

CELEBRATING CRAFT AND FLAVOR

FULL CIRCLE CHEF



THE VALUE OF EXPERIENCE
SEEING, TASTING, AND TOUCHING GIVE CREDIBILITY

MUSSELS
WHAT A LONG, STRANGE TRIP IT'S BEEN

RECIPES
CHEF ROBERT WIEDMAIER'S FAVORITE DISHES



DOUBLE CROSS[®]

V O D K A

WINE ENTHUSIAST RATINGS

DOUBLE CROSS 95
SLOVAKIA

KETEL ONE 89
HOLLAND

GREY GOOSE 84
FRANCE

BELVEDERE 84
POLAND

"EXTREMELY SMOOTH
AND CHARISMATIC."

THE NEW YORK TIMES



2 GOLD MEDALS
WORLD SPIRITS COMPETITION



CHEF ON A TIGHTROPE

The change of seasons is a great way to show nature's ongoing balancing act. The fresh citrus flavors of summer salads succumb to the hearty richness of winter stews and game. The bounty of vibrantly painted fruits and vegetables give way to thick-skinned, leaf-colored squashes and root vegetables. And we ourselves hunker down for the cooler months, insulated by an extra layer of friends and family during the holidays.

Aren't we always walking a tightrope? In the kitchen, it is the delicate symmetry of flavors in every dish; in the dining room, the fine line between the presence of too much service and not enough. Posturing intellect with a real experiential understanding of what is required from us to get things done right. And of course, in our daily lives, a healthy dose of personal time with those we love to measure up to the passion and commitment we have for the jobs we do.



The Value of Experience Chef Robert Wiedmaier

When I was working in Brussels for Chef Eddie Van Maele, he once taught me a very valuable lesson. It was a small kitchen, just a staff of about four, and sometimes he would walk in and catch me without my toque on.

One day, he took me to a two-star Michelin restaurant in town and led me into the kitchen to meet the chef. There, Eddie pointed around the room: everyone was wearing their toques. I realized at that moment that if I was going to take this seriously, I had to dress the part. I also understood that seeing this firsthand was an extremely powerful motivator. It's important to surround yourself with valuable experiences.

The RW Restaurant Group prides itself on providing opportunities for employees to travel and experience—a valuable education about the food and wine industry. I want my team to see, to touch, to taste, to have that

In this issue, I want to show how we always carefully consider balance: from nurturing a staff that brings to the table an education of real-life experiences, making for a well-rounded discipline in this industry, to the very ingredients on the plate that create a well-balanced, healthy meal—every time—packed with all the flavors we love without excessively pandering to the sweet and salty.

Meet our guests who keep us in check at Marcel's—our amazing purveyors like Joe Henderson, whose Randall Linebacks offer us meat the way it should taste, and Penn Cove Shellfish, whose extraordinary mussels deliver us not only flavor but also a nutritious alternative to traditional meals, which I aim to cultivate through our Mussel Bar & Grille restaurants. And learn why fine dining isn't about a pricey menu, but the art of a finely tuned dining experience.

So welcome again to *Full Circle Chef!* And may you leave our tables happy, healthy, and satiated!



firsthand practicality about why that ingredient with which they are working or that bottle they are serving is so important: to be flown to New York to eat at Le Bernardin, to the West Coast to dine at the French Laundry, or to Brussels to understand the type of cuisine I serve. Knowing who the great chefs are and their specialties, visiting vineyards and talking to winemakers, because this is a networked industry, and nothing beats getting out there and meeting people face-to-face. I want to arm my staff with the confidence to tell a customer in a smart and educated way: "I was just there, touching the soil, picking the grapes, sipping from a barrel in the cellar." It's the difference between knowing something and understanding the full picture—and it adds a very different seasoning to the meal: credibility.

First Hand Knowledge

Traveling, experiencing, and tasting translate into better service

PAUL STEARMAN
CHEF DE CUISINE AT MARCEL'S

Chef Paul Stearman has had the opportunity to taste wines throughout Bordeaux with Christophe Chateau, director of the Cinq Côtes Association, and run his dogs with the cows at the Martins Farm off Route 66. He is constantly sourcing and tasting new products.

Seeing ingredients in the ground and learning about a producer's level of commitment gives me an extra edge. I talk to the guests in the dining room all the time, so it's important that I know the stories behind the ingredients I work with. I visit a lot of local wineries and cheesemakers. I have witnessed the whole farming operation at New Frontier Bison and Chapel Hill Farm. It comes down to literally getting your hands dirty, learning about everything from the grass to the soil, and talking specifically about what I need to work with in the kitchen.

We have guests who have access to some incredible bottles of wine, and since we offer an exceptional level of cooking, they want to honor their wines by having us do the pairings. It's what I do almost daily, and it's what Marcel's is known for. Anyone can pair red wine with meat and white wine with fish, but being able to create a pairing where the food makes the wine sing is very special. When you get a pairing just right, each sip will make you want to take another bite of food. So having those experiences of going out and touching the soil, eating grapes off the vine, seeing the whole process, and then tasting the finished product allows me to recognize those extra levels in a wine and better understand its complexity. With that, I can best prepare the food as simply or as intricately as it needs to be.





