse Chicago chef Rick Bayless, Leña Brava, highlights more than 100 mezcal selections. An ode to the live-fire cooking traditions of Mexico's Baja California Norte, it's the spot to unwind with a Monteromero (Montelobos mezcal, crème de cassis, black pepper, rosemary, lime) before a dinner of slow-cooked octopus *carnitas*.

Mexican cuisine, particularly of the Tex-Mex variety, has long resonated with American diners. Skillet fajitas and salt-rimmed Margaritas are as much entrenched in America's culinary fabric as fried chicken and grilled



hamburgers. While the tequila-lime juice-triple sec concoction is as timeless as a mess of cheesy, jalapeño-studded nachos, the Margarita is only one reason agave-based spirits are so clamored for today. Bartenders, who continue to hone their important roles as gatekeepers, have helped put the nuanced interpretations of tequila—as well as mezcal and on-the-rise raicilla and bacanora—in the spotlight of Mexican and non-Mexican-inspired settings alike.

Many of the country's bartenders are ardent supporters of the Tequila Interchange Project, an advocacy group supporting the diversity and exportation of quality, agave-based spirits. After visiting distilleries in Mexico firsthand, it's hard not to become roused by mezcal, believes Dee Ann Quinones, head bartender at Westbound, a restaurant that channels luxe railcar travel in downtown Los Angeles. "I've visited many distilleries around the world and I have to say that watching mezcal being made

is absolutely magical," she says. "From the distinct way each family has their own methods to the varied terroir, it is unique. I think that is why bartenders took to [mezcal] so quickly. Once they get passionate about something, they share it, and it becomes the 'it' thing."

As bartenders dispense this wisdom and delineate the differences between, say, tequila and mezcal, they build trust with their guests, and it becomes easier to convince guests they should sample something new. "The best way of getting the word out about the great list of Mexican spirits we carry is through staff education," explains Drew Sweeney, beverage director of New York City's Dream Downtown hotel, home to the upmarket Mexican restaurant Bodega Negra. "We have found that once they have the opportunity for a personal connection with these products, they want to share that enthusiasm with our guests, which is the best way to get them to explore."

Jimmy Yeager, proprietor of Jim-

my's in Aspen, Colorado, helped pioneer the success of mezcal in the U.S. He says it was 30 years ago when interest in Mexican spirits began to take shape. Every year since, that curiosity has grown, especially in 2010, when top-notch tequila became more readily available. "This led to more education and knowledge being shared within the industry, as well as to the development of the discerning customer who cares about the quality and source of the spirit that they are drinking." An appreciation of tequila is, of course, a springboard to relishing other agave spirits.

At Jimmy's, where a slate of comforting foods—spinach & artichoke dip and lobster mac & cheese—are draws, patrons delve beyond more fitting bourbon offerings to sip on the Puerto de Aspen (Tapatio blanco tequila, Solerno blood orange liqueur, Ancho Reyes liqueur, fresh watermelon, lime). If guests prefer mezcal woven into their cocktails, then they might spring for La Otra Palabra (mezcal, Luxardo Maraschino, green Chartreuse, lime), a riff on the gin-based The Last Word, or the Vida Buena, a Negroni-like mix of mezcal, Aperol, and Antica Carpano. A customized "mezcal omakase" tasting is yet another adventurous option. Each course, Yeager points out, "is a cultural experience accompanied by stories of the spirit's history, flavor profile, tradition, and the process in which each mezcal was made." Serving the mezcal in copitas, which mimic the traditional vessels used in Mexico, further heightens guest intrigue. Scotch drinkers in particular might savor this approach, for mezcal is imbued with smoky notes that are also synonymous with the brown spirit.

Taha Ismail, beverage director at Pepita, Mike Isabella's cantina and tiki bar in Arlington, Virginia, echoes this synergy. "I find more Scotch drinkers [choosing] mezcal, especially during the warmer months," says Ismail. "Agave-based spirits are so versatile and complementary that today's bartender can create a cocktail for any consumer." His customers drink agave spirits habitually, with Margaritas sought after "from the patio on a



AT WESTBOUND, DEE ANN QUINONES, HEAD BARTENDER, DEEMS THE WESTBOUND UP & UP AN EASY CHOICE, WITH ITS VIDA MEZCAL, CHIPOTLE HONEY, LEMON, AND SMOKED PAPIKA.

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hot summer day, and from the enthusiast who wants a 'dealer's choice' mezcal libation." In the popular Legend, mezcal is infused with pineapple and then shaken with fresh lime juice, epazote, agave, and Angostura bitters.

For Sweeney's guests the easy choice is a Spiced Celery Sour (celery-infused Montelobos mezcal, jalapeño syrup, fresh lime juice). "The salty smokiness combined with fresh vegetal notes from our celery infusion and a bit of spice make for an exciting option that shows guests how to incorporate this great spirit into a cocktail," he says.

Patrons at Añejo in New York City often order their chicken adobo empanadas alongside La Piña Escondido, a cocktail with tequila's little-known, once-bootlegged cousin raicilla, pineapple, fresh lime, ginger, and lavender syrup. And at Leyenda, bartenders Ivy Mix and Julie Reiner are illuminating sotol—a Mexican spirit made from the Desert Spoon plant that was once classified in the agave family. La Contenta, another New York City favorite known for sweet blue crab tostadas, makes once-obscure bacanora the star of the Paloma Norteña, which unites maraschino liqueur with grapefruit juice and lime.

Despite the growing attention lavished upon these more unconventional finds, Sweeney says, the tried-and-true Margarita—made with premium tequila and fresh lime juice—remains a go-to: "It's a clean, simple drink and a classic for good reason. We like to use this recipe as a base, to build around with different fresh fruits, juices, and house-made syrups that add complexity."

As Quinones points out, tequila is a helpful starting point, provoking conversation between bartenders and guests already enamored with the spirit. Once they learn it is part of the mezcal family, interest in the larger agave category will pique. But even with mezcal's ascent and the newfangled cocktails it inevitably generates, Quinones feels Americans will always reserve a special place for tequila. "The U.S. has a long history and love affair with the spirit," she says. "I don't see that changing anytime soon." ■

# Falling for Ciders

The season's most popular fruit makes the perfect beverage pairing for harvest dinners and holiday menus.

By Brian Yaeger



Beer Editor **BRIAN YAEGER** combines his love of drink and passion for travel to write about beer for *FSR* magazine.

**T**he crisp autumn air. The earth-tone foliage. And the season's most popular fruit. With the apple harvest comes a season for putting the resurgence in American cider-making front and center on any table, and a handful of restaurants or cider-centric public houses are at the forefront of this movement. Admittedly, much of the hard cider boom is centered on back-sweetened product that's tasty and refreshing, but perhaps not something befitting a delectable meal. (It's OK to simply call it cider since "soft cider" is just juice and no one calls grape juice "soft wine.") But if there's one thing restaurateurs and bar managers love to get to do, it is be innovative. Seeing as how nascent cider and pairing with cider is, in the grand scheme of things, that makes brand new places such as Anxo in Washington, D.C., The Northman in Chicago, and Capitol Cider in Seattle some of the restaurants and taverns to watch.

In New York City's Lower East Side, the veggie-focused restaurant and cider bar Wassail is named for the ancient ceremony of celebrating in the orchards to ensure a good harvest. Wassail's cider director, Dan Pucci, struggles against being dubbed a pommelier—a pomme fruit riff on sommeliers—but he certainly knows apples and what fermented ones offer—not only to a patron but to a restaurant itself. With an Italian wine background, Pucci's affinity for French, Spanish, and ultimately for American ciders has him excited about the future of bar programs. "Cider is a totally uncharted beverage and we're still fig-



**THE BLACK TWIG CIDER HOUSE IN DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA, WHICH BOASTS 90 CIDERS ON ITS MENU, CELEBRATES THE SYNERGY BETWEEN SPANISH CUISINE, PORK-HEAVY DISHES, AND CIDERS.**

uring it out," he says, which is contrary to well-established cider cultures in places like Normandy and the Basque Country. But, while a bottle of biodynamic Redbyrd Cider's Cloudspitter from the Finger Lakes Region, a dry, tannic cider made from heirloom varieties listed at \$57 per bottle—one of the most expensive on Wassail's menu—may not fetch as much as an estate-grown Sauvignon Blanc from Napa Valley, the fact that most ciders are less alcoholic means that diners are able to drink twice as much. Says Pucci, "They spend more money on the product and leave very happy."

Cider, he affirms, pairs well with

foods, where wine or beer may come up short. He points to spicy or heavily seasoned foods where lower-alcohol beverages that have high acidity is an ideal combo.

Wassail actually began as a vegetarian restaurant. It didn't take long to make the adjustment to amend the menu to include dishes such as pork belly pintxos (think crostini) and smoked duck breast. The pork belly is braised in cider, and the new duck breast is braised with Spanish ice cider and currants.

The innovative, helpful bottled cider menu's North American offerings aren't broken up by region or even style, per



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se, but rather by descriptors such as *fruit*, *savory*, and *wild*. Pucci explains, "That took so many revisions ... but as we went to more American products, people had no idea where to start." And while he ensures Wassail's staff is well-versed in discussing the wide variety of ciders and flavors, the staff "don't need to handhold customers." Guests come in eager and receptive, and the menu does a lot of the talking for them. It's how they might select the Snowdrift Ciders Red Crab with hints of berries and melons to pair with Brillat-Savarin, a decadently creamy French cheese, or Eden Specialty Cider's Cinderella's Slipper, an earthy, funky, still cider from Vermont, to go with Garrotxa, a semi-soft goat cheese from Spain.

The Spanish connection is impossible to avoid in the booming world of cider, and Black Twig Cider House in Durham, North Carolina, finds a way to marry pork-heavy Spanish-style sausages with Southern flair. But more importantly, Black Twig boasts the largest stash of ciders—roughly 90 in all—in the Southeast.

Co-owner Mattie Beason, already a partner in the beer-oriented Mattie B's Public House, discovered cider while traveling through the Basque Country. It's why the restaurant features a traditional Basque txotx, or cider barrel, that doles out samples for patrons. Alas, unlike those found in the Northern Spain region positioned outdoors for obvious reasons, Black Twig's txotx is inside, and it's common for some to splash on the floor.

Black Twig seats some 85 customers who Beason believes are excited about the cider experience but who usually don't know what they specifically enjoy. And even the half who walk through the door with the preconception that they're not really cider drinkers and who just came in to eat well—those agnostics tend to become the beverage's biggest converts. Furthering the education is manager Amy Loria, whom Beason helped train as a cider expert and who is certified by the United States Association of Cider Makers (USACM).



“I like to contrast, not just complement,” says Beason of cider pairing. It helps create new flavors in addition to cider’s palate-cleansing effect given its usual light carbonation and gentle acidity. Sandwiches named for traditional cider apples include the Handsome Norman, a bratwurst with house-smoked pimento cheese that is the most popular. Golden Harvey, named for a sharp and aromatic variety of apple, features chorizo, a bright Spanish romesco sauce, smoked goat cheese, and a kick of sweetness from Espelette honey. On its own, the sandwich, Beason says, is “round and fatty and luscious,” so that either the Basque ciders that are the natural inspirations or domestic dry ciders can come in and create a creamy mouthfeel that standard, sweet ciders might simply quash. Southern cider makers who have found a home at Black Twig include Noble Cider, from across the state in Asheville, and Foggy Ridge from Virginia.

As for other American cider producers making food-friendly ciders, look no further than the WildCraft Cider House in Eugene, Oregon, where proprietor

Sean Kelly hosts pairing dinners at one of the few cideries with an on-site full-service restaurant. The reservation-only events (reservations are not required to dine in the restaurant) highlight WildCraft Ciderworks’ commitment to seasonality and support for local farmers and orchardists. In fact, all of the fruit in the ciders—including other pomme fruits such as pears, quince, and medlars—and the foods served at the Cider House are grown in the Willamette Valley. One exception to that rule was when Kelly hosted a sushi and cider dinner that grew to 140 customers when the restaurant’s usual capacity is around 60.

