

FOCUS ON WINE



RAY & ELEANOR HEALD

Area chefs creatively pair food and wine

Each of its seven years, the Michigan Culinary Food & Wine Extravaganza, held at Mac & Ray's in Harrison Township on Mardi Gras, has been an artful display and tasting of food and wine from metro-Detroit's finest restaurants.

This year, a panel of media judges evaluated 18 participating restaurants, solely on the basis of how well their particular dish matched the wine served with it. Attendees had their say with a People's Choice Award for the event's best restaurant.

Best Food & Wine Pairing went to Cafe Cortina of Farmington Hills. Proprietor Adriano Tonon and his team of chefs served a tasting portion of handmade gnocchi with a delicate porcini mushroom, truffle oil sauce and parmesan crisp, paired with the 2000 Jermann Pinot Grigio.

Cafe Cortina narrowly edged out Steve & Rocky's of Novi, by about a point. Along with the Golden Mushroom, these were the only three restaurants with an average score in the 90s, in the opinion of the judges.

People's Choice

This year, 800 attendees at the event helped raise \$50,000 to support aspiring chefs through scholarship awards and to raise money to send a team of Michigan chefs to the World Culinary Arts Salon, held every four years in Germany.

The People's Choice First Place award went to Steve & Rocky's of Novi. Proprietor-chefs Steve Allen and Rocky Rochwitz served warm house-smoked salmon with vermouth sauce, enhanced with coarse grain mustard and complemented by potato pancakes. The dish was paired with the 1999 Trimbach Reserve Pinot Gris.

"This award tells me," said Allen, "that we're on the right track. We have a sense of what diners come to Steve & Rocky's to eat. Some chefs cook their favorite food. I cook what my diners tell me they like. Yet, I personally like this dish because it showcases harmony among all the ingredients." He credits his wine salesperson Melissa Fisher of the distributor L&L Wine World in Troy for nailing the wine match.

In second place was Mac & Ray's of Harrison Township. Executive Chef Jeff Baldwin served rack of lamb with a merlot sauce, paired with 2000 Penfolds Thomas Highland Shiraz. Southfield's Golden Mushroom took third place with its applewood house-smoked salmon with boursin cheese on crispy root vegetable chips, drizzled with sundried tomato oil, paired with 1999 Rowland, Jill's Vineyard, New Zealand Pinot Noir.

What our readers thought

We think our readers are cool! So

Please see HEALDS, B2

WINE PICKS

The best of both worlds exists for chardonnay in winter. Wines from the newest vintage (in this case 2000) are being released along with the last of the 1999s, generally single vineyard and reserve bottlings. Early-release 2000s are upfront and fruity and the 1999s have mellow oak overtones and lots of finesse. Rankings from our recent tasting of chardonnays:

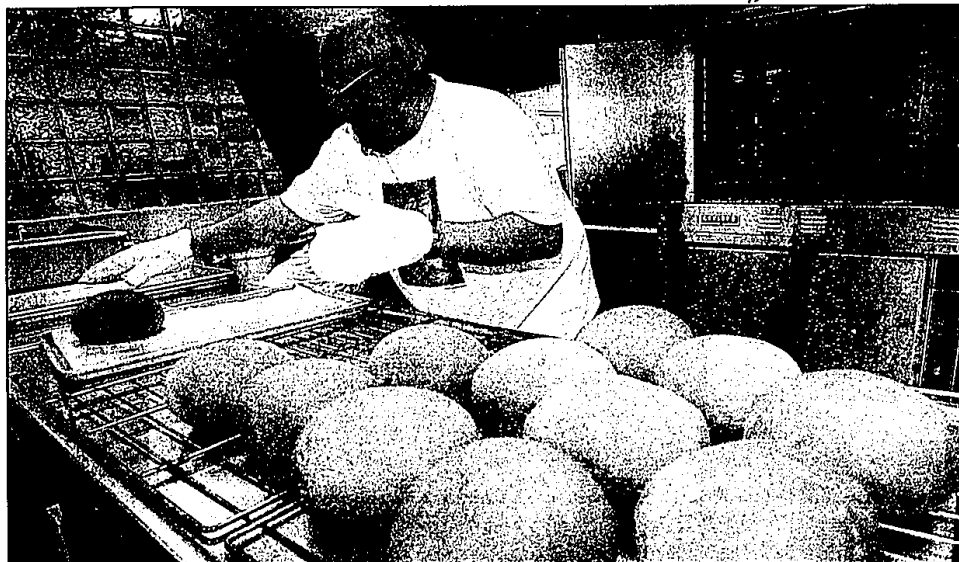
Outstanding: 1999 Joseph Phelps Ovation \$47 and 1999 Kunde Reserve \$35.