RAMON NARVAEZ
GM AT BRASSERIE BECK

When Ramon Narvaez first started at Marcel's more than 12 years ago, Chef Wiedmaier sent him to vineyards all over Europe to learn and taste, and then to wine classes to qualify as a sommelier.

I enjoy telling guests stories from grape to bottle of certain vintages. About seven years ago, I got to stay at the main château on the Moët & Chandon estate—which is an experience in itself. Chefs came from all over to cook for us and pair the food with Dom Pérignon dating back to the '70s. I have a photograph of a small chapel in Hautvillers, where Dom Pérignon and another famous monk, Dom Ruinart, used to live and work together. In this tiny church are two marble tombstones on the floor that bear their names. It's a great story to bring up at a table.

A couple of years ago, I was at Jaboulet with a small group of Americans. We had a chance to create our own hermitage using bottles of the different cuvées after an informational session with the chef de cave. Then we got to pass them around and taste them all. I like to use this story to illustrate that wine is a very personal thing, and that while you can get to know it better with the right training, it still boils down to what you like. That day in the Jaboulet lab, we were all excited about the different blends we each had made. And wine should do that: excite you. It's not about the ratings or the points a bottle has gotten in a review—it's personal taste. Growing up in South America, I can distinguish the tropical fruits and flavors in a wine straight away because my brain recognizes them; apples and pears, not so much! So don't be afraid to bring your own experiences to the table, and you'll find that it's hard to make the wrong wine choice that way.



MOEZ BEN ACHOUR
GM AND WINE DIRECTOR AT MARCEL'S

Moez Ben Achour started at Marcel's in 1999 as a food runner and worked his way up to head its wine program eight years ago.

It was the combination of being given the opportunity to directly visit vineyards around the world and becoming a certified sommelier that really took my wine experience to the next level. I have been fortunate enough to travel all over Europe as well as to Oregon and Napa Valley during different seasons. I have met winemakers, seen their cellars and facilities, examined the soil, and been directed through all the possible weather scenarios that can affect a wine and its price, for good or for worse. It helps you not only to understand what to buy and what pairs best with which dish, but it's an incredible tool for our wine-savvy guests.

Given the technology and the way the wine industry has evolved, we have to be very smart customers. Guests go to classes and study up before they dine—nothing slips by them! So it is my pleasure to be able to make connections at the table between the wines they order or bring in and the places to which I have been. I had a guest who brought in a bottle of Sine Qua Non, a wine from Napa Valley. After showing it to his guests, he asked me what I knew about it, and I was able to tell him all about the owner, who is also the artist behind each wine label. He was both surprised and impressed because this is a small-production wine.

I have also had the opportunity to go to Beaune, the wine capital of Burgundy, where each November the Hospices de Beaune wine auction is held to benefit the local hospital. I have been able to tell guests who have acquired great vintage wines from the area through collectors about my experiences there, barrel tasting in the cellars. I had a gentleman who heads to Beaune every year, and being able to chat with him about the auction was great: we were speaking the same language. The point being, you have to embrace your knowledge so that it comes off as confident, and never arrogant. That's what Marcel's is based on—a foundation of great service and putting yourself in other people's shoes.



Fine Dining

It Means More Than the Price

Chef Robert Wiedmaier has opened a restaurant for almost every level—from the haute cuisine of Marcel’s to casual dining at the Mussel Bar & Grille, with Brabo and Brasserie Beck in between. Each has a specific purpose in its offered dining experience, even if you do find dishes on their menus with comparable price points.

What makes fine dining? Is it driven by price or experience? There seems to be a little confusion about that recently, and perhaps rightly so. If you walk into a casual gastropub, sit down at a wooden table, order pan-seared diver scallops, and the dish costs \$32, isn’t that fine-dining prices?

Or is it simply the price you pay for ingredients that have been impeccably sourced and precisely cooked? Take a handmade veal-cheek-and-mushroom ravioli on a bed of parsnip puree with a veal reduction and sprinkled with chives—that’s a great dish that involves a lot of work. It deserves to cost \$30, no matter where it is served.

With the inundation of cooking shows, the dining paradigm has shifted. We see a lot of celebrity chefs opening restaurants, but media exposure does not guarantee that their establishments are fine dining, regardless of prices on a menu. To do fine dining you first have to understand what that entails, both physically and philosophically in the dining room and the kitchen.

Make no mistake: it costs a lot of money to open a fine-dining establishment. Fine equates with special. And at Marcel’s, similar to a lot of the fine-dining experiences you’ll find in New York City, that includes ironed linen tablecloths, Bernardaud china, Christofle silverware, Spiegelau glassware, and mise en place showplates. Add to that all the little accoutrements, from the amuse-bouche skewers to the demitasse spoons, and the costs begin to accumulate quickly. When I worked for Eddie Van Maele in his two-star Michelin restaurant in Brussels, we had to wash all the glassware by hand. If you broke one, you paid for it. When it comes to fine dining, you have to be diligent on breakage and

cleanliness and putting things away. Not just in the dining room, where our waiters inspect each table to make sure it is spotless, but in the kitchen too. Even beyond the phenomenal execution of the food, you should find an immaculate kitchen, where you could literally eat off the floor and all the cooks and commis are presentable and in uniform.