Echoing a sentiment from Pucci at Wassail, Kelly opines that the vast majority of diners are still looking for education and that they’re intrigued, if not familiar, with most of the ciders on offer. And unlike the other restaurants, WildCraft’s 10-strong taplist is composed of house ciders, all wild-fermented. Kelly further mentions that some of the apple orchards date back to the 1850s, while one biodynamic orchard from the 1960s represents what WildCraft aspires to, with ciders devoid of sulfites, tita-

tions, and back sweetening.

Given that fall is a time to celebrate the harvest, every crumb or drop of the fruit is utilized. Kelly loves the Wild Rose cider with the house crepes. (The cider is made with whole, native, wild roses, and it’s worth noting that apples stem from the rose family.) As opposed to other Spanish-influenced menus, there’s little pork served at the Cider House.

Both Pucci and Black Twig’s Beason proclaim cider to be the ideal beverage to serve with roast turkey and the cornucopia accompanying Thanksgiving meals, from squash to foraged mushrooms where cider won’t overpower those flavors. As mostly a pescatarian, Kelly loves the versatility of WildCraft’s crepes. Not only are they filled with fresh vegetables or fruit compotes, but also cider is used in the batter. The restaurant also makes apple sodas in house, great for guests too young to sip the hard stuff, and the pulp is used to make fruit leathers. “Any farm-to-table restaurant, children should be a part of it,” Kelly proclaims. Even the youngest early settlers in America would raise a mug to that. ■



AN APPLE GARNISH FINISHES OFF A REFRESHING CIDER FROM WASSAIL IN NEW YORK CITY (LEFT AND BOTTOM). WILDCRAFT CIDER HOUSE IN EUGENE, OREGON, USES A VARIETY OF POMME FRUITS IN ITS CIDERS. LIKE THE BLEND OF WILD AND CULTIVATED PEARS FEATURED IN THE HAND-PRESSED WILDCRAFT PIONEER PEAR CIDER (RIGHT).





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# SIPS APPEAL

BEER EDITOR



**BRIAN YAEGER** combines his love of drink and passion for beer to write about beer. BeerEditor@FSRmagazine.com.

IPAs are eminently delicious but big hop flavors are sometimes difficult to match with foods without overpowering them. Soft expressions of herbs and fruits, and delicate tartness that awaken the palate with unexpected acidity, offer culinary accents right at home on adventurous tables.



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## Anchor, Meyer Lemon Lager

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BEER



WINE EDITOR



**KRISTINE HANSEN** has written about wine since 2004 and is passionate about pairing food with wine. WineEditor@FSRmagazine.com.

In the States, local wines might mean those from a nearby region. But they could also refer to lesser-known, smaller wine regions from around the globe. From Washington's Horse Heaven Hills to Galilee, Israel, and micro-climates within California that aren't as recognized as Sonoma and Napa, here are wines worth checking out.



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WINE



SPIRITS EDITOR



**ALIA AKKAM** is based in New York but travels the world experiencing and writing about spirits, food, and hospitality. SpiritsEditor@FSRmagazine.com.

Autumn is typically dominated by whiskey. While there are a number of just-debuted brown spirits to look forward to sipping this fall, there is also an artful Cognac variant, a heady tweak on a time-honored Italian amaro, and a few gins—one summer-conjuring, one appropriately robust—that are also worth giving a whirl.



## Jefferson's Bourbon

Trey Zoeller, visionary founder and master blender, matures his whiskey in rum barrels. For the Jefferson's Reserve Old Rum Cask Finish, eight-year-old Kentucky straight bourbon is placed in barrels that held Gosling's Family Reserve Old Rum for 16 years, and whiskey before that. A 14-month finishing session in these Bermudian barrels leads to notes of spice rounded out with caramel, maple, and banana.



## Knickerbocker Gin

Juniper-and-citrus-centric Knickerbocker Gin is among the stars of the Michigan-based New Holland Artisan Spirits portfolio. It's also the foundation for Blue Haven, a gin steeped with blueberries grown between the Havens on the state's western coast. Subtly sweet, the delicate fruit flavor it elicits is a nod to the country's epicenter of blueberry production.

SPIRITS





# SIPS APPEAL



## Crooked Stave, Colorado Wild Sage

**7.2% ABV** Sage is hardly a common ingredient in beer, but when it's used, it's typically to great effect. This prodigiously food-friendly wild saison—with a Brettanomyces-led tartness complemented with lemongrass—is herbal and earthy, making it a natural with grilled meats, light fish, and baked veggies.



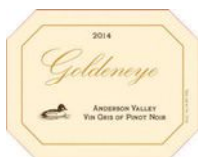
## Base Camp Owyhee Canyonlands Wild Ale

**5.6% ABV** I'm including another wild sage beer because it's so seldom seen but works so well that perhaps it should be a trend. The musty sage notes lend a natural savory and dry character as does the wild Brettanomyces, which helps true ferment to dry. The leathery finish makes it complementary for long, slow-cooked meats.



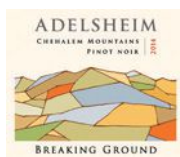
## Ruse Brewing, MultiBeast Brett-Saison

**6.6% ABV** Portland's newest farmhouse-style brewery uses a particular tropical-to-stone-fruit throwing strain of Brettanomyces, and this oak-aged saison has a lovely nectarine thing going on while still standing clear of any fruit beer sweetness. Try it either with a salad tossed with candied pecans or a fruity or herbal sorbet.



## 2013 Goldeneye Winery Pinot Noir

**ANDERSON VALLEY, CALIFORNIA** The softness on this wine is apparent in the plum notes as well as in its tannins. Cola and fig flavors contribute to an elegant, expressive style of Pinot Noir. Anderson Valley, in western Mendocino County, is known for producing excellent Pinot Noir.



## 2014 Adelsheim Vineyard "Breaking Ground" Pinot Noir

**CHEHALEM MOUNTAINS, WILLAMETTE VALLEY, OREGON** The winery's first new wine release since 2005, this incredibly balanced Pinot Noir offers aromas of lilacs and raspberries before easing into black cherry, cocoa, and cola notes that are layered and complex.



## 2013 Moobuzz Pinot Noir

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA** Culling its grapes from the Central Coast—which is a huge production area but not home to as many boutique labels as Napa or Sonoma—this Pinot Noir is light in body but heavy on baking spices, with cherry and plum notes, plus a seamless finish.



## Hennessy

In the past, Hennessy has collaborated with international artists like Shepard Fairey and Futura for its Very Special Limited Edition Series. The latest creative talent to join forces with the Cognac behemoth is tattoo luminary Scott Campbell. This distinctive version is graced with Campbell's graphic, metallic-embossed label, which depicts wings.



## Bird Dog Whiskey

Bird Dog Whiskey is known for its flavored incarnations of aged Kentucky bourbon, from apple to chocolate. The most recent addition is Bird Dog Small Batch Bourbon Whiskey, melding corn, malted barley, and rye. Matured in new American white oak barrels, it juxtaposes restrained honey undertones with rich caramelized sugar ones.



## No. 209

Like many current gins, San Francisco's No. 209 has ventured into experimental mode by finishing the spirit in Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and Cabernet Sauvignon barrels. The latter is matured for six months in French oak casks from sister winery Rudd Oakville Estate in Napa Valley. Once housing the Bordeaux-style blend Rudd Oakville Estate Red, the barrels lend the gin a bourbon-like jolt of chocolate, oak, and spice.

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**Angry Orchard, Walden Hollow**

**8% ABV** Plucked from Angry Orchard's estate orchard in New York's Hudson Valley, the American heirloom fruit in this riveting cider is acidic and tannic, and was left to ferment to the pleasant side of dry. Despite its newness, it's a complex, mature cider that begs for fresh cheeses and aged charcuterie.



**Leinenkugel, Bergarten Tart**

**4.8% ABV** Though this German-style brewery has never done a German tart beer before this Berliner Weisse—which is quite dissimilar from its popular line of lemony-sour shandies—it is exceptionally balanced. The refreshing beer has hints of lime, coriander, and light graininess.



**2015 Bodega Garzón  
Sauvignon Blanc**

**URUGUAY** A zesty style of Sauvignon Blanc, the wine is youthful and fresh, with grapefruit notes and plenty of effervescence. In Uruguay, Sauvignon Blanc is used as a 100 percent varietal as well as in a blend.



**2008 Golan Heights Winery  
Yarden Blanc de Blancs**

**GALILEE, ISRAEL** From Chardonnay grapes grown in the Golan Heights' coolest viticulture area, this is a sparkling wine with crisp nectarine and green apple notes, bringing with it a backbone of balance and a dry profile throughout.



**Coopers' Craft**

Brown-Forman's first new bourbon brand in 20 years, Coopers' Craft is an ode to making barrels, an art that founder George Garvin Brown embraced by launching a cooperage in 1945. Aged in barrels from Brown-Forman's own coopers, the Kentucky straight bourbon undergoes a mellowing beech and birch charcoal finishing process.



**Canadian Club**

Revered Canadian whisky brand, Canadian Club, has always flaunted rye in its blend. But with the continued rise in popularity of the spicy grain, a 100% Rye variety has arrived on the scene. Spawned solely from rye, it's aged in new American oak, once used bourbon, and Canadian whisky barrels. A bold, earthy heft makes it welcome in cold-weather Manhattans.

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Libbey's Craft Beer glass offers guests an authentic experience by presenting beer in just the right glass. Ideal for serving many styles of craft beer, the graceful contours of the glass are comfortable to hold, while the narrow top captures aromas that enhance flavor. Featuring a thick sham, this glass offers stability and durability in service. Craft Beer - 1647



**Wine**

Rivere, one pattern in Libbey's Master's Reserve Collection, evokes a new standard of elegance and sophistication for premium glassware. The modern look of Rivere features a wide, gracefully designed bowl that concentrates aromas, while the large surface area allows wine to breathe. Its elongated, svelte stem adds striking elevation to beverage presentations. Rivere Red Wine - 9426



**Spirits**

The retro-inspired Spiegelau's Perfect Serve offers a stunning Double Old Fashioned glass. Perfect Serve caters to the demands of a modern bar by uniting functionality with timeless elegance and sophistication. Platinum Glass technology offers lasting durability and special cut decoration that produces unique light refraction, perfectly showcasing cocktail creations. Perfect Serve Double Old Fashioned - 45080177

BEER



WINE



SPIRITS







Hotel Phillips in Kansas City, Missouri, is on the National Register of Historic Places.



BY DANIEL P. SMITH

No longer just an on-site amenity, hotel restaurants have become destinations in their own right, attracting locals, tourists, and dining dollars into the hotel setting.

# STAYING POWER



Along 12th Street in downtown Kansas City, Missouri, the upscale Hotel Phillips rises 20 stories into the Midwestern air, a distinguished, stately presence in an area teeming with new development and fresh energy.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the 85-year-old, art deco gem seemingly constructed from the pages of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* features intricate bronze and nickel metalwork, marble walls, and a gilded 11-foot likeness of the goddess of dawn hovering over its lobby.

When Chicago-based Arbor Lodging Partners purchased the 217-room boutique hotel last October, refashioning the hotel's food and beverage program stood at the top of leadership's whiteboard.

"Guests are demanding a more holistic experience at hotels, and you have to keep up, particularly on the food and beverage side,"



## DINING EXPERIENCE

Arbor Lodging co-founder and CEO Vamsi Bonthala says.

Arbor Lodging's efforts, which started in earnest this past summer, included converting a pair of underutilized spaces into a coffee concept and a speakeasy-style bar, while Bonthala and his team also started plotting a new full-service restaurant concept to replace 12 Baltimore, the property's longstanding three-meal dining establishment.