Excellent: 1999 Geringer Private Reserve \$35; 1999 Chateau St. Jean Belle Terre Vineyard \$24; 1999 Chateau St. Jean Robert Young Vineyard \$25; 1999 Kunde Kinneybrook Vineyard \$22; 1999 Kunde Wildwood Vineyard \$22; 2000 Marcellina \$22; 2000 Chateau St. Jean Sonoma County \$14 (exceptional value).

Very good: 2000 Frei Brothers Reserve \$17; 2000 Chateau Souverain \$14; and 2000 Geyser Peak \$16 (great with spicy shrimp creole).

Bread & Soup

Foods to warm the body and soul



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL DRINKER

Fresh from the oven: Brother Vincent Reyes removes his honey whole wheat bread from the oven at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen. See related recipes and photo inside.

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Mmmmm. One whiff of freshly baked bread or a simmering pot of soup is enough to send a comforting glow from head to toe on a cold winter day. Soups and breads warm the body, provide nutrients like vitamins and minerals, and relieve life's stresses, but even more than that these comfort foods greet all walking through the door.

Brother Vincent Reyes is fond of saying he doesn't bake bread at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen because he needs to, but because the aroma is a way of welcoming men, women and children coming in from the street. The kitchen serves 2,000 meals a day at two locations in Detroit in addition to delivering meals for shut-ins.

This snowy February morning the soup kitchen's pastoral director would begin making his honey whole wheat bread with the old-fashioned sponge method — warm water, yeast, sugar or food for the yeast, salt and enough flour to make a batter. Reyes bakes 17 loaves every Wednesday.

Behind him a kettle of pea soup bubbles and simmers slowly. Chef Alison Costello started the soup the day before by making a stock from 40-pounds of ham, bone and shavings. Nothing goes to waste at the soup kitchen. Every scrap of meat and vegetable counts when making soup to feed 500 hungry people.

"I love wheat bread," said Reyes. "It's hearty with a wonderful crust. I love the texture and flavor. Soup and bread are comfort foods. It reminds people of the time when they were a kid. Most people love homemade bread."

Good-for-you ingredients

Like many comfort foods, soup, when made from the wrong ingredients, can ruin a healthy diet. Dr. Bob Roman knows first hand the devastating effect certain foods have on the body. As a Farmington Hills pediatrician, he's seen a dramatic rise in the cases of Type II Diabetes and attributes it to a fast food diet. Cooked from scratch doesn't necessarily translate to better for you. A lean stock is essential not only for a tasty but a nutritious soup. Save the water from cooking vegetables and potatoes. It contains valuable nutrients. Throw in the outer leaves of cabbage, lettuce, kale, the tops of celery, beets and chard.

"Soup isn't always good for you," said Roman, a Bloomfield Hills resident who in his spare time takes cooking classes at Schoolcraft College in Livonia. He began volunteering at the soup kitchen, chopping vegetables and ladling out soup, in August.

"It depends what's in the soup. Begin with a chicken starter, nothing too high in fat or salt. Put in vegetables and meats, lean meat like chicken or turkey sausage. No bacon. A soup if cooked right can be your whole meal. When we're having a 6-inch snow day and you come in, it makes you feel warm all over."

There's nothing like stirring a pot of soup and inhaling the steam rising from the mingling car-



Feeding a crowd: Chef Alison Costello stirs the pea soup she made to feed 500 people arriving for lunch on a snowy February day.

rots, thyme and tomatoes. Herbs and seasonings add flavor to a soup. Costello says, "nothing's written in stone at the soup kitchen. Ingredients vary depending on what's on hand. Great soups require quality ingredients. It's all about educating the palate."

Donations enable Costello to cook most of the meals from scratch using not processed, but whole foods because she believes "people poison their bodies enough."

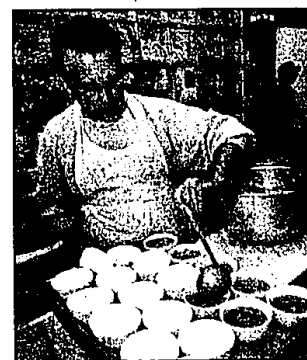
"I make lentil, chicken noodle, mushroom barley, bean soup, vegan soup, as long as it has a lot of stuff in it," said Costello who's worked as a chef at the Moneytree downtown and Pronto in Royal Oak. "But it's the seasonings that give it flavor — bay leaf, thyme, chervil, and of course fresh garlic. Oregon has a tendency to be too strong, basil for sweet flavor. I prefer using white pepper over black because it's stronger. Lots of times I add sugar to tomato-based soup, and dill in chicken soup from Brother Rick Samyn's Earthworks Garden in summer (a program to grow food to feed the poor)."

"Soup isn't fast food. You have to watch it and cook it slow. You can't rush soup."

Bread, oil and honey

Nor bread. Reyes lets the sponge starter "sit

Please see SOUP, B3



Steaming hot: Dr. Bob Roman, a Farmington Hills pediatrician, ladles pea soup into bowls.