To me, fine dining is defined by the experience, the whole package. It is three to four hours of indulgence and education and pampering. Eating is just one part of that equation. It’s about walking into a restaurant and seeing the whole brigade in suit and tie, ready to serve you. It means having a menu presented to you and a napkin placed on your lap. It includes going through the wine list with the sommelier, enjoying six or seven great courses, where the wines pair perfectly with the food, and then perhaps even walking away from the table for a cognac and a cigar.

Don’t confuse proper dining with “old school.” Fine dining means lining up your whole staff—the front of the house and the back—to inspect their shoes, their fingernails, the way they look, and the way they smell. Too much cologne and you are going to ruin the ambiance. We don’t even have flowers in our restaurants, because they take away from the food and the wine.

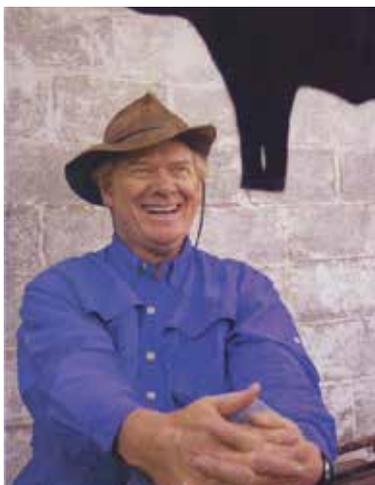
It’s also about attitude. I always tell my staff that it doesn’t matter if you are the captain or the food runner, when you are in the dining room you have to up your game. It’s imperative because everyone is wearing the same uniform, and no matter who the guest asks a question to, you have to be prepared to answer it then and there. It’s likewise in the kitchen: everyone is equal. I want the garde manger and the commis to strive to be the sous-chef. I treat everyone the same, and I expect my staff to do likewise with their coworkers, because the guy who cleans the copper and makes it spotless deserves the same credit when our customers remark on it as the chef who is recognized for creating a superb dish.

Fine dining is more than a price tag and a set of fancy linens. It’s a state of mind that starts the moment you walk in and are greeted with a smile or a handshake and continues way past the valet pulling up your car when you leave. It’s about creating an incredible memory of a place and time long after the effects of that last glass of Sauternes wear off.

CHAPEL HILL FARMS

When What Happens on a Farm Shouldn't Stay on the Farm

Joe Henderson raises heritage breed cows on a small farm in the Shenandoah Valley, and he's happy to tell you all about it. Because decisions that are made on a farm affect the food you eat.



“You would be surprised by how many people in the food industry, from chefs to prep cooks, have never seen a cow or been on a farm,” Joe Henderson says with a laugh. “We are so urbanized and separated from the land that we don't have the same opportunities to interact with nature the way we used to. With people going from point to point by plane, few take the time to go through the landscape—it's just not a part of our lives.”

But farming is a huge part of Henderson's life, even more so today than when he was growing up on and around Virginia farms. By raising Randall Linebacks, a heritage breed that dates back to the 17th century, Henderson not only has saved them from near extinction but also has opened up our minds and palates to the way meat used to taste—and really should taste today.

With 600 picture-perfect acres of soft limestone coursing with natural springs, and 900 more leased from those who don't want to farm, Chapel Hill Farm offers Randall Linebacks plenty of room to graze on the grass, and only the grass, with just a little grain added at the very end to provide what Henderson calls “21st-century palatability.” Given that most cows are fed a steady diet of grain, commercial steaks play into our predisposition for engineered foods that are salty, fatty, sweet, and easy to chew. “For the past 150 years, beef breeds have been genetically selected for fat rather than flavor,” adds Henderson. “Corn and grain feeding result in increasingly fat animals. The meat of a Randall Lineback will not taste like that. It will taste the way meat is supposed to taste before this genetic emphasis on intramuscular fat: lean with a bright, fresh flavor for all the right reasons.”

“When you come to the Shenandoah Valley, you step into the world of small-farm agriculture,” Henderson explains, which today is as much a

lost art as butchery is to many chefs. Farming used to be multicultural—before tractors, crops were rotated for a period of three years and then the ground was left fallow for a year. That rarely happens anymore. “Today, the farming industry is shaped by big business needs for widgets. Entire states are dedicated to churning out one perfect ingredient, such as a potato. Huge farms raise cattle that have a similar poundage, genetic makeup, and color. And so the closest we ever get to touching an actual cow is a perfected, shaped piece of meat in a plastic baggie.”