Though 12 Baltimore scored solid results, thanks to a dedicated team, it was, Bonthala acknowledges, a restaurant created to serve hotel guests first and foremost, but it was lacking any connection to Kansas City and its burgeoning downtown core.

Seeing opportunity—or, more accurately, need—Arbor Lodging teamed with DMK Restaurants, a heralded Chicago-based multi-concept restaurant group led by David Morton and Chef Michael Kornick. In July, they began the process

of re-concepting 12 Baltimore into a destination restaurant more befitting its place inside Hotel Phillips. Hence, Tavernonna Italian Kitchen is slated to open in December.

The ultimate goal, Bonthala explains, is for this new Hotel Phillips restaurant to deliver chef-driven cuisine and Kansas City flavors in a sophisticated, yet unpretentious, setting as relevant for first dates as for family celebrations.

"The restaurant will absolutely be an extension of the hotel's identity," Bonthala says. "We know if there's not thought put into the design, character, and food of the restaurant, then it hurts the overall impression of the hotel, and that's something that cannot happen."

In today's era of foodie culture, social media, and heightened hospitality competition, upscale hotel operators like Arbor Lodging have ditched status quo food and beverage. Hotel restaurants are increasingly concocted as revenue driv-



CHAD CHISHOLM, CREATIONIZE

**HOTEL:** The Broadmoor  
**LOCATION:** Colorado Springs, Colorado  
**FOOD AND BEVERAGE VICE PRESIDENT:** John Johnstone  
**EXECUTIVE CHEF:** Bertrand Bouquin

### 1858

Taking its name from the Gold Rush era, 1858 sits in the shadow of what may be America's most famous mountain peak—Pike's Peak—and at the base of Cheyenne Canyon, where diners can gaze out at steep granite walls and a 181-foot waterfall characterizing Colorado's natural beauty. Meat and produce are sourced from local farmers and ranchers, while many dishes feature French, German, and Creole touches in a nod to the early East Coast miners who ventured to the area more than 150 years ago in search of their fortunes.



THE KIMBERLY HOTEL / EMPIRE STEAK HOUSE & LOUNGE

## Empire Steak House & Lounge

**HOTEL:** The Kimberly  
**LOCATION:** New York City  
**EXECUTIVE CHEF:** Jack Sinanaj

Located blocks from Rockefeller Center, the boutique Kimberly hotel evokes the golden age of nostalgic New York City, while its restaurant, the recently launched Empire Steak House & Lounge, captures the essence of its previous life as a 1920s-era opera house. The completely reconstructed, 10,000-square-foot space features an ornate winding staircase and a cathedral dome ceiling, a grand setting for the fine meats, fresh seafood, and extensive wine list offered by Chef Jack Sinanaj and his fraternal partners, Jeff and Russ Sinanaj.

## DINING EXPERIENCE

ers and marketplace differentiators, becoming dining destinations as eager to connect with the local market as with travelers.

“Hotels no longer find it acceptable to lose, or even break even, on food and beverage. A restaurant has to be something that will drive revenue and traffic, and differentiate a property from its competitive set,” says Steven Kamali, founder of Hospitality House, a top food and beverage consulting company with a client list that includes the likes of Marriott and Lightstone as well as boutique hotel properties across the U.S.

This evolving reality is not lost on John Kolaski, president of the Disruptive Restaurant Group. As a subsidiary of sbe, a leading lifestyle hospitality company that develops, manages, and operates award-winning hotels across the U.S., Kolaski says hotels have little choice but to create—and then execute—winning restaurant concepts.

“In a saturated market, everyone is fighting for the same guest, so offering creative food and beverage is how operators can really show the soul of a brand and capture that initial traffic that can be converted to lifelong, loyal guests,” Kolaski says.

### Hotels Ditch Humdrum Restaurants

For hotel operators, granting the restaurant scene and its food-and-beverage brethren their proper due has been a steady and, frankly, still-ongoing evolution.

Twenty years ago, hotels largely positioned a full-service restaurant as another property amenity, something akin to same-day laundry, concierge service, or a fitness center. Dining was an obligatory service created to accommodate a wide-ranging, diverse demographic of hotel visitors, says Jody Pennette, founder of the Connecticut-based cb5 Hospi-



CAMERON MITCHELL RESTAURANTS

**HOTEL:** Le Méridien  
**LOCATION:**  
Columbus, Ohio  
**EXECUTIVE CHEF:**  
Brian Hinshaw



### The Guild House

Located in the Short North Arts District of Ohio’s capital city, The Guild House bills itself as an artisan eatery, something accomplished with creative American cuisine artistically crafted from seasonal offerings, both regional and global, and a custom gin blend from Columbus’ own Watershed Distillery. The 6,000-square-foot restaurant embraces the local area’s cosmopolitan character with an energetic dining room punctuated by green chandeliers, reclaimed barn-wood beams, and local art.



COURTESY OF THE UMSTEAD HOTEL AND SPA

### Hérons

**HOTEL:** The Umstead Hotel and Spa

**LOCATION:** Cary, North Carolina

**EXECUTIVE CHEF:** Steven Greene

Chef Steven Greene, a 2016 semi-finalist for James Beard Best Chef: Southeast, prepares seasonal menus inspired by the surrounding region of North Carolina’s flourishing Piedmont farms and flora. Many of the restaurant’s ingredients, in fact, arrive from One Oak Farm, which is located less than a mile from Herons’ kitchen. Recently, Chef Greene launched The Umstead Cuvee, an exclusive, custom-blended Pinot Noir designed to complement Heron’s cuisine as well as spotlight the hotel property’s artistic, nature-inspired environment.



## DINING EXPERIENCE

tality Consulting firm, which has developed more than 300 distinctive foodservice concepts for hotels.

Breakfast was about capture, lunchtime about traffic, and dinner, the most difficult daypart for hotels to seize, focused on luring hotel guests back onto the property with the promise of convenience, Pennette explains. But in the process of attempting to cover every base, hotels diluted their offering.

"It's hard to go from Corn Flakes to prime rib," Pennette says, "and the industry wrestled with this because it is not as formulaic as many would like."

In a first attempt to break out, Pennette says, hotel operators turned greater attention to bolder, more dynamic restaurant design. "That was fun," Pennette says, "but it did not necessarily have a purpose and a sincere story behind it."

Thereafter, some hotels turned to celebrity chefs like Gordon Ramsay and Jean-Georges Vongerichten. Though easy to

sell in the boardroom, such restaurants proved much more difficult to execute given how little time many of these culinary heroes could devote to the concept. "You can't hype the consumer. They are too damn aware and comfortable now in their own convictions," Pennette says.

Some hotels also attempted to mimic the hot trend of the day and translate it onto their property. From tapas to sliders, Asian fusion to gourmet burgers, operators pushed concepts that lacked the soul, conviction, and entrepreneurial energy from which these popular trends had blossomed.

"What works well in Seattle, Miami, Dallas, and Vermont is all different—and there is no restaurant concept that works everywhere," Pennette reminds.

More recently, however, hotels seemed to have crafted a more sustainable, strategic plan for their restaurants, exchanging the quest for stars and Yelp reviews in favor of



JOE FLETCHER FOR CSS ARCHITECTURE

### La Toque

**HOTEL:** The Westin Verasa Napa

**LOCATION:** Napa, California

**WINE DIRECTOR:**

Richard Matuszczak

**EXECUTIVE CHEF:** Ken Frank

In the nation's vino epicenter, La Toque makes a grand statement about the important and distinctive synergy between food and wine. Chef Ken Frank, a renowned truffle chef, crafts contemporary French cuisine from the region's bounty of seasonal, fresh produce and organic meats sourced from a network of local purveyors. The food is artfully designed to complement the restaurant's vast wine list, which boasts more than 2,100 bottles and by-the-glass selections from renowned wine regions around the globe.



THE HAY-ADAMS

### The Lafayette

**HOTEL:** The Hay-Adams

**LOCATION:**

Washington, D.C.

**FOOD AND BEVERAGE**

**DIRECTOR:** Paride Guerra

**EXECUTIVE CHEF:**

Nicolas Legret



Across Lafayette Square from the White House, The Lafayette pairs contemporary American cuisine and attentive service in a stately, elegant setting befitting its spot inside the historic Hay-Adams hotel. On any given breakfast, lunch, dinner, or weekend brunch, political powerbrokers and D.C. elite pack The Lafayette. The people-watching is grand, but so, too, are the establishment's house-made soufflés.

## DINING EXPERIENCE

authenticity and market relevance. More than ever, Kamali says, hotels are putting time, energy, and money into the resources and talent that can deliver a restaurant relevant to the local neighborhood and capable of standing on its own legs.

“Because if the restaurant can’t do that, then why does the hotel need it?” Kamali asks.

### Authenticity Upsets Algorithms

Across the country, it’s been a rising tide, with one hotel after another—in one market after another—debuting compelling concepts that are focused on authenticity. “Purity, honesty, and integrity must be present,” Pennette says.

The Grange restaurant at the Citizen Hotel in Sacramento features a daily changing menu based on Northern California foods and wines.

At the Westin in Reston, Virginia, Vinifera eagerly cham-

pions the pleasant marriage between food and wine with seasonal small plates and rare vinos.

At the Marriott in downtown Syracuse, New York, Eleven Waters, a restaurant name that pays homage to the Finger Lakes in upstate New York, is a regional bistro concept pouring area wines from a tap.

This new era of hotel restaurants has transformed the hospitality landscape.

Once upon a time, restaurants were offered as sacrificial lambs, a must-have hotel amenity just because. Later, they became about marketing, and the property owners accepted them, willfully if not begrudgingly, as a loss leader.

Today, however, savvy hotel operators are only thinking of their restaurants as viable revenue producers and traffic drivers—even if hotel leadership might still wince at the volatility a restaurant operation often brings. Meanwhile, trav-



DANIEL KRIEGER

### The NoMad

**HOTEL:** The NoMad Hotel  
**LOCATION:** New York City  
**EXECUTIVE CHEF:** James Kent

Chef Daniel Humm and restaurateur Will Guidara, the forces behind the critically acclaimed, Michelin three-star-rated Eleven Madison Park in New York City, teamed together to launch The NoMad restaurant in 2012. Spread across several dining rooms surrounding a glass-enclosed atrium, diners can enjoy upscale American cuisine with European touches as well as rare vinos and spirits from a nearly 100-page beverage list.



STEVE HALL FOR HEDRICH BLESSING

### Sixteen

**HOTEL:** Trump International Hotel & Tower  
**LOCATION:** Chicago  
**FOOD AND BEVERAGE DIRECTOR:** Morgan Eagles  
**EXECUTIVE CHEF:** Thomas Lents

Located on the 16th floor of the Republican presidential candidate’s namesake Chicago skyscraper, the Michelin two-star-rated Sixteen restaurant showcases a thoughtful approach to modern American cuisine, blending high-quality global ingredients in an effort to introduce new flavor profiles to every guest. Not to be outdone by its celebrated cuisine, the restaurant’s 30-foot, floor-to-ceiling windows provide diners with panoramic views of Lake Michigan, the Chicago River, and Chicago landmarks like the Wrigley Clock Tower.



TRE RIVALI

### Tre Rivali

**HOTEL:** The Kimpton Journeyman Hotel  
**LOCATION:** Milwaukee  
**EXECUTIVE CHEF:** Heather Terhune

The Tre Rivali name, “Three Rivals” in Italian, pays homage to Milwaukee’s three at-odds founders—Solomon Juneau, Byron Kilbourn, and George Walker—but Tre Rivali delivers peace, not war. The new eatery pairs grilled, braised, preserved, and smoked Mediterranean-inspired Modern American cuisine from Chef Heather Terhune. And the restaurant’s inventive beverage program celebrates the Mediterranean coastline’s native spirits, wines, and seasonal cocktails. An adjacent café, meanwhile, offers lighter fare and to-go options.





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elers and locals alike are dining in hotel restaurants or putting a visit to a hotel's rooftop bar at the top of their to-do list.

