



Chef Chad's Blog

By Chad Johnson, Executive Chef

Chefs are commonly asked where the inspiration for our menus comes from. Common responses would be along the lines of a dish that was a childhood favorite, or maybe something had on recent travels. In reality, the answers are much more varied, and constantly changing. In the SideBern's kitchen our dishes come from many muses; a conversation between two servers about what was eaten for dinner last night, or maybe a story from our beloved dishwasher about what he ate growing up in Haiti, and many times our newest creations are inspired by what we as cooks want to eat after a late night of drinking beers at the local bar. The following are a couple of my favorite dishes from our new menu and the odd beginnings from which they came.

As previously mentioned restaurant employees tend to be fans of beer, so much so that my Christmas present to our Chef de Cuisine was a home brewing kit. Because of this brewing kit there has been a lot of



conversation involving brewing and beer ingredients being thrown around the kitchen. I knew I wanted to do an oyster preparation on our next menu and was trying to come up with something a little more creative than cocktail sauce and lemon. In comes the beer, while sitting frustrated in front of my incomplete menu, our General Manager, Dean, mentioned doing something with beer and oysters. Beer, oysters, sounds good, but which way to spin it? Once again Dean stepped in with the idea of using hops as an ingredient in the dish. The resulting dish is a raw oyster presentation seasoned with Meyer lemon juice that has been infused with cascade hops, a touch of honey, and a final seasoning of grains of paradise (a spice often used in brewing, it has the flavor of black pepper but more floral).

Other than food and beer I'm also obsessed with traveling, not only do I love the actual journey, but the anticipation and planning of an upcoming trip is something I find exhilarating. I'm currently planning a trip to Italy this summer, much of which will be based around food. Our new pork entrée celebrates some of the classic flavors of Tuscany that I've recently been reading about. The dish consists of two cuts of pork from Palmetto Creek Farms, a T-bone seasoned with fennel pollen and a slow roasted shoulder. To finish the dish we'll be grating Pecorino Toscano over the pork, and making the sauce with the famous wine of the region, Chianti.

My favorite dessert came about from the start of strawberry season and a series of random text messages between myself and the resident pastry guru, Asbel. Strawberry season is something we get very excited about, a local product that is spectacular - every chef's dream. The thing about strawberries is they're usually at their best when left alone, few things are better than a perfect strawberry. However, the expectations of our kitchen are a bit more than a bowl of plain berries. That's where the texting comes into play. I sent Asbel a few ideas one morning that he thought sounded good, but felt more like a Summer dish, not a dish for early February. Another idea I sent him was replied with doesn't sound good no matter the season (can't win them all). After this back and forth, Asbel came up with a stunning play on the two most classic strawberry desserts, the shortcake, and the combination of berries and cream. The classic shortcake has been replaced with a moist cake seasoned with sumac and mint, the cream has been replaced by quark cheese (similar to yogurt). All of these items add up to a unique spin on the classics, and a dish complements without overwhelming the star, fresh local strawberries.

Whether inspired by a passion for beer, dreams of future travels, or a pastry chef's dislike of my ideas, all of our new dishes we're conceived with two things in mind; to showcase our amazing ingredients, and provide our guests with an amazing dining experience.

PlumpJack & CADE - LEEDing the Way in Napa Valley

By Kevin Pelley, Wine Director

On April 8th, to kickoff Bern's 14th Annual WineFest, SideBern's restaurant is pleased to welcome winemaker Anthony Biagi for the Gala Dinner featuring PlumpJack & CADE. The PlumpJack group consists of fourteen businesses dedicated to fine living that include wine shops, restaurants, spas, hotels and two Napa Valley wineries: PlumpJack and CADE. The PlumpJack Group was founded in 1992 by former San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom and the Getty family. Both wineries names were inspired by Shakespeare, PlumpJack for a character that liked to eat, drink and be merry, and CADE is the Shakespearean term for oak barrel. Together, the wineries offer the best Napa Valley has to offer with PlumpJack's valley floor vineyards in Oakville and CADE's steeply terraced vineyards on Howell Mountain.

PlumpJack's vineyards encompass both valley floor and the bench or foothills of the Vaca Mountain range on the eastern edge of the Napa Valley. These Oakville vineyards are gravelly and well drained over a bed of Bale clay loam soil and are perfect for growing superb Cabernet Sauvignon grapes with sweet tannins and approachability. Conversely, CADE is located 1,800 feet above the Napa Valley floor on Howell Mountain. The grapes at CADE's mountain vineyards are thick skinned, low yielding grapes that produce wines with great intensity, tannin structure and ageability. Together, the wineries and their divergent vineyard sites and styles complement each other perfectly.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about CADE is the thought and care for the environment that went into the building and construction of the winery. CADE Winery has been awarded LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold Certification, their highest level awarded, by the United States Green Building Council. Essentially, LEED is a program that grades new buildings in five key areas of human and environmental factors including: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, material selected and indoor environmental quality. In fact, CADE is Napa Valley's first organically farmed, LEED Gold Certified Winery. Built in 2006, the CADE Winery is constructed entirely from renewable resources including glass, concrete and steel, in which 98% was from recycled materials. The walls are insulated with recycled denim. Natural lighting is used in every room of the winery. Their cellar is a cave that is tunneled into the volcanic rock hillside, providing a 15,000 square foot barrel storage facility that is naturally cooled, never requiring a cooling system. And, a whopping 99% of their annual energy needs are generated by solar panels. With all these initiatives, it is clear that CADE is LEEDing the way in sustainability, environmental conservation and world-class winemaking.