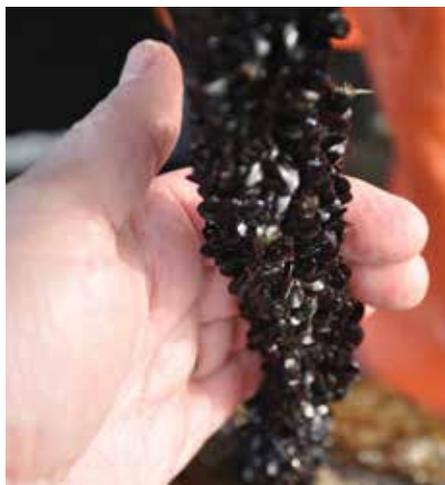
Henderson might be able to save the Randall Linebacks one cow at a time, but educating the public is a task in itself. Henderson welcomes people out to his farm at a time when leaving the city for some might as well be a trip to another planet! When he gets a group together, he serves Randall burgers to familiarize guests with the end result, and takes them on a hayride to view the facilities and see the animals—how big they are, what they eat, and how they behave.

“Urban populations today are completely divorced from the agricultural experience. It's important to me to have not only the kitchen staff out here to witness the entire operation but anyone with an interest, because decisions that are made on a farm affect the food that ends up on your plate. And doing things incorrectly might seem cheaper and easier for the consumer, but it's not necessarily better in the long term.”

PENN COVE MUSSELS

Wonder Food of the Sea

“If you got stuck eating only one thing, mussels would be the best you could eat. They are low in calories and fat composition and high in protein, essential minerals, and omega-3. And they taste a lot better when it’s all still stored up inside of them”—Ian Jefferds, General Manager of Penn Cove Shellfish



Mussels are pretty simple animals. As bivalve filter eaters, they move a lot of algae through their systems, pumping and filtering the water as they feed. Ian Jefferds mussel farm is located in Whidbey Island’s Penn Cove, which captures all the nutrient-rich snowmelt from the Cascade Mountains along with the fresh mountain-river waters from the Skagit and the Stillaguamish. Here, the mussels grow quickly because of abundant plankton.

“Mussels live on a diet that mirrors the nutritional benefits of spirulina products you find based on dried algae,” explains Jefferds. “That means they store up a lot of the essential minerals that are out there—zinc, magnesium, manganese, iron, and calcium, as well as sugars and lipids that keep them healthy and growing. It’s important for us to get them on the plate as quickly as possible because once they come out of the water and are put in storage, they have to live off what is stored up inside of them. If they are kept for too long, that takes away from the overall taste experience.”

Chef Wiedmaier was impressed by the Penn Cove operation, where the mussels are harvested early in the morning and then carefully washed, sorted, bagged and tagged, and plunged into a saltwater ice slurry to cool them for shipping before they head to the refrigerated warehouse. There, they are packed up with consistent temperature monitoring, then sent to his restaurants by commercial air freight, all within 24 hours.

Along with a fresh product, Penn Cove Shellfish strive to deliver the most information they can about their operation firsthand to chefs and individual consumers alike. “We feel the same way Chef Wiedmaier does: the more people know about a product, the more they will enjoy it,” says Jefferds, who regularly hosts chefs at the facilities and maintains a comprehensive website.

All the same things that make a wine great and unique can be said for shellfish. “The terroir, or ‘merrior,’ of the bays they come out of and the manner in which they are grown—these factors lend to the mussels’ flavor and appearance. If someone is aware of all this and can speak knowledgeably about it, it will excite the customer, who can develop a passion for that particular product.”

BUYING, STORING, AND EATING MUSSELS:

Penn Cove Shellfish General Manager Ian Jefferds gives us basic advice on approaching a bowlful of edible bivalves to ensure a pleasant experience.

“Use your nose and your eyes when picking mussels, or any other shellfish. Look for ones that are closed up. If they are open, squeeze them: if they attempt to close, they are still alive; if not, do not use them. Find some that are fresher!”

“Always keep your shellfish in the fridge at 35°F to 40°F. The low temperature slows down their metabolism and keeps mussels tasting fresher longer. Place the mussels in a self-draining container with ice. Mussels will drown if left in melted ice or stagnant water.”

“If they are in a plastic bag when you buy them, open the bag or make sure there are holes to allow the shellfish to breathe. You want them to stay alive.”

MUSSELS COME WITH THEIR OWN UTENSILS:

For mussels steamed in a light broth: “Here, I typically use my fingers. Pick up a mussel, tear off half a shell, and use the shell to scoop out the mussel meat along with some broth, as if it were a spoon.”

For mussels in a creamy broth: “In this case, I either use the little fork that typically comes with the dish or I take a shell that has both sides still together and use it as a pair of tongs to pick up and dip the mussel meat into the broth.”

Congratulations to Chef Paul Stearman and the Brasserie Beck team for winning the 2013 Belgian Restaurant Week Mussel Throwdown!

Mussels

What a Long, Strange Trip It's Been

Ever since I worked at Aux Beaux Champs at Washington D.C.'s Four Seasons, I have always had mussels on my menus. At that point, I was taking them out of the shell and serving them as a gratin, which incidentally remains a classic dish on the Marcel's menu today. —Chef Robert Wiedmaier

Mussels have always been appreciated in Europe and I knew that if we able to present them in a simple and flavorful way to Americans that they would love them. That's where the idea for Mussel Bar started, and now it's full steam ahead. I also knew that mussels are good for you, relatively inexpensive, and, with excellent beer pairings, sound like the perfect recipe for a festive time. I originally wanted to call the place Poubelle—"trash can" in French—with the idea of having a bag attached to a hole in the middle of each table into which you could toss the empty shells!