"The hotel restaurant isn't just about convenience anymore," says Greg Griffie, senior vice president of food and beverage for Crescent Hotels & Resorts, which operates over 100 hotels and resorts in North America, including properties under the Marriott, Hilton, Starwood, Hyatt, and IHG banners. "You have to be authentic, and you have to raise the bar because the days of serving subpar food at hotels have passed us by."

More and more, Pennette sees hotels blending the DNA of their brand into foodservice and focusing on details that resonate. "From the coasters and room service trays to the uniforms," he says.

And perhaps more importantly, hotels—even the large conglomerates—are sincerely investing in the culture and soul of the eatery, something that can put the restaurants on par with high-performing local independents. Leaders are teaching the entire team about the origins of the restaurant's food, which in turn allows staff to share culinary stories built around local goods or sustainable ingredients in an effort to build deeper, richer connections with guests.

"Hotels are finally paying attention to the little things because there are no broad strokes, and they realize the message has to be telegraphed clearly," Pennette says.

It is intense, unending work, Crescent's Griffie acknowledges, but imperative in today's world. "It's never an overnight process," he says, calling the restaurant-building adventure a mix of art and science.

### The Operator's Perspective

While some hotel brands and operators prefer to develop and oversee their own concepts, others are actively recruiting local chefs or restaurateurs to open a restaurant on hotel property, in yet another move to push authenticity and local connections that help a hotel restaurant resonate 365 days a year.

Restaurateurs and chefs, once reluctant to hear such pitches, given the long-

standing stigma of hotel-based restaurants, are now increasingly open to and intrigued by the opportunity to leverage a hotel's inherent advantages, including a captive audience.

"Compared to a free-standing restaurant that has to fight for every single guest coming through the door, it's likely that hotel guests will give a hotel restaurant a chance," Disruptive Restaurant Group's Kolaski says.

Bob's Steak & Chop House president Bill Lenox has found a welcome synergy with the eight units that his brand operates on hotel properties. The 23-year-old chain has a total of 14 units, and with more than half of the portfolio residing in hotels, he says future growth calls for additional units inside Omni Hotels.

"When the Omni Nashville is busy, Bob's is busy, so it makes for a nice combination," says Lenox, who does insist on a separate, street-level entrance for his hotel-based restaurants so that Bob's can maintain its independent vibe.

In addition to a generally captive audience, Kolaski says restaurateurs and chefs exploring a hotel location can also leverage something else: a full hotel team that is dedicated to supporting the restaurant's performance in areas such as marketing, operations, and facilities. "Having another layer of team members in the hotel to support and champion your venue certainly contributes to the likelihood of success," Kolaski says.

There also exists a compelling financial advantage. In most cases, Pennette says, hotels will pay for the restaurant build-out, which allows chefs and restaurateurs to launch a new restaurant without needing to rally significant funds.

Yet hotels also bring their share of challenges. Their restaurants might face limited space as well as requirements to fulfill room service, banquet, or all-day-service obligations, all of which might require culinary and operational leadership to adapt to a different cadence. "In a hotel restaurant, there are a lot of nerve endings to connect and the restaurant operators need to be prepared for this," Pennette says. "Nothing in this business is ever a slam dunk." ■



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BEVERAGE

# Wines with

CHARDONNAY PAIRS BEAUTIFULLY WITH DISHES AT THE CORK & CRAFT RESTAURANT IN SAN DIEGO, WHERE CO-FOUNDER MATT DELOACH SUPPORTS LOCAL WINERIES AS WELL AS MAKES HIS OWN WINE IN THE RESTAURANT'S ABNORMAL WINE COMPANY.

# Local Color

A restaurant doesn't need to reside in California to offer regional wines anymore. Discovering local vinos from surprising terroirs can be an explorative and profitable experience for dedicated operators.

BY KRISTINE HANSEN

**The minute Tyler Sailsbery—chef/owner of The Black Sheep** in Whitewater, Wisconsin—decided to pour local wines, business partnerships started to happen.

Suddenly he was hosting chef dinners six times a year at Staller Estate Winery, one of the wineries whose bottles appear on his list. The winery is in a rural part of Delavan and run by a young couple. In some ways, the partnership was very organic. Black Sheep is a farm-to-table restaurant, and Staller makes wine from estate-grown grapes. "We started off with that (farm-to-table concept) in mind, from day one," says Sailsbery.

Wisconsin isn't the only state where the wine industry is making inroads on restaurant wine lists. Virginia, Texas, Washington, Oregon, North Carolina, New York, and Michigan are among the states where the wines are rising into acclaim.

Sussing through local wines, however, takes considerable amounts of research. Unless in California, distributors might not be as familiar with regional options as they are with those from far-flung wine regions. In preparing to open Black Sheep in 2012, Sailsbery took to the road in the name of research, visiting local wineries and their tasting rooms. After



## BEVERAGE

finding wines he felt were a good match with his cuisine, he inquired about carrying them at the restaurant. Prairie Fumé, a white wine crafted from Seyval Blanc grapes at the Wollersheim Winery in Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin, and popular throughout the state, was added almost immediately. A couple of bottles from Vetro Winery in Jefferson, Wisconsin, are always on the menu. And from

he also shares fliers about the local wineries he supports, for guests who want to learn more. “We’re not necessarily pushing [the wine],” he explains, “but more likely to ask: ‘Did you know this is the top-growing grape in Wisconsin?’” He’s also active in using social media to promote the wines on The Black Sheep’s Twitter and Facebook pages.

Another region that is becoming more

known for their Sauvignon Blanc,” says Petronzio, who first got into wine while working for Red Hook Winery, a journey that’s now come full circle. It was after blind tasting various wines at the winery that Petronzio fell in love with the Sauvignon Blanc. “I was stumped because it was very elegant, very refined. It was much more of an elegant expression of Sauvignon Blanc,” he says.

The Sauvignon Blanc is now served on tap from a keg. “From traveling around, I’ve learned that where wine works best on tap is when it’s local wine from the region,” says Petronzio, alluding to the environmental advantages and sustainable benefits. When local wines are served on tap, the kegs themselves are



OCEANA

Staller, Sailsbery curated a selection of four wines by the glass, plus two bottles. There are imports on the menu, too, but only if they are the best expression of a grape, such as a Malbec from Argentina.

Selling wine by the glass is key to listing local wines, as most diners aren’t familiar with the winery—or the grapes. “It’s harder for us to sell a local wine in that customers are trained to say, ‘I want a Merlot or Chardonnay,’ but Wisconsin doesn’t grow those,” says Sailsbery, who feels Wisconsin wines are sweeter than their domestic counterparts, a factor he takes into consideration when balancing the food.

But Sailsbery wanted to dig deeper into his commitment to regional wines by introducing diners to the winemakers and being able to say, “This is where the wine comes from,” and “This is why they make their wine.” In the restaurant,

**NEW YORK’S FINGER LAKES HAS PROVED TO BE AN EXCELLENT WINE REGION, ACCORDING TO ADAM PETRONZIO, THE WINE DIRECTOR AT OCEANA IN MIDTOWN MANHATTAN. HE ENTERED INTO AN EXCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH RED HOOK WINERY TO PROCURE A SAUVIGNON BLANC MADE SPECIAL FOR OCEANA.**

celebrated for its wine is the North Fork of Long Island, New York. For instance, Adam Petronzio, the wine director at Oceana in the Midtown section of Manhattan, entered into an exclusive partnership with Brooklyn, New York’s Red Hook Winery. A Sauvignon Blanc was made just for Oceana, to pair with its General Tsao’s Lobster, a popular entrée served with spicy sweet and sour sauce, cashews, scallions, and forbidden rice.

Macari Vineyards on the North Fork supplies Sauvignon Blanc fruit to the winery for this particular wine, with Robert Foley and Abe Schoener serving as winemakers—both have made wine in Napa, California. “They’re one of the classic vineyards out there. They’ve been out there for a long time. And they’re

reusable (in close proximity they can be refilled at the winery), paper is not printed for labeling (there is no label), and the cost to ship heavy glass is a non-issue as there are no wine bottles.

New York’s Finger Lakes is also proving to be an excellent wine region, says Petronzio, who sources Damioni’s 2012 “Davis Vineyard” Riesling along with Element Winery’s 2012 Cabernet Franc, which he says “has more of a Northern Rhone style. You’re getting more minerality and complexity in [these] wines,” he adds.

There is an East End South Shore selection on the list, too: Wölffer Estate Vineyard’s 2011 “Grapes of Roth,” which he describes as “a Merlot that’s absolutely beautiful and a very small production.”

## BEVERAGE

To interest diners in these local wines, he's found that offering a free pour is essential. "That allows the visitor and the local resident to actually see what New York has to offer," Petronzio notes. "The easiest way to get over that barrier is to have them try it."

At The Cork & Craft Restaurant in San Diego, California, the definition of local wine is constantly being updated. When Matt DeLoach co-founded the restaurant in 2014, he'd already been making wine as "a bit of a hobby gone crazy," and he wanted to fold that into his busi-

ness plan. Since 2012, he had been making wine and even had a tasting room—called Abnormal Wine Company—in San Diego. From time to time, he hosted pop-up dinners in the tasting room.

Creating a restaurant seemed like the next best step. "We had an opportunity to take over the two spaces next door so we jumped on that," DeLoach says. Grapes are sourced from around the world, and the wine is fermented and aged on site. Four reds and three whites were made this past summer, with plans to expand to 10 wines by year's end.

In addition to selling his own wine, DeLoach is a believer in carrying local wines. Hill Top Winery in Valley Center, California, and Scratch Wines are on the restaurant's wine list. Like Sailsbery at The Black Sheep, he plans to partner with Scratch Wines' winemaker, Sabine Rodems, on a dinner next month. And he's designing a map of nearby Ramona, a community in San Diego County rich with wineries, in an attempt to educate diners about this wine region. "Just up the hill there's a lot going on," he says, "but most people don't know that." ■

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# LESSONS IN LEFTOVERS

Chefs are working toward zero-waste by repurposing food scraps into viable dishes. *By Amanda Baltazar*

**I**n June, five of the top Bay Area chefs collaborated on a “Waste Not, Want Not” dinner, held at The Perennial in San Francisco. Organized by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), the benefit had a two-fold goal: to raise money and to showcase a stellar meal made largely using leftover foods.

The chefs—Dominique Crenn of Atelier Crenn, Nick Balla and Cortney Burns of Bar Tartine, Traci Des Jardins of Jardinière, and Chris Kiyuna of The Perennial—each prepared an appetizer and an entrée, and Chef Kiyuna prepared a dessert.

During the event, the chefs talked to guests about the food and the chefs’ personal philoso-

phies about food waste.

The Perennial, which hosted the event, has only been open since January, but already the restaurant has been very passionate and creative in using food scraps to make other dishes. In fact, the restaurant’s owners, Karen Leibowitz and Anthony Myint, say minimizing food waste speaks to an operation that is “environmentally sustainable.”

Using up leftover food is nothing new, but the practice has largely gone out of favor for convenience. However, following close on the nose-to-tail trend, which encourages using every part of an animal, many chefs are aiming to reduce, or eliminate, waste.



## SUSTAINABILITY

“When restaurants see that food costs aren’t where they should be, the [operator] should realize the restaurant should be using leftovers,” says New York City restaurant consultant Arlene Spiegel. “It makes sense to use leftovers, and if you’re an independent restaurant, you can be creative with waste.”

Beyond food costs, another benefit to using leftovers is that it helps save the planet. On a global scale, a third of the world’s food is lost or wasted, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. This amounts to a whopping 2.8 trillion pounds of grub. Far from detracting customers, the use of leftovers is turn-

ing them on, especially those who take an interest in the future of our planet, a cause that especially appeals to millennials. “It used to be we would hide this, but today if we highlight [using leftovers], it makes us a better restaurant,” says Gregg Rapp, a menu engineer based in Palm Springs, California.



