

FOR THE LOVE OF FOOD



CHEF RICK HALBERG

Wilderness weekend spent hunting morels

Every year at this time, my wife, Karen, our kids, Emily and Andy, and I pack up our car and drive to Wilderness State Park at the farthest northern point in the Lower Peninsula for a weekend in the woods. Well, almost every year. We started this spring tradition 15 years ago when the kids were 1 and 4. I must say it was always a hassle packing for the trip. Karen would start a week early. Not only did we have to take the normal things for the little ones, but we had to pack all of our bedding and kitchen gear too. Karen teaches in Farmington Hills so we can't leave until after school Friday, which means we don't arrive until after dark. After an hour of setting up the cabin and getting some snacks we are ready to unwind. The cabins are really out there and have no electricity or running water.

Rustic cabin

Wilderness is one of the few Michigan State Parks where you can rent rustic cabins. It's the kind of place where you can really get away from the noise and crowds of the city. The cabins are equipped with bunk beds, a wood stove, and a great supply of usually wet wood. That's about it! Oh, and last I forget, a very clean out house.

Over the years packing got lighter and more organized. Karen perfected our list to include just the right stuff. Of course, being a chef I had to become the master of one pot meals. I had to out of necessity because we only had a two-burner Coleman stove. We kept hot water on one of the burners and never had enough room in the car for a lot of cooking gear.

We choose the same weekend each year for one major reason: morel mushrooms! Every year we spend hours walking back woods trails looking for those prized Michigan treats. There is something so exciting about finding food out in the wild, and Michigan morels are among the most prized of wild foods to be found in our locale. Morels have a certain distinct character and texture that makes them so unique. Something peculiarly nutty, sweet and woody. And morels can be prepared very simply to bring out their natural goodness.



Determination

As Andy and Emily grow so did their determination to find the first morel. It seemed as if we walked all day, and the only thing we saw was the ground. And I must say the very tip of the Lower Peninsula is a beautiful place. We were all obsessed. I think the first year we probably found only two morels, some years we didn't find any. We never found what we were looking for, never even found more than one or two in one place. One year as we were walking along the main road, back to the car, in a nasty, cold mist, Andy found a string of morels on the gravel. But when I say they were tiny you must imagine mushrooms the size of a pencil eraser. That was really exciting, although they were too small to eat. It took me a couple of years to learn that we weren't really looking in a good area for morels. But you know it never really mattered. The mushrooms we

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LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Recipe to share
- Cheers for Beer

OCC's Culinary Team



Teamwork: Members of Oakland Community College's Culinary Team, Jennifer Maslocha (left to right) chef/instructor/team manager, Kevin Enright, team coach, John Telfer and Neil Magbanua present Pesto Ricotta Gnocchi with Fresh Tomato Sauce and Shallot Cream.

Students learn teamwork
main ingredient of success

There were a lot of sleepless nights, and the schedule was brutal, but hard work paid off for Oakland Community College's Culinary Team, which placed sixth out of 17 teams in the American Culinary Federation's Junior Team Central Regional Competition in Chicago.

The students competed against teams from 16 states including Illinois, Texas and Kansas. They had 1-1/2 hours to prepare and serve a four-course dinner and took a one hour knife skills test. Judges compared what the team did to what they said they would do.

Team members shared ideas and designed a menu, which reflects their collaboration of different ethnic backgrounds. Salmon Martini has an Asian flair. Pesto Ricotta Gnocchi, Italian; Roasted Rack of Lamb, Mediterranean; and Molten Chocolate Cake, American.

"We learned time management skills and how to work with others," said team captain Matthew Misener of Oxford. "A lot of hard work went into the competition. We spent a lot of time researching and reading to develop the menu."

Prior to competing in Chicago, team members competed individually in culinary contests held in Columbus and Indianapolis to work on their timing and get feedback from judges.

"This is different from cooking in a real restaurant," said team member Neil Magbanua. "It's classic textbook, there's some one standing over you to make sure it's done right."

Chef/instructor/team manager Kevin Enright said this competition mirrors the business. "Students plan the menu, and they only have so much time to execute it," he said. "If you don't finish things, it doesn't matter how good your plan is. Working together as a team, getting to be a better cook, and putting yourself out is more important than winning a medal."