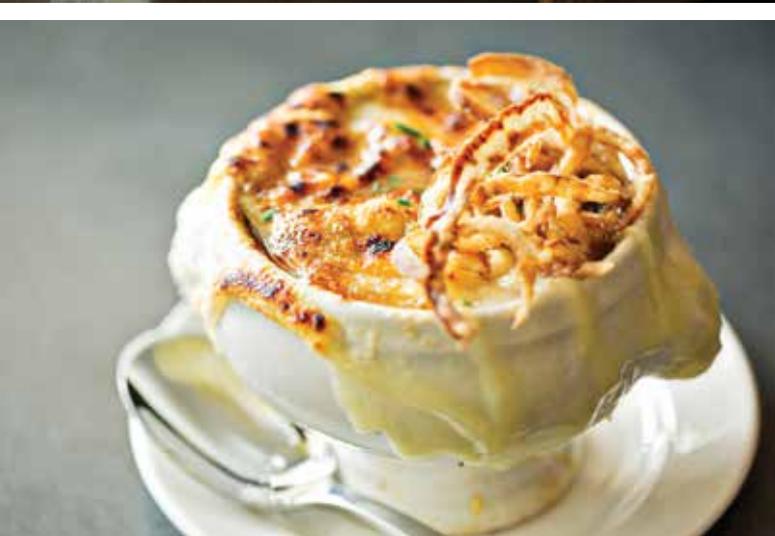
Even now, mussels are somewhat of an anomaly to most people. The first location we opened in 2010 in Bethesda was simply called the Mussel Bar. We quickly realized that even though we featured more on the menu than just mussels, the name was a turnoff for a lot of people, because they simply weren't sold on the mussels. So we added "and Grille" to make that crystal clear: yes, we specialize in mussels and Belgian beer, but we also serve all kinds of different steaks, grilled fish, and tarte flambée because this isn't a chef-driven restaurant—it's a concept-driven restaurant. It's still my recipes that we take very seriously, but it's a lot more too. And it has also evolved spatially since that first opening.

The original Mussel Bar was exactly what I had always envisioned: dark and cavernous, with wooden tables and loud rock and roll. The second location, in Atlantic City, is quite different, with a beautiful open kitchen and big bar area. The latest location, in Arlington, is closest to the perfect model based on what we have learned from experience.

One of the smartest things we did in Arlington was install CookTeks in each of the kitchens. I can throw on these large, flat pans with glass tops filled with mussels and all the garnishes and broths, and watch them cook in four minutes. From there, they go straight to the table, where all you have to do is take off the top. And voilà!

And, of course, to be truly successful when it comes to food, you have to start off with really great ingredients. I love Penn Cove Mussels. The waters there, in Coupeville, Washington, are so fresh and untouched. I really think that the colder temperatures and the higher levels of salinity in the water create cleaner, smoother, silkier mussels. They tend to be a little smaller but so much sweeter. And when you cook them, that flavor comes out in the sauce and you can really taste the difference.





CLASSIC MUSSELS GARLIC, SHALLOT, VERMOUTH

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 tbs unsalted butter
1 tbs minced garlic
1 tbs minced shallot
1 pound Penn Cove mussels,
cleaned and debearded, in the shell
1 cup dry vermouth
1 cup heavy cream
1 tbs chopped Italian flat-leaf parsley

METHOD

To a pot or heavy pan over medium heat, add the butter. Sweat the garlic and shallot until translucent, about 45-60 seconds. Add the mussels and vermouth, and cover the pot. When the mussels are almost open (about 90 seconds-2 minutes), add the heavy cream and cover the pot. Once all of the mussels are open (about 2 more minutes), sprinkle parsley over top and serve.

Cooked mussels can be eaten directly from the pot or pan or transferred to a wide rim soup bowl.

Keep covered until just prior to eating as they cool quickly.

ANTIGOON BEER

In 2010, Chef Wiedmaier approached the Belgian Brouwerij De Musketiers to brew a special beer for him. The result is Antigoon, a bright yellow beer that is slightly hazy in appearance with a nice bready nose, funk from the yeast, a sweet and malty balance, an earthy hop, and a hint of fennel to round out the flavor. Medium-bodied, Antigoon has a clean, dry finish with a bit of lingering bitterness from the hops.

A fitting tribute to Wiedmaier's Belgian background, *Antigoon* comes from the legend around the origins of Antwerp's name. According to folklore, a cruel giant called Druon Antigoon would hold up all the ships entering the harbor from the river Scheldt to demand a toll; those who refused lost their heads. One day, a brave soldier, Silvius Brabo, cut off Antigoon's hand and tossed it in the river. This act of "throwing the hand" became "hand werpen"—or Antwerp.