THE PERENNIAL  
FAVA TOAST FROM  
THE PERENNIAL

ing them on, especially those who take an interest in the future of our planet, a cause that especially appeals to millennials.

“It used to be we would hide this, but today if we highlight [using leftovers], it makes us a better restaurant,” says Gregg Rapp, a menu engineer based in Palm Springs, California.

### Meeting the Challenge

“It’s important to stop thinking about things as waste, and [instead] see leftovers as other kinds of ingredients,” says Leibowitz, co-founder of The Perennial. Two of her favorite dishes incorporating leftovers are a fava bean toast and a cauliflower toast, both made using day-old bread.

The former is topped with whole fava beans and underneath is a pesto made

from fava bean shells, chard, and dill. Additionally, the fava beans are cooked in a stock made from leftover cheese rinds so there’s a hint of cheese. “It gives it a depth of flavor, and we’re using the whole fava bean,” she says. For the cauliflower toast, the vegetable’s stems are puréed and served as a bottom layer under roasted and pickled cauliflower. “It’s fun to think about vegetables in the same way as we are looking at animal proteins,” Leibowitz says.

The Perennial even puts its coffee grounds to good use. It steeps them in buttermilk, left over from butter making, then strains the milk, and makes crème fraîche from it. The restaurant

serves this crème fraîche over chicory and peas as an appetizer. “This is a spring dish,” says Leibowitz, “and it has the nuttiness of the coffee and chicory, along with creaminess and the peas.”

Chef Kiyuna, The Perennial’s head chef, gets a kick out of all this creativity. “You’ll have a lot of things that are not a success, and you also need a lot of patience,” he says. “It’s challenging, but it’s an exciting challenge, and it’s really fun when things work out.”

The three Founding Farmers restaurants in and around Washington, D.C., also pride themselves on cross-utilization. “It’s rare when we have something that has a one-time use,” says managing partner Mary Carter. “It’s about making sure your menu has a lot of options for what you’re doing, and being as creative as you can.”

The restaurants use up the rinds of oranges that have been juiced for the bar program to make orange marmalade. They cook the rinds down with different flavors such as vanilla or cranberry. “It took us about a year to get the marmalade base to where we could use it,” Carter says.

Even red velvet cake tops are put to good use. After they’re sliced off—in a process to make the top of the cake even—they are left to dry for about 30 minutes, then crumbled and used with icing to decorate the sides of the cake “and add more chocolatey flavor and texture,” Carter says.

### Powdered Powerhouse

TAG Burger Bar in Denver uses vegetable scraps in its house-made veggie burger. Although the restaurant offers a seasonal menu, chef and owner Troy Guard uses the year-round vegetable scraps such as carrots, tomatoes, celery, and mushroom stems so the product remains consistent. Day-old carbohydrates such as farro, rice, and quinoa bulk out the patty.

Other restaurants in the TAG Restaurant Group also use vegetable scraps in fried rice or ravioli fillings, he says. These are often the more seasonal vegetables and because of this, these “leftover” dishes appear to be timely.

At bubu, Chef Guard’s newest restaurant in Denver, beets, ginger, and carrot are juiced. This leaves a lot of excess fibers, he says. Guard dries these “low and slow in the oven” and makes powders that he adds to pasta doughs for different colors. Or he grinds up the dried vegetables more roughly and sprinkles the product on top of salads, which adds texture, color, flavor, and nutrition.

Chef Aaron Meneghelli oversees the culinary program for The Carneros Inn in Napa, California, which has three restaurants. Carrots are a great example of Meneghelli’s versatility. He uses roasted carrots in many dishes and has several uses for the leftover parts: He juices them and then cooks carrots in the carrot juice to create a carrot sorbet for lobster carpaccio. He ferments leftover pulp from juiced carrots and makes it into a vinegar for vinaigrette, and then there’s

the ubiquitous carrot-top pesto, which he serves over roasted carrots.

This past spring he also made some green garlic powder from leftovers. He dehydrated them in a gas oven that was turned off—so it was 75 to 100 degrees F—for two days, which prevents oxidation and keeps the leaves green. When they were dry and brittle, he ground them up in a spice grinder. He also dries mushroom stems and ramp leaves. All of these powders can be used as seasonings for beef, or folded into aioli or even sprinkled on dishes as a finish.

“It’s terrific to see more chefs starting to use parts of plants we think are unusable, and it exhibits a real level of creativity,” says JoAnne Berkenkamp, senior advocate in NRDC’s food and agriculture program. The NRDC works to educate consumers on food waste. This past spring it launched a Save The Food campaign with the Ad Council, the first national campaign to reduce food waste among consumers. “Often we’re throwing out some of the healthiest parts of the plant so it’s great that they’re pushing the envelope,” she says. “Chefs can be such fantastic catalysts for consumers to think about what’s possible in their kitchens.”

### Desserts Deliver Options

No scraps are too small or inconsequential for Café ArtScience in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the fleur-de-crêpe dessert—with rhubarb granita and cherry honeycomb crunch—which was on the menu this spring, is a great example.

Pastry chef Renae Connolly uses every part of the rhubarb. Before the fruit is steeped to make the granita, she peels its skin and makes a crystallized rhubarb tuile with it to use as a garnish for the dish.

Any other scraps go into purées or jams, or the restaurant’s bar blends them into ice cubes.

Chef Connolly also compresses brunoise-cut rhubarb scraps in a vacuum bag, as well as cucumber done in the same way, then mixes the two together to make a fruit salad garnish for the crêpe dish.

# FOOD WASTE IN AMERICAN RESTAURANTS



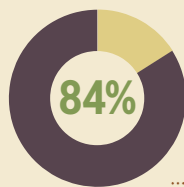
**40%** OF THE U.S. FOOD SUPPLY GOES TO WASTE ANNUALLY.

This number equates to about **\$218 billion** spent in growing, processing, transporting, and disposing of food that is **never eaten**.



The average American eats about **1,996 pounds of food per year**, or about **1.2 pounds per meal**.

That’s **35,070,140 people** who could be fed by just food **waste alone** in this country.



**84 percent** of the food waste generated by surveyed U.S. restaurants ended up in a **landfill**.

Only **1.4 percent** was **donated**, while **14.3 percent** was **recycled**, and most of that was reclaimed as **cooking oil**.



**90 PERCENT** of what restaurants throw out could be **reused or composted**.



Sources: Business for Social Responsibility on behalf of the Food Waste Reduction Alliance, US Foods, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Feeding America, National Restaurant Association



## SUSTAINABILITY

“We use good products, but we want to be aware of our costs and not waste anything,” Connolly says. “We also want to be an experimental restaurant and, over time, we are learning new things. It’s easy to get stuck using things in the same ways, so this pushes you to be creative and to find new techniques.”

For instance, Concord grapes are very versatile, too, she says, and having a centrifuge at the restaurant “allows us to

take things that would be one ingredient and break it into different parts. So I can use a solid and a liquid.” This means zero waste for these local fruits.

Connolly takes fresh grapes, cooks them with a little sugar, and then blends that mixture and strains it through a chinois. She then spins the mixture in the centrifuge to separate it by density. The lighter liquid rises to the top, while the heavier pieces of sediment (mostly

grape skin particles that are used for grape jam, fruit jellies, and in the bar program), sink to the bottom. She uses the lighter liquid from the top to make grape “bubbles” that she serves as a garnish for the peanut butter and jelly dessert. “It’s an explosion of grape when people bite into it and it pops in their mouth,” she explains.

Another pastry chef, Zac Young, at Craveable Hospitality Group in New York City, also has a leftovers policy. “In pastry we end up with a lot of waste from production, from cutting things down, or from things breaking,” he says. “Because [these ingredients] and labor are expensive, we want to make sure we are using all of it.”

Young turns scraps from classic American layer cake into cake pops: He mixes the scraps with frosting and mousse, shapes it all into balls, sticks in a lollipop stick, and dips it in tempered chocolate. Or, he’ll cut it into shapes to use as petit fours, enrobed in chocolate or glazed. “This speaks to cross-utilization,” he says. “We want to be able to use the same thing in different ways.”

Leftover chocolate garnish, or tempered chocolate, is also repurposed. He melts it and makes a ganache, or breaks it up and adds it to cookies and brownies. Even leftover mousse doesn’t go to waste. “You can melt it down and it can go into an ice cream base, or become a filling for hollow truffle shells, or become a liquid center,” Young says. “You don’t want to rewhip it because it changes the texture.”

Using leftovers can be viewed two ways: There are those—hello, millennials—who embrace it and applaud that it’s being done; and others who turn their nose up at the thought of eating mere kitchen scraps.

Founding Farmers does not make a production over using leftovers. “We consider this practice as part of our sustainability,” says Carter. “It was never a question of whether we should or should not. To us, this is standard operating procedure, not something that is above and beyond. I don’t think we should get credit for doing it as much as we should be held accountable for not doing it.” ■



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# The Spirit of In-House Competition

An Applebee's franchisee channels its staff's creativity with a competition designed to boost employee morale and community engagement. **By Linda Formichelli**

**W**hen executives at The Rose Group, a restaurant franchise company in Newtown, Pennsylvania, noticed the staff at their 56 Applebee's restaurants were using the restaurant's ingredients to invent meals of their own during breaks, they decided to channel all that creativity toward a franchise-wide cooking competition.

The Top Apple Chef Competition, which is in its sixth year, is open to all staff in both the front and back of the house, though they see more cooks than servers competing. The first level takes place in each of the restaurants, where the employees and managers vote to determine which staff member will be going on to round two. These store champions go on to the district finals, where one finalist is chosen from each of the eight districts. These finalists then represent their district at the Top Apple Chef Finals Competition.

At the finals, which take place at the Newtown Applebee's, contestants take turns cooking several plates of their creations in the kitchen and then presenting them to the judges. Family, friends, and regulars often attend to watch; once the judges have tasted the food, they share it with the spectators and other contestants. It's like a Food Network program, minus the acerbic judges and crying contestants.

Competitors need more than a great-tasting recipe to become a Top Apple Chef. The judges interview all contestants to learn their motivation, their inspiration, and their cooking experience. Contestants also provide a worksheet with a cost breakdown and a suggested menu price, and they must be able to create the dishes within Applebee's ticket time standard of 14 minutes. Dishes that are quick to prepare and that offer value have an advantage over slower and more expensive recipes.

In addition, contestants are required to use approved products that are already available in the restaurants—no bringing in exotic spices or unusual vegetables. This rule led to a conundrum one year when a contestant created pancake-battered french fries with amped-up ketchup, using batter from the flapjack fundraisers Applebee's allows charities to hold



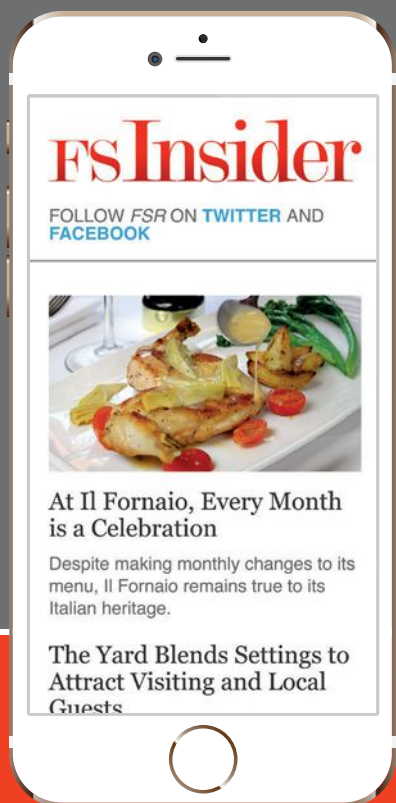
**GRILLED SALMON IS A POPULAR ITEM ON THE APPLEBEE'S MENU, AND MANY CONTESTANTS IN THE TOP APPLE CHEF COMPETITION WERE INSPIRED TO CREATE DISHES USING THE WOOD-FIRED GRILL.**

in its restaurants on weekend mornings. "The fries were phenomenal," says Jeff Warden, CEO of The Rose Group. "There was a long delay because everyone was grabbing fries and the [contestant] had to go back and make more. The question was whether that [entry] was within the rules because we don't serve pancakes ... but we do. So he went on to the next level."