For more information about the dinner, please contact Kevin Pelley at Bern's Fine Wines & Spirits (813) 250-9463 or visit the website <http://www.bernswinefest.com/>

Rush in for Some Winter Cheese

By Kira Jefferson, Manager/Cheese Director

My resolution for 2010 was to eat more cheese than any other year. For the first time, I accomplished my goal and the numbers are staggering! Last year (according to my well maintained list of consumed cheeses) I tasted 39 sheep's milks, 71 goat's milks, 134 cow's milks, 19 mixed milks and 43 blue cheese selections from all over the World. I will help you with the math: that's 306 different cheeses! In celebration of this occasion, I picked a few cheeses we are serving at the restaurant right now that made my most memorable list!

Azeitão (ah-zay-DONH) was the most unique sheep's milk selection from 2010. Made in Portugal, this wheel is small and rustic. The cheesemaker uses cardoon thistle rennet to coagulate the milk, molds the curds into cloth and washes the wheels with brine. Azeitão is one of those sumptuous treats you can dig into the paste with a spoon. Just cut the top off by running your knife along the circumference and let it soften up. This cheese is rich, sweet, acidic and vegetal pairing perfectly with Tempranillo & Albariño wines.

Wisconsin is known for cow's milk cheese, and at Uplands Cheese Company they are embracing Old World style. The result is a beautiful wheel called Rush Creek Reserve. When allowed to reach room temperature, this soft goo-bomb is silky and runny showcasing flavors of a washed-rind that has been tenderly wrapped

in a strip of spruce bark and aged for 60 days. Rush Creek is not as stinky as some washed-rinds, but certainly has the smoky,



meaty spectacularness true to washed-rind character. Sip on a Riesling or Gewürztraminer and ponder how you let any year pass without this blissful combination.

On to the mixed milk category, Campo de Montalban is a Spanish cheese similar to Manchego only it is made with the perfect blend of cow, sheep and goat milks instead of just sheep's milk. The flavor is sweet with nuances of warm, caramelized onions. The richness of the three different milk types is delightful with Grenache or sherry. Campo de Montalban can be found in many of Chef Chad's recipes. He loves to grate it finely and scatter it like light snow on top of rich meats and produce.

You can bet that my resolution for this year is to eat even more cheese than I did last year, so stop in and try the three special treats while you still can. We will be on to the next cheeses soon.

For the Love of Scotch

By Dean Hurst, General Manager

Ron Burgundy famously said, "Scotch, Scotch, I love Scotch." I feel the same way! But... the road to my fascination has been a bit bumpy. There are so many labels and styles, single malts and blends to shift through, how does one define their preference? I would like to offer up a few models to follow on your journey to better drinking.

The key to introducing your palate to brown spirits, is starting with mild, approachable flavors! Most people begin drinking white wine, then transition into a light red, say Pinot Noir, and end up loving Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel or, my favorite, Syrah. Rarely does one go from zero right to oak-y, tannic, bop-on-the-head reds. The parallel could be rum, bourbon then scotch. They all experience extensive aging in oak barrels, which is a common thread, but the difference is night and day. Really great rum is a truly fantastic quaff, a shamefully overlooked spirit. Bourbon offers a similar sweetness, but more assertive characteristics take the spotlight. Scotch tips the scale just a bit more towards the robust, smoky flavors that make Scotch so unique.

Let's assume you have warmed up to the idea of drinking something straight, either neat or with ice, and you want to explore the next category, which happens to be scotch. Blends are a great place to start. They are often blended to be mild and easily accessible. Johnnie Walker Black is probably the most well known. But, Compass Box Asyla is, in my humble opinion, the prettiest gal at the ball. Light in color with soft aromas of vanilla and dried flowers with a silken finish that lingers just long enough, this is possibly the best aperitif whisky around!

Single malts are a different matter all together. Known for their unique malt characteristics, these whiskies can be separated by barrel treatment and peatiness. Macallan is aged in sherry barrels, which lends a certain sweetness, whereas Glenfiddich spends time in bourbon barrels, adding spicier notes. The level of peat in the spirit introduces smoke and even iodine notes that can be a bit overwhelming at first. Give it time. Lagavulin (sherry aged) or Talisker (bourbon aged) are good launch points. Ardbeg makes some of the biggest whiskies in the category, but they manage to keep a certain elegance and balance.

All scotch is whisky, but not all whisky is Scotch. A true statement by definition, but it doesn't begin to describe the nuances that make Scotch so special. For those that doubt, you are just going to have to trust me. The road may be long for some, but the destination offers rich rewards. Perhaps the first step is a Scotch cocktail? We have been known to make a really great cocktail now and again! Join us on March 3rd for an evening with Compass Box. Chef Chad has prepared a unique 6-course tasting menu to complement 6 of their award winning whiskies. Limited seating available.

CONTACT

Opening at 5 daily.
Friday & Saturdays until 11.
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please visit our website
www.sideberns.com