The label on Antigoon by Robert Wiedmaier features the giant with his bleeding limb. The beer has grown from cult-status popularity to overwhelming demand from both sides of the country.



BROWN SUGAR-GLAZED BISON SHORT RIB WITH BABY BOK CHOY, CANDIED GINGER, AND RED WINE REDUCTION

Serves 8



INGREDIENTS

<i>Eight 14-oz bone-in bison short ribs</i>	<i>6 shallots</i>
<i>salt and pepper</i>	<i>1/2 bottle red wine</i>
<i>1/4 lb butter</i>	<i>peppercorns</i>
<i>3 carrots</i>	<i>potato puree</i>
<i>1 large onion</i>	<i>4 baby bok choy</i>
<i>1 quart demi-glace</i>	<i>chicken stock</i>
<i>2 bay leaves</i>	<i>candied ginger, julienned</i>
<i>1 bunch thyme</i>	<i>4 radishes, julienned</i>
	<i>3 stalks of micro celery, julienned</i>

METHOD

Carefully remove the bones from the short rib and any silver skin from underneath. Season the short ribs with salt and pepper. Sear them in a cast-iron pan on high heat, then line them up in a deep rectangular baking dish; they should fit with very little space left around. Add butter and sear the carrots and onion in the same pan. Place the vegetables over the short ribs, then sear the bones that were removed and place them in the dish as well.

Pour the demi-glace over the short ribs. Add bay leaves and thyme and bake them in the oven at 400°F for 5 to 6 hours or until very tender. Carefully remove the short ribs making sure to support them from underneath so they don't break. Place the short ribs on a sheet tray, put another sheet tray on top, and slightly weigh down the top tray. You want to press the short ribs so they are flat and uniform. Chill for 2 hours or until chilled all the way through.

Sauté the shallots in a saucepot then add the red wine and a few peppercorns. Reduce the wine about 3/4. Skim the braising liquid and then pour it into the wine reduction; reduce until it has a nice consistency that coats the back of a spoon. After the short ribs cool, trim the sides, shaping them into perfect rectangles. Reserve the trimmings.

Fold the trimmings into some potato puree and work it around until the trimmings are hot and break up slightly into the potatoes. Place the short ribs back into the sauce until they are hot all the way through. Heat the bok choy in a little chicken stock and butter.

To plate, place a little of the potato puree on the plate, then place the short rib over the potatoes, spooning over with the braising liquid. Place the bok choy by its side, spoon over with some of the cooking butter, and garnish with julienne of candied ginger, radish, and micro celery.

AMUSE BOUCHE OF SWEDISH SHRIMP IN SAFFRON CREME BRÛLÉE

Makes 24 mini crème brûlées

INGREDIENTS

3 shallots, sliced
1 sprig thyme
pinch of saffron
1/2 quart cream
salt and pepper
3 eggs
2 egg yolks
1/2 cup sugar
brined Swedish shrimp
chervil

METHOD

Sautee the shallots in a saucepot, then add the thyme and saffron. Pour in the cream, bring it to a boil, and season with salt and pepper. Let the mixture steep for about 30 minutes; the color should be very yellow. Strain the liquid and chill it. Beat the eggs, season them, then add them to the saffron cream. Pour the mixture into mini crème brûlée dishes. Place dishes in a water bath in the oven at 250°F. Cook for 30 to 40 minutes or until they set, checking every 10 minutes (time will depend on the power of your oven). Chill them. Put a teaspoon of sugar on each crème brûlée, shake off the excess sugar, then clean the dish by running your finger around. Using a torch, melt the sugar to form a crispy top. Place three shrimp and a little chervil on top before serving.



CONGRESSIONAL SEAFOOD



Reeling in quality

Every great meal starts with the finest ingredients, and when it comes to fish, freshness is paramount. For the past 17 years, Congressional Seafood has been providing the freshest seafood to some of the finest restaurants, gourmet markets, and country clubs in the Washington D.C. and Baltimore metro areas, including all of the RW Restaurant Group establishments.

After sourcing the most recently caught fish and shellfish, Congressional uses special techniques to transport the product so that it arrives at the restaurant in optimal condition. And with QR technology in place, consumers can now easily trace back where the fish on their plate came from and when it was caught. It adds a new layer of transparency to the catch.

Among the selections Congressional Seafood supplies Chef Wiedmaier's restaurants are: raw oysters on the half shell, meticulously cleaned; mussels, plucked fresh from the icy depths of the Atlantic; and a variety of 'catch-of-the-day' specials: rockfish, tuna, branzino. Congressional Seafood allows Chefs like Robert Wiedmaier to meet uncommonly high standards with excellent ingredients that always makes for a memorable dining experience.

DOVER SOLE AND SCALLOP MOUSSELINE,
BUTTERNUT SQUASH PUREE



WHY I LOVE THIS PLACE

GUESTS OF THE HOUSE SHARE THEIR FAVORITE THINGS



KELLY MEADE

Kelly Meade is an analyst who lives and works in Old Town Alexandria. She loves to share a good meal with friends and family.