Besides the opportunity to win prizes—all finalists receive a specialty chef knife, a cash prize, and an engraved plaque—a big bonus for the staff is that they get to show off their passion and creativity, and experiment with new techniques and equipment. "We now have the new wood-fired grill, and contestants were motivated to have that to play around with," Warden says. In fact, many of the finalists' entries this year



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involved the grill, including the Butcher's Steak Salad that nabbed the top prize for Manuel "Alex" Castelan of the Wyomissing, Pennsylvania, Applebee's. The wood-fired kebabs that came in second place also made use of the new grills.

All of this fosters a fun, camaraderie-filled atmosphere for Applebee's employees. "There's a lot of activity in



**CONTESTANTS FOR TOP APPLE CHEF ARE REQUIRED TO WORK WITH PRODUCTS ALREADY AVAILABLE IN THE RESTAURANTS, LIKE THE GRILLED STEAK.**

the stores in the 30 to 45 days the process lasts, and much enthusiasm and discussion leading up to the finals competition," Warden says. "Everyone gets involved."

Finalists also get to share their inspiration, personal stories, traditions, and family histories during the questioning phase of the competition, which boosts staff morale even higher. For example, the 2015 winner, Maria Rivera of Aberdeen, Maryland, created chicken enchiladas that blended her mother's recipe with Applebee's ingredients. She told the judges that her mother made this meal with love for her—and Rivera made it with love for the judges and her fellow staff.

You'd think it would be difficult getting corporate on board for something so far beyond what the restaurant usually does, but Warden says Applebee's executives were enthusiastic from the start. In fact, executives including the Applebee's corporate chef and a vice

president, have flown out from the Glendale, California, headquarters to help judge the Top Apple Chef Finals. "They've always been very supportive," says Warden. He adds that there hasn't been a single year when Applebee's corporate executives haven't been represented on the judging panel.

Warden points out that competitions like this are very scalable. The Rose Group does it with 56 restaurants spanning Eastern Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey, and Delaware, so, he says, "It would require different logistics, but Applebee's could possibly roll it out company-wide. I believe it's under consideration."

Applebee's corporate was right to embrace the Top Apple Chef Competition. With the local movement stronger than ever, events like these appeal to the restaurants' local communities. The Rose Group sends out press releases to regional news outlets, which often cover the competition and the winners. For example, when Alex Castelan won the Top Apple Chef title this year for his Butcher's Steak Salad, the news appeared in *The Reading Eagle*, *The Standard-Speaker*, and *Lehigh Valley Live*.

While the winning dishes don't appear on the restaurants' menus, each store, and the judges, receive a bound book that contains all 56 recipes plus the cost breakdowns. "The idea is to provide inspiration for Applebee's. I know it helps inspire them, and I can tell you that similar items have shown up on the menus," Warden says. "With this competition, we prove the point that we don't need to bring in lots of new ingredients."

Instead, all The Rose Group needed was to show its staff that it's OK to improvise. And the results were excitement in the community, pumped-up employees, and fresh new ideas. ■



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**FSR**  
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# Restaurant

# SMARTS

## Going Global

As demand for ethnic cuisines heats up, guests are looking for more authentic global dining experiences. By Jenn Morrison

AVOCADOS FROM MEXICO

BLURRED  
BORDERS 66

DISTINCTLY  
SPICED 70

VIVA  
AVOCADO 72

VENDOR  
RESOURCES 74





EXCITING ETHNIC DISHES ARE BECOMING STAPLES OF MAINSTREAM U.S. CUISINE.

AVOCADOS FROM MEXICO

## Diverse Palates

The increasing diversity of the U.S. creates a surge of global flavors.

It's no secret that international cuisines and fusions are hot among U.S. Millennials, who have a reputation for seeking adventure through new flavors. However, the explosion of global flavors throughout the U.S. is reaching across generations and is further pushed by the country's ever-growing diversity.

Regardless of their generation, people are seeking bold, unique flavors from around the world. Through an expansion of heritage cuisines and increased awareness and availability of regional

global flavors, U.S. restaurants have an opportunity to help diversify guests' palates through distinct regional flavors that are united by seemingly universal flavor trends and fresh ingredients.

Mark Garcia, director of foodservice marketing for **Avocados From Mexico**, says the growing Latino population in the U.S., and especially the substantial portion of Millennials that identify as being of Hispanic descent, is a major driving factor in the demand for Mexican and Latin foods and ingredients. In

addition, this growth is also contributing to the spread of more specific regional Latin and South American foods.

While increasing diversity throughout the country pushes demand for global flavors, Rose Olcese, foodservice marketing manager for **Mission Foods**, says part of what has helped Peruvian food gain particular interest is the overwhelming diversity of flavors already found within that category.

"The great thing about Peruvian food



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## RESTAURANT SMARTS GLOBAL FLAVORS

is there are a lot of influences from different ethnic groups in Peru,” Olcese says. “So there are twists on Italian, [such as with] *tallarines verdes*, which is basically spaghetti with a creamy pesto sauce. There’s another dish called *lomo saltado*, which is a stir-fried beef dish that Peruvians adopted from Japanese and Chinese immigrants.”

While diversity in the U.S. is opening more opportunities to incorporate global flavors, the diversity within each global food category creates limitless opportunities for blending cultures and cuisines.

### Clean Labels, Global Dishes

The growth in global cuisines is also fundamentally tied to the surge in demand for healthy foods and fresh ingredients with a perception of many ethnic cuisines pulling from fresh ingredients for bold flavor and greater authenticity.

“The word ‘fresh’ in foodservice has been almost a guiding lamp for more than a decade,” says Trip Kadey, corporate chef for **French’s Foodservice**. “It’s just become more and more impor-

tant. The definition of fresh has gone from not frozen, not dried, or not canned, to made freshly in front of you. That’s why so many [restaurants] are incorporating global flavors. When they hear and smell the sizzle and see the fresh herbs and fresh citrus go in [the dish], it seems to go hand in hand.”

The demand and awareness of both global foods and clean labels are skyrocketing, which is especially driving the growing American interest in Mediterranean diets.

“In a study last year ... the National Restaurant Association found Mediterranean to be the most common ethnic cuisine with consumers beyond the big three of Mexican, Italian, and Chinese, and the one that has shown the strongest popularity gains in terms of consumption frequency over the last six years,” says Catherine Porter, foodservice marketing director for **Grecian Delight**.

Despite common images of Italian food in the U.S. as heavy, carb-loaded plates, Holly Henman, foodservice marketing manager for **Barilla America**,

says Italian food’s popularity has also grown with movement toward healthy eating in association with Mediterranean foods and cooking styles.

Now with consumers depending heavily on the media for their food information more than ever, Porter says the media are a major catalyst in the increased demand for Mediterranean cuisines.

“With [the] advent [of] everything social, mobile, and digital, we have access to things we didn’t before, so we are looking for those chefs and restaurants that have a [point of view] on their cooking or sourcing philosophy,” Garcia says. “We can easily go to those restaurants’ websites and look for their ingredients.”

### The Meat of It

As Peruvian, Korean, and North African flavors especially continue to grow in popularity, the proteins typically included in these global dishes are changing the way Americans are consuming meat, says Catherine Golding, foodservice business development man-



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REGIONALLY FOCUSED DISHES ARE GROWING IN POPULARITY ALONG WITH DISHES THAT CROSS ETHNIC BARRIERS.

THE GROWING POPULARITY OF MEDITERRANEAN FOOD DRIVES INCREASING INTEREST IN GREEK CUISINE.



GREGAN DELIGHT

ager for **Meat & Livestock Australia**, North America.

“The bold, earthy, and often spicy flavor profiles of these cuisines are a great match with the grass-fed beef and lamb we bring into the U.S. market and often feature authentic preparations for our meats that pair beautifully with the flavors guests are looking for,” Golding says.

Across different global cuisines, she says, meat consumption is balanced by being incorporated into more dishes but in smaller quantities.

“In many of the growing ethnic cuisines, meats are used in smaller portions but integrated in the dish, [such as in] noodle bowls, pasta dishes, or tacos,” Golding says. “This makes it easier for Americans to focus on the quality of the meats they are eating and often the values behind them, like grass-fed or antibiotic-free.”

### Zooming In

Of course interest in global flavors is not new in the U.S., as evident in the widespread popularity of American adaptations of Greek, Italian, Chinese, and Mexican foods. However, as people are branching out of their culinary comfort zones, they are also becoming more aware of regional distinctions.

“There’s this almost hyper-focus

toward regionality,” says Tom Baumann, foodservice brand manager for **Lite-house**. “It’s the next level down to a subcategory of these monster cuisines.”

Kadey says that while Asian, Latin, and Italian cuisines are maintaining momentum in the U.S., these categories have diverged into more specific areas that are quickly gaining popularity, from Thai or Korean to North African or Sicilian.

As people in the U.S. are beginning to explore the regional differences between Italian cuisines, they are shifting away from their previous perceptions of Americanized Italian dishes as ordinary comfort food to open opportunity for a fresh experience.

“While [Tuscan cuisine] has been out there for a while, Northern Italian regions, like Veneto and Trentino, or Southern Italian, like Puglia and Sardinia, are ripe for exploration,” Henman says.

### The Boom in Mash-Ups

Beyond simply replicating these global dishes, chefs are also finding harmonies between flavors from around the world and creating an overwhelming demand for these fusions.

Global twists on tacos are one of the most prevalent ways that chefs are mixing ethnic flavors and ingredients, and

the tortilla itself presents a versatile foundation to be used for any global dish.

“[Mission] always operated that these [ethnic] cuisines are very fluid and can pull different flavors from different global cuisines,” Olcese says.

Kadey says he is constantly seeing global fusions in sauces and condiments and practicing it himself, such as in adding Asian influences to the Cattlemen’s Kansas City Classic Barbecue Sauce.

“I’ll add fresh pineapple juice, a low sodium soy sauce, a little sesame oil, and maybe even some fresh ginger, and all of a sudden you’ve got a beautiful Asian fusion barbecue sauce,” Kadey says. “We’re seeing a lot of that [experimentation] with our sauces.”

Kadey says he is also seeing Frank’s Red Hot Rajili, a sweet Asian sauce composed of tomato, garlic, and ginger, appear across menus of different types of cuisines.

“We’re seeing [Rajili] pop up on menus either straight as a sauce ... or someone will thin it with some mango juice, pineapple juice, or coconut milk and use it as a glaze,” Kadey says. “I’ve even used it with some fire-roasted tomatoes and fresh cilantro, and it kind of takes on a South American appeal.”

Even without intent to blur the lines, different global cuisines continue to incorporate similar styles, concepts, and ingredients that can help chefs innovate seamless fusions or simply draw appeal and a notion of familiarity in a foreign dish.

“Even though all of these countries’ cuisines and ingredients are indigenous to those areas, I’m always surprised to see how many other cuisines incorporate those same ingredients or styles,” Garcia says. “When we explore or travel to those areas, you do see that fusion of ingredients similar to other cuisines. So while we’re different, we’re also very similar.”

While acknowledging distinct variations, discovering similarities between ingredients and concepts of different global cuisines allows chefs to attract guests who seek new flavors but with an element of comfort. ■



# The Zest for Spice

Americans are looking to heat up the plate with a new variety of global flavors.



CONSUMER DEMAND FOR BOLD, FLAVORFUL DISHES CONTINUES TO GROW.

To spice up a global menu, many chefs are taking a history lesson.

Ancient herbs and spices, including thyme, parsley, lavender, rosemary, and even mustard, are popping up more in restaurant kitchens to enrich the flavors of globally inspired dishes by pulling from flavors that have long been used across different cuisines.