The team was formed after try-outs in November. "They made a dish out of one chicken with a vegetable and starch and had to demonstrate knife skills," said Enright. Practice was 6:30 a.m. to noon every Friday from December to April with additional practices just before the competitions. "I work Thursday nights, and it wasn't easy to get to school at 6:30 a.m.," said Magbanua. "You have to be dedicated. I

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Slip, Swirl, Savor Fine Wines

WHAT: Third annual Great Lakes - Great Wine Walk Around Tasting.

When: 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 3.

WHERE: Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge Campus, J-Building, third floor, Orchard Lake Road (at I-696), Farmington Hills.

TICKETS: \$40 per person, call (248) 474-3400. Proceeds benefit scholarships for OCC Culinary Arts and Management students.

Oakland Community College
Culinary Team 1998

TEAM MANAGER: Chef/instructor Kevin Enright.

TEAM COACH: John Telfer, OCC Apprentice Program graduate, pastry chef at Steve & Rocky's in Novi.

TEAM CAPTAIN: Matthew Misener

TEAM MEMBERS: Neil Magbanua, Jennifer Maslocha, Jennifer Hughes, Kevin Peasgood, and Spiro Diakovskilou.

Telling a little about a lot, some new, some not

WE SELECT

PICK OF THE PACK: 1996 Clos du Bois Flintwood Chardonnay \$18 tastes better than most at half the price! Aromas jump from the bottle once the cork is pulled and the excellence of this wine is savored through the last drop.

IN THE TASTING: We picked the Clos du Bois number one, right on the heels was Gallo Sonoma Stefano Vineyard Chardonnay \$16.

HAIL THESE CABS: 1994 Gallo Sonoma Cabernet Sauvignon, Frei Ranch \$18 and 1995 Mount Vender Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley \$30.

BEST BUY WHITES, \$10 AND UNDER: 1997 Canyon Road Sauvignon Blanc \$7; 1996 Chateau St. Jean Fume Blanc \$9; 1996 Bonville Chardonnay \$9; 1996 Napa Ridge Chardonnay \$9; and 1997 Rosemount Chardonnay \$10. But for a couple of dollars more, 1996 R.H. Phillips Toasted Head Chardonnay is the real value!

BY ELEANOR & RAY HEALD
SPECIAL WRITERS

New wines and spirits pop up with regularity. We frequently tend to react to what's new, rather than to some of the best that have been around for 25 years or longer. We're striking a compromise this week.

The Cakebread family, owners of Cakebread Cellars in California's Napa Valley, founded their winery in 1973. The 82 acres of Cakebread vineyards are planted to sauvignon blanc and cabernet sauvignon, but long-term relationships with select growers provide other varieties such as chardonnay, merlot, pinot noir and zinfandel.

Many California growers chose not to replant sauvignon blanc in vineyards ravaged by phylloxera. Today, there is a definite shortage of superior sauvignon blanc from California. This is unfortunate since Americans are "in" to spicy



New Canadian Iceberg Vodka

with the 1995. No way, it's stellar.

Carneros Creek Winery

Francis Mahoney founded Carneros Creek Winery a year before the Cakebreads. Mahoney's dream was to grow pinot noir and make wines that would stand up to French Burgundies. No one has done more vineyard research with

foods and their best white wine mate is sauvignon blanc. The 1997 Cakebread Sauvignon Blanc \$18.50 is one not to miss.

Typifying Napa Valley's richness is the 1995 Cakebread Cabernet Sauvignon \$34. Because we thought the 1994 was so spectacular, we were prepared for a little let-down

pinot noir than Mahoney. He knew that classic pinot noir would derive from several clones. But which ones?

With cooperation from the University of California at Davis, he conducted a pioneering clonal research project that determined the distinct personality of several pinot noir clones. Today, Carneros Creek pinot noirs are an artist's palette of flavors from seven clones chosen to be the most promising for achieving the Carneros Creek style.

Treat yourself to a tasting of Carneros Creek pinots beginning with 1996 Fleur de Carneros \$13, then to 1996 Estate Grown Pinot Noir \$20 and on to the ultimate statement 1995 Signature Reserve Pinot Noir \$38. The latter is produced only in vintages of great distinction and in extremely limited quantities. Carneros Creek pinots are ele-

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