When you go to Marcel's, what resonates with you from your time spent in Brussels? My parents always encouraged us to try new foods and appreciate local fresh ingredients. In Belgium, they shopped every day for the evening meal. When I walk into Marcel's, Chef Wiedmaier's cuisine brings me back to those years and all the great memories.

What is your favorite dish at Marcel's? The rack of lamb. I also love the Dover sole and the lobster bisque.

And your favorite table? Table 28 for special occasions, otherwise I love to sit in the corner at the far end of the bar for a view of all the activity.

Favorite beverage? Rosé Champagne

What do you enjoy most about Marcel's? The ambiance when you walk in the door. While Marcel's is very much a fine-dining experience, there is something uniquely warm and cozy about both the food and the restaurant. I feel as though I am being welcomed into a home.

What memory at Marcel's stands out to you in terms of the food or service? I have celebrated my last 13 birthdays at Marcel's. I also regularly bring friends and family there to celebrate an event or holiday, so my specific memory is a collective one of all those times when the food, the service, and the personal touches made me feel special.

What would you suggest from the menu to a first-time Marcel's diner? In addition to my favorites listed above, I would recommend the boudin blanc, tartare of filet mignon, any fish dish, and the foie gras!

JIM COURTOVICH

Jim Courtovich is founder and managing partner of Sphere Consulting, a public affairs company with offices in London, D.C., and Buenos Aires. He lives in Woodland-Normanstone Terrace in D.C.

How long have you been dining at Marcel's? Twelve years. I go there for both business and pleasure, from a night grabbing a bite at the bar to a full dinner.

What is your favorite dish at the restaurant? There are too many to pick from, but the lobster bisque and rack of lamb are always favorites.

And your favorite table? The one in the circular room.

Do you have a beverage of choice? Whatever bottle of wine Moez brings out.

What do you enjoy most about Chef Wiedmaier's food? It is always excellent, and the sauces are fantastic. I have clients from all over the world who have eaten at many of the best restaurants, and when they come to town they always want to go to Marcel's—not only because of the food but for the entire experience.

Why do you keep coming back? Marcel's is consistently great and the service is friendly and professional. I have had so many great meals there with friends and associates. I look at Marcel's as an extension of my own dining room. I am that comfortable there!

FRED RITTS

Fred Ritts is an attorney at Brickfield Burchette Ritts & Stone, PC, with a specialty in energy. He enjoys golf, dining at Marcel's, working out, attending the Kennedy Center Ballet, and winning legal battles. He lives in McLean, Virginia.

How long have you been dining at Marcel's? Ten years. I go there before the Kennedy Center Ballet and on special occasions.

What keeps you coming back? The outstanding service, the pleasant decor, the excellent wine list, and the great menu.

What is your favorite dish at Marcel's? There are too many to choose from!

And your favorite table? A table by the window, where I always sit!

Do you have a favorite beverage? Turley wine.

What would you suggest from the menu to a first-time Marcel's diner? Definitely the fish special of the day.

BOB AND SANDY COHN

Bob and Sandy Cohn have homes in McLean and Annapolis. A lawyer, Bob is an avid fisherman, much like Chef Wiedmaier. A retired college instructor, Sandy loves to travel with her husband and try new foods and wines.

How long have you been dining at Marcel's? Since its inception. When we attended the 10-year anniversary dinner, I framed the menu!

Have you celebrated any special occasions together at Marcel's? So many birthdays and anniversaries, I can't even keep track of them all! Bob takes all of his business clients to dine there.

Do you have a favorite table? The one at the wall that separates the dining room from the kitchen, but any table is fine, preferably with Jonathan as the waiter.

What is your favorite dish at Marcel's? Too many to list, but here goes: the perfect scallops, bison, unbelievable roast chicken, always fresh vegetables in unusual preparations, and any kind of fish—cooked or raw.

Do you have a favorite bottle of wine? Moez and Jonathan are always introducing us to new and fantastic wines. We have had some remarkable white Burgundies, many stupendous reds, and Chambolle-Musigny, among many others.

What do you enjoy most about Chef Wiedmaier's food? It's so fresh and perfectly prepared.

What keeps you coming back? Marcel's offers both excellent food and professional service. They want you to enjoy every aspect of your dining experience.

GREG AND LINDA LAUGHLIN

Greg and Linda Laughlin both have political backgrounds. Greg is a lawyer and former member of Congress, and Linda is an Army Arlington Lady and former president of the Former Members of Congress Auxiliary.

How long have you been dining at Marcel's? Since it first opened. You will find us there every Friday evening, if we are in town.

Have you celebrated any special occasions together at Marcel's? Most anniversaries, birthdays, and special occasions, and with our children and friends too.

Do you have a favorite table? Number 15

What are your favorite dishes at Marcel's? The lobster bisque, Dover sole, all amuse-bouches, the foie gras, Chimay, and the Grand Marnier Mousse.

Favorite beverage? The Kir Royale and Champagnes for me; red wines selected by Moez for Greg.