“The mustard seed is one of the oldest spices in the world and has been used in multiple cuisines for centuries,” says Trip Kadey, corporate chef for **French’s Foodservice**.

By looking back to the roots of the flavors, the incorporation of different

spices and herbs into an ethnic dish can bridge gaps between cuisines and cultures for a timeless and universal appeal.

## Pass the Salt

Global dishes may range from purely authentic to simply incorporating a dash of a foreign flavor, but the appropriate seasonings can elevate a dish on either end of this spectrum.

Through enhancing the flavor or adding texture, seasonings can help maintain the integrity of the global cuisine’s fundamental flavors, but it can also be an opportunity for a chef to add personal flair with an original interpretation.

“Using sea salt in creative ways, such as rimming the glass for a specialty cocktail or topping a unique dessert, engages diners and enhances the global experience by ensuring that all aspects of a meal, even the tiniest of details, like a drink rim, contribute to those flavors and pay tribute to the inspiration of the dish or dishes with a distinct, modern twist,” says Megan O’Keefe, media relations manager for **SaltWorks**.

However, selecting the seasonings isn’t solely in the hands of the chef. By thinking about how bartenders and the guests use seasonings, the global flavors become a part of the dining experience.





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“More full-service restaurants are upgrading and expanding their salt selections to explore and bolster thematic, global, and fusion flavors,” O’Keefe says. “Sea salt can be utilized in every facet of a restaurant, from in the kitchen, to behind the bar, or on the tables.”

By empowering the guests to add flavor to their own liking, they become active participants in their global tasting experience. O’Keefe suggests salt flights invite this flavor experimentation.

“Salt flights are a unique way for chefs and restaurants to offer diners an opportunity to explore and experience the culture of a cuisine,” O’Keefe says. “Whether set out on a table or crafted to accompany specific dishes, a flight is an interactive way for diners to engage and experiment with global flavors.”

**Pepper Craze**

The spices in a dish also elevate the complexity and variety of ethnic dishes. With Mexican and Latin cuisines, this flavor boom is especially clear in the incorporation of different peppers.

“There’s a whole host of Mexican chilies, and people in the U.S. are becoming more familiar with not just something that’s hot and spicy, but what type of pepper is being used in the cuisine,” says Rose Olcese, foodservice marketing manager for **Mission Foods**. “It’s not just jalapeños anymore.”

This variety in spices extends to many other ethnic cuisines, adding importance to the distinct flavor profiles associated with certain spices.

“[Spice] is getting more dialed in, so it’s not just heat but specific types of

heat,” says Tom Baumann, foodservice brand manager for **Litehouse**. “Beyond jalapeño, it’s chipotle, habanero, [and] poblano, so there’s a wide variety of heat being developed into menus.”

The focus on specific spices also adds to the authenticity consumers are seeking through these regional ethnic cuisines.

“Calabrian chilies are a great example,” says Holly Henman, foodservice marketing manager for **Barilla America**. “They fit with Americans’ love for spicy foods, [but they] bring that authentic, regional story to the plate as well.”

Adding heat aligns with the demand for adventurous eating through global flavors, but pulling out those specific spices and flavor profiles creates an authenticity more guests crave. ■

## Green With Versatility

With momentum toward fresh and natural ingredient decks, there’s one healthy halo item that’s become overwhelmingly popular across global cuisines: the avocado.

Mark Garcia, director of foodservice marketing for **Avocados From Mexico**, says demand for avocados is continuously rising, not only as a fresh ingredient staple in Mexican and Latin foods, but also as a key component of many Asian cuisines, including an increased use of avocados in Indian and Pakistani restaurants.

“Instead of having a mango lassi, [Indian restaurants will] have a cucumber avocado lassi,” Garcia says. “Or they’ll use avocados as a component of the dish or as a topping.”

However, lassis, traditional yogurt-based drinks in Indian cuisine, are not unique to incorporating avocados outside of the entree.



AVOCADO FINDS A HOME IN UNEXPECTED PLACES.

Avocados are dominating across menu categories year-round, in beverages, appetizers, and desserts, but also across cultures as a common thread between different global cuisines.

“With all the emerging global flavors and intriguing ingredients that are showing up in American restaurants, I think that for the customers, as well as the chefs, it’s kind of a perfect storm,” Garcia says. “They’re realizing the avocado’s versatility and how well it plays out on so many different menu ideas and applications far beyond just slicing it, dicing it, or making guacamole with it. When the chefs really dive into the food culture, and they see on that journey that avocados were really part of the cuisine, it just makes it even more fun because they have a great, authentic story to tell about the ingredients, as well as the culture of the menu.”

With a growing awareness and desire for ingredients, like the avocado, that are true to a culture’s cuisine, consumers are seeking authentic storytelling with a healthy appeal.





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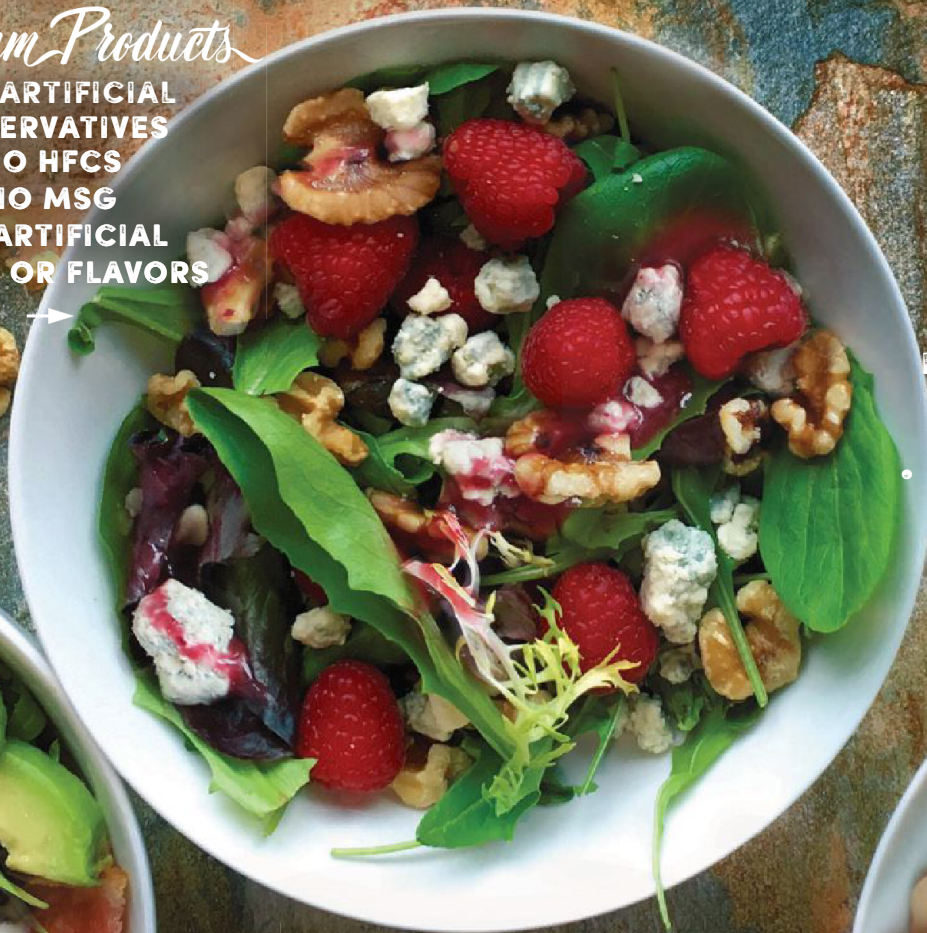
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## Forecast of Cloud Coverage

It's a concern that keeps multi-unit operators awake at night. When an established restaurant makes the leap from one location to many, trying to maintain a certain standard across state lines can be a dicey challenge. Traditionally, restaurant owners have relied on audits to stay informed. However, the pen and paper model can be subjective, outdated, and oftentimes better suited for a shredder than a staff meeting.

Ryan Vann, the executive vice president of operations and services at Last Call, a three-concept restaurant group that has more than 80 units, explains the problem from the ground. Even if an auditor completes his assessment of a specific store, scans it, uploads it, and sends it in, he notes, how would an employee at the corporate office really absorb the information? In an industry where time is fleeting, trying to sort through hundreds of hand-written audits is essentially unrealistic. And spotting real issues and trends from a mountain of paperwork is equally foolhardy.

"When I joined the company, all of our auditing, from facilities to operations to cleanliness and organization, to food and beverage specs to how we handle our finances, was only done with pencil and paper and then either just left at the store or scanned and emailed to somebody out there who never got it," Vann says.

For the past year, Last Call has turned to the HappyCo platform for its 48 Fox & Hound Sports Taverns, 10 Bailey's Sports Grilles, and 22 Champps Kitchen + Bar locations.



**THANKS TO DIGITALIZED AUDITS, LAST CALL DISCOVERED SOME OF ITS RESTAURANTS WEREN'T GIVING GUESTS A BEER LIST WHEN THEY WERE SEATED—A COMPANY POLICY.**

HappyCo's Happy Inspector mobile app and Happy BI (Business Intelligence) platform automates a restaurant's audit and inspection process. The information is collected on mobile devices and uploaded to the Cloud, where Vann or

anyone from the Last Call team can quickly pull up a location and access the digitalized notes. The BI program arranges it so Vann can see, from a global perspective, what the company averages are on every single question posed in its



	PAGE
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<b>Harbortouch</b> . . . . .	10
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<b>Kraft Frozen</b> . . . . .	5
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<b>Lactalis Culinary</b> . . . . .	26, 27
1-877-LACTALIS www.LactalisCulinary.com/FetaRecipes	
<b>Litehouse</b> . . . . .	73
800-669-3169 www.lighthousefoodservice.com	
<b>Marukan</b> . . . . .	67
562-630-6060 www.Marukan-USA.com	
<b>Meat &amp; Livestock Australia</b> . . . . .	60
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<b>Manitowoc Foodservice Group</b> . . . . .	55
800-627-4460 www.mtwfusa.com	
<b>National Pork Board</b> . . . . .	3
800-456-7675 www.PorkFoodservice.org	
<b>Red Gold</b> . . . . .	28
866-729-7187 www.SacramentoTomatoJuice.com	
<b>S&amp;D Coffee, Inc.</b> . . . . .	35
800-933-2210 www.sdspecialtycoffee.com	
<b>SaltWorks, Inc.</b> . . . . .	29, 71
800-353-7258 www.seasalt.com	
<b>ServSafe</b> . . . . .	64
www.ServSafe.com	
<b>Shortening Shuttle</b> . . . . .	77
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<b>Simplot Sidewinders</b> . . . . .	21
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<b>Smithfield Farmland Foodservice</b> . . . . .	31
888-327-6526 www.SmithfieldFarmlandFoodservice.com	
<b>Smucker's Foodservice</b> . . . . .	19, 36
800-756-4357 www.smuckerfoodservice.com	
<b>TUUCI</b> . . . . .	63
305-634-5116 www.tuuci.com	
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customizable audits. “Based on that, we can rally around the opportunity as a brand and make an impact very fast,” he says.

Since deploying, the group’s internal shopper score is up from 85 to 91 percent, the cleanliness rating has jumped from 91 to 94 percent, according to a third-party certifier, and guest complaints have dropped from 1.7 to 0.8 per location.

One of the main reasons for this progress might seem simple, but it was a mythical concept pre-HappyCo. With the mobile technology, auditors can take and upload photos to go along with their report, giving Vann some tangible proof of the claims. “It’s like you were there yourself,” he notes. “You can’t argue a picture.”

He can see just how clean a location’s bathroom truly is. Or, and this is where he says he’s noticed the biggest impact, Vann can observe food and beverage specs to check if dishes are being prepared, plated, and presented consistently across locations.

“Flat out, our brands were serving the wrong ingredients, wrong specs, it wasn’t plated correctly, and drinks weren’t in the right glass,” Vann recalls. “We were able to fix that right away.”

He also noticed that some units weren’t handing guests a beer menu when they sat down, which is company policy. “At the Fox & Hound brand, we also weren’t having enough hosts on, being at the front door greeting people,” Vann adds. “We were able to address and attack that, and get a host on the schedule from open to close, with somebody at the front door greeting folks.”

“The first two quarters that we did the internal audit with our services, our scores were about 50 percent,” he continues. “And this past quarter, the same person, doing the same audit, we’re in the low to mid 70s. So there’s been really good improvement with the audit as well from an operational and cultural stance.”

Vann says their full operational audit “probably has more than 250 questions,” and the HappyCo platform allows him to find the bottom 20 things that were

missing on each audit at every unit. There's also hardly any training involved. "It's self-explanatory," he says. "We have a director of training who made a training audit for the regional training managers to go audit training stores, there's nothing to it. Cleanliness and organization have improved tremendously."

Vann says the group is also witnessing a financial boost. "We've saved an incredible amount of capital on things that would have broke if we hadn't done these audits," Vann explains. "Things that we caught in time and said, 'Hey, we better do something with these now.' In addition to that, our food and drink quality has gone up tremendously."

Jindou Lee, the CEO of HappyCo, started the company for property managers to aid in inspections. He was investing in real estate and found that it was difficult to retain deposits without having effectively recorded data.

"And what we found going through that process was that it wasn't just property managers that were having that issue," Lee says. "It was virtually any business that is a multi-side or multi-location operation. Everyone was using pen and paper. And it just blew my mind, and those happened to be my assets. But imagine if you were looking at millions and billions of dollars of assets."

The company started in 2012 and expanded to include other industries, such as restaurants, in 2015. Lee says the company is continuing to evolve to meet the foodservice sector's needs. For example, one upcoming module will include work orders. The current software runs on any platform, from iPhone to Android and web-based systems.

"What we essentially did was to help replace [pen and paper] with our technology so all of that data could be collected in real time," Lee says. "Organizations can leverage that data in no time to make key decisions around the business." ■

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# Mexican Brand Makes its Global Move

For the past three decades, Consolidated Restaurant Operations (CRO) has worked to expand Cantina Laredo, its Texas-based, modern Mexican brand, across the world. CRO currently operates 39 of the upscale restaurants, but significant expansion plans for the brand lie on the horizon.

This year, Cantina Laredo leadership shifted its focus from company-owned stores to franchising, an opportunity CEO John Harkey says is compelling to restaurant owners and operators. "It's an exciting time for the brand," Harkey says. "We are pivoting into franchising and believe there are opportunities in the U.S. and all across the world."

There are currently 38 total locations globally. Twenty-six are company-operated and 12 franchised, Harkey reports.

Most recently, the brand signed agreements to open three locations in Qatar's capital city of Doha. The group Al Amthal Hospitality, an affiliate of Real Estate Services Group that specializes in hospitality development across Qatar, is Cantina Laredo's newest franchisee. Plans exist for three Cantina Laredos in Doha, with the first location scheduled to open later this year. Al Amthal Hospitality will open this unit in a multi-use urban environment where there will be restaurants, office spaces, and residential units.

The genesis of Cantina Laredo in Qatar follows other successful Middle Eastern locations in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. There are still active units in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Riyadh, and elsewhere in Saudi Arabia.

"The contemporary flavors of Mexico



**CANTINA LAREDO'S MENU, WHICH FEATURES CLASSIC MEXICAN DISHES LIKE THESE TACOS DE PESCADO, APPEALS TO DINERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST.**

for which Cantina Laredo is known will be a welcomed addition to the restaurant environment in Qatar," Al Amthal Hospitality CEO Ali Taimour says.

Harkey agrees with Taimour's assessment. "Mexican food resonates very well with the Middle Eastern diners," he notes. The restaurant's fare includes proteins and wraps that parallel traditional Middle Eastern dining palates. The transition to the region felt natural and logical.

"We're very active in the region," Harkey says. "The brand has been accepted very well." Evidence supports his observation: Just before the Qatar locations were announced, CRO signed for 10 new locations in Istanbul, Turkey. Construction for a new restaurant is also under-

way in Cairo, Egypt.

Cantina Laredo leadership has plans to add more franchisees in the future. Harkey says ideal candidates would already have significant restaurant expertise.

"We're really making a concerted effort to push franchising," Harkey says. The company recently hired a full-time director of franchising and signed seven new franchised locations just in the past few months.

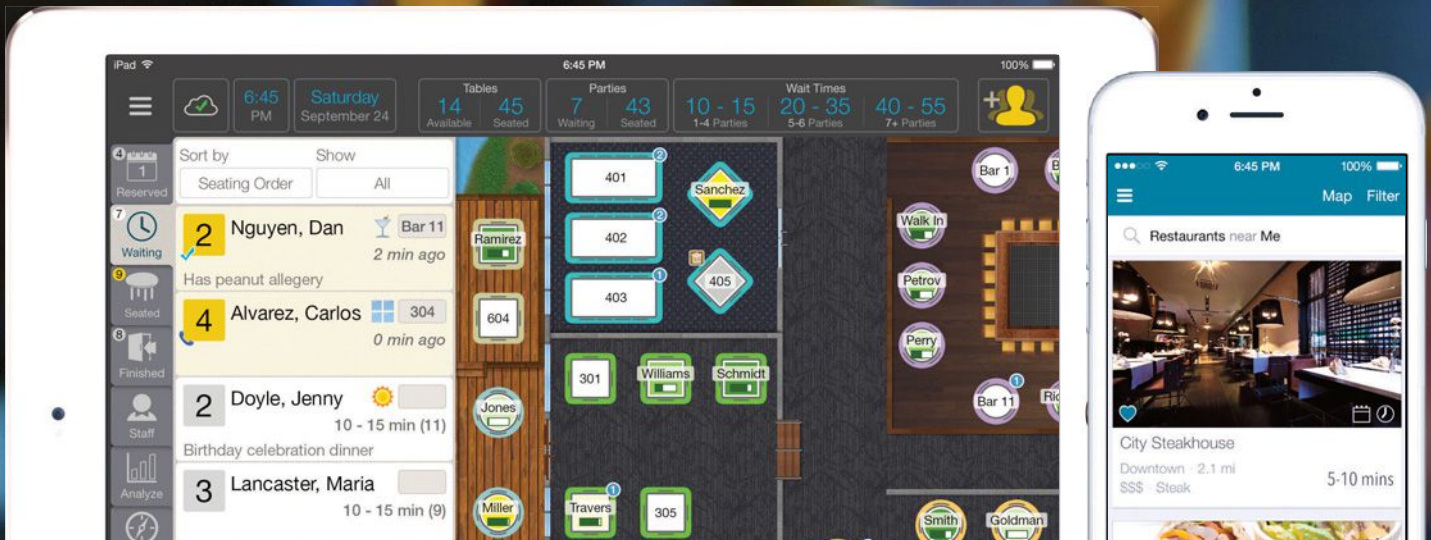
Cantina Laredo leadership is currently engaged in conversations in Asia, India, China, Korea, and Taiwan. Harkey intends to open 200 new Cantina Laredo locations within the next five years.

CRO attributes the brand's success to open-mindedness. When asked how he finds leads for new restaurant locations, Harkey says the answer is much simpler than one might think. "Well, we answer our telephone when the telephone rings."

The Qatar partnership evolved out of one such phone call. Taimour's Al Amthal Hospitality impressed Harkey and his team with its professionalism, existing resources, and well-established hospitality and restaurant industry expertise.

CRO hopes Al Amthal Hospitality will experience success with its Cantina Laredo ventures and will feel encouraged to build even more locations in the region beyond the initial three restaurants in Doha.

Founded in 1984 in Addison, Texas, Cantina Laredo provides guests with an upscale-dining atmosphere to experience a blend of authentic and modern Mexican cuisines. In addition to Cantina Laredo, CRO restaurant brands include Black Oak Grill, Cool River Café, El Chico, Silver Fox, Good Eats, Lucky's, and III Forks. ■



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## Chefs Who Share

**T**he NoMad hotel in the heart of New York City has roughly 100 kitchen employees, including line cooks, 15 sous chefs, and managers at different kitchen levels. The NoMad's executive chef, James Kent, and chef de cuisine, Brian Lockwood, talk about opportunities to challenge and inspire young chefs in their restaurant settings and in competitions. Chef Kent competed in the Bocuse d'Or in 2011, placing tenth in the world, and Chef Lockwood is an advisor for Team USA, for the 2017 Bocuse d'Or.

### For young chefs, is working in the hotel different than other restaurant settings?

**CHEF KENT:** At The NoMad, we have an opportunity to bring in people at many levels. We have a bar where someone who is a little greener can work with one of our sous chefs. We have a private dining room on the roof, run by a sous chef, and we normally have two or three cooks up there. And we have our proper restaurant, where the dinner kitchen is, and where the stronger cooks gravitate. We can bring people in at different levels and watch them grow. We have a lot of young cooks who end up doing well.

One of those young protégés who's doing extremely well is Vincenzo Loseto, a line cook at The NoMad who—along with Daniel Garcia, another NoMad cook who served as his Commis—won the Young Chef Competition. Winning that competition earned them the opportunity to stagier with Team USA in the



CHEF JAMES KENT



CHEF BRIAN LOCKWOOD

CHRISTOPHER VILLANO / THE NOMAD HOTEL

Bocuse d'Or in Lyon, France, in January.

### Did Vincenzo ask to compete or did you select him?

**CHEF LOCKWOOD:** He came to us, so of course we helped him. It was the same when I said I wanted to compete, James helped me get to the finish line.

**CHEF KENT:** The whole staff can benefit when one of the team is competing. Brian was training here at The NoMad for months leading up to the competition for Team USA, and it really inspired everyone in the building. People were coming in early to help and to watch.

Vinnie is also an incredible young cook. He and Danny worked really hard, and did very well. Now, Vinnie is completing a stagier at Noma [in Copenhagen, Denmark]. He won a ment'or scholarship grant to travel and stagier, so he's been at Noma for the past 10 weeks.

### When he finishes that stagier will he come back to The NoMad?

**CHEF LOCKWOOD:** Part of winning the Young Chef competition means he gets to work with Team USA leading up

to the Bocuse d'Or, so when he comes back from Noma he'll spend a few weeks here with us, and then go to Napa to help Team USA. He'll go to Lyon with them and then come back to The NoMad.

### You are very active in the ment'or organization and even host dinners at The NoMad with chefs from around the country. What are the benefits of hosting chef dinners?

**CHEF KENT:** Fund-raising is clearly part of it, but it's also a great opportunity for our team at The NoMad to get to work with amazing chefs. I always love cooking with my friends in their restaurants or at food and wine events. If my cooks can spend time with these chefs, learn from them, and create relationships, that's the most important aspect.

### How do you find people who have ambition, an eagerness to learn, and a willingness to be mentored?

**CHEF LOCKWOOD:** That's part of the criteria we look for and part of our culture. We're all still curious and want to learn. I know I am and Chef is, and we all want to learn from the people around us. ■

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# SOUP FOR THE OPERATOR'S SOUL



Caribbean Jerk Style Chicken  
#78001220

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MADE FOR YOUR WORLD.™



# DRY AGED CHERRYWOOD SMOKED BACON

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Everyone loves bacon. But not every bacon lives up to the promise of tantalizing flavor people obsess over. Jones lives up to the promise.

We cure our bacon with a 100-year-old family recipe, using a traditional or all-natural process. Then, we smoke it with real Cherrywood before doing something no one else does: We **dry age** it.

Our original dry aging process can take weeks, but the result is worth it—an authentic, subtly sweet and smoky flavor that you can proudly feature on your menu and your burgers.

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[JonesBaconBeerBurger.com](http://JonesBaconBeerBurger.com)

to get the recipe for our  
Dry Aged Cherrywood  
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