



Chef Chad's Blog

By Chad Johnson, Executive Chef

The beginning of spiny lobster season is a date we eagerly anticipate in our restaurant. August 6th was the opening day of the season this year, and our kitchen is already showcasing these local treats in a variety of preparations. Poached, grilled, roasted, or even fried, the succulent meat of the spiny lobster lends itself to an array of culinary applications.

In my opinion, one of the great food pairings is the combination of poached lobster and fresh mayonnaise. The lettuce wraps on our lounge menu take advantage of this deliciously simple combination. The richness of poached lobster and mayonnaise are balanced by the addition of fresh tomato, radish, and chopped fines herbes.

To add a salty finish to the wraps, we add pieces of crispy house made pancetta. In addition to the sweet shellfish flavor, the texture of lobster is one of the identifying trademarks of the culinary delicacy. Spiny lobsters have a firmer texture than Maine lobsters in a way



that I think makes them more versatile to cook. Our appetizer of Spiny Lobster Cavatelli pasta highlights this unique texture. Cavatelli is pasta made with ricotta cheese in the dough, what results is a small dumpling with a texture in between that of dried pasta and a potato gnocchi. The soft chew of the cavatelli plays beautifully against the firm bite of the spiny lobster. The dish is finished with pieces of braised fennel and a light lobster consommé.

As an entrée course, we're offering Spiny Lobster a la Plancha. For this dish, we peel the shell off of the entire lobster tail and marinate it with coriander seed and fresh mint. The lobster is roasted on our flat top grill, resulting in a sweet caramelized crust. To play up the sweetness of the lobster, we've paired it with a silky carrot puree, and a refreshing salad of pea tendrils. In place of the traditional lemon wedge, we're serving a spin on the classic French sauce grenoblaise, we finish the sauce with tangerine juice and olive oil instead of the classic brown butter. Garnishing the dish is a light fritter of the lobster leg meat seasoned with red chile and orange.

Preparing ingredients only when they are in season and at their peak of freshness is the inspiration behind all of our cuisine at Sidebern's. Right now that ingredient is Florida spiny lobsters.

The ABC's of Chardonnay

By Kevin Pelley, Wine Director

A few years ago American wine drinkers became tired of one of the noblest white wine grapes due to over manipulation by winemakers. This backlash was well deserved and some wine drinkers became members of the so called "ABC Club" – Anything But Chardonnay. In this timeframe, we saw the rise in popularity of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, Spanish Albariño, Italian Pinot Grigio and even Austrian Grüner Veltliner in America. But today, Chardonnay has made a rebound and is as popular and food friendly as ever before.

During Chardonnay's rapid ascent in popularity in America in the late 1980's and early 1990's, many winemakers chose to