What do you enjoy most about Chef Wiedmaier's food? The flavor layers, the exquisite presentation, the freshness, and the perfection that begins with Robert and extends through every member of his staff.

What keeps you coming back? Greg likes to say, "Marcel's is our country club." We are always treated like royalty, which is very special. When I was admitted to a nearby hospital, Robert called to check on me and even offered to send me my meals!—a true friend!

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Sustainability

From Local Farms to Your Table

Fells Point Wholesale Meats originated in 1988 and was located in the Broadway Market in historic Fells Point. This retail butcher shop was one of many local vendors offering farm fresh, local products, including organic meats. Continuing that tradition, Fells Point Wholesale Meats has transformed into a full-service wholesale company offering a range of local, quality products from the farm to your table.

At Fells Point Wholesale Meats, we support local farms and cattle growers by offering their high-quality beef and steak to customers. We receive Black Angus beef, located in Monkton, MD, and local hogs from Centerville, MD. In addition, we procure local lamb and rabbits from Hagerstown, MD and bison meat from Monkton, MD. All of these products are delivered to our facility fresh and ready for processing almost every day. We believe that by doing business with local farms, we are helping the local economy, and keeping farmers and ranchers in business.



FLAVOR BALANCE

by Chef Robert Wiedmaier

Salt, sugar, and fat: the three culprits that make processed foods so irresistible. I use them all in my cooking too, just a little differently than the large food companies—to coax out the flavors in my proteins.



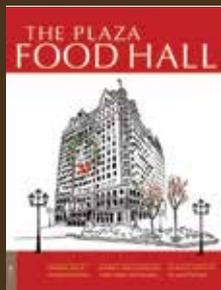
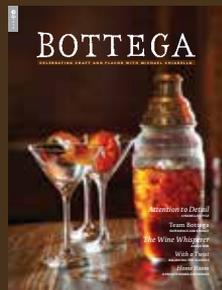
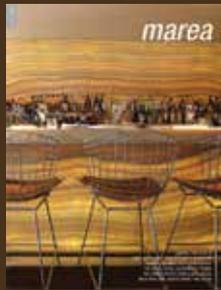
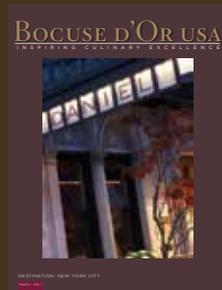
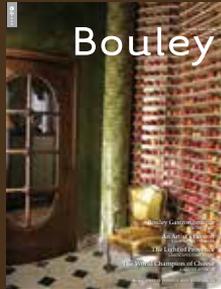
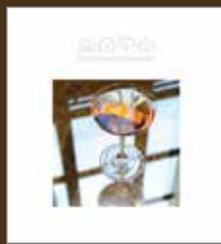
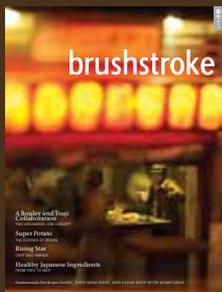
The palate loves salt, sugar, and fat, and that is basic to human instinct. Salt is an essential compound in our bodies that we naturally crave, fat is an extremely dense source of energy, and our taste for sugar is born out of a primitive craving for ripe fruit. When it comes to incorporating these elements into my cooking, I take it back to another primal basic: whole animal butchery—breaking down the whole animal and extracting all those flavors very naturally, and then balancing the flavors on the plate with those in the glass of wine accompanying it to bring out the best of both worlds.

If I am creating a dish with medallions of venison, the flavors that end up on that plate are the result of careful preparation. For this dish, a whole saddle of venison was brought in and butchered. The bones were chopped into little pieces and caramelized. A mirepoix was added and then left to cook and cook and cook, until we get these amazing concentrated-venison flavors. As I think about what wine will pair best with this venison gloss, I add a little bramble to the sauce for its sweetness and some beets for their earthiness. And then I add wine that will

reduce down and finish the sauce with a gastrique—a little bit of caramelized sugar and vinegar—to wake it up. Your cravings will be satisfied in a completely organic way.

Wine pairings are not easy—but when done well, it's magical. A big part of learning to pair food and wine comes from simply tasting them, which I always encourage my staff to do. And given the amount of wine dinners we have, the opportunities to taste are endless. If you are a bona fide chef, you have to understand wines. And that is especially true for the saucier.

There is also a processed component to what happens in our kitchen: technique. And that technique is time and love, a lot of both, especially when it comes to making a sauce. The right flavors in a sauce are essential because they have to complement not only the rest of the dish but the wine as well. For a lamb sauce we might start off with a fond blanc—a white lamb stock that has been cooked and skimmed for 24 hours. Then we caramelize the bones from a second lamb, add the chopped vegetables, and bring out all the natural sugars. To that, we add the fond blanc for fortification and let that cook for another 24 hours, skimming constantly. From six to seven gallons of liquid, you might end up with about two pints. But you only need one beautiful, glistening spoonful of it in a saucepan, with a little butter and fresh tarragon or other herbs, to make a dish explode with flavor! It's a lot of work, but seeing our guests' satisfied expressions make it absolutely worth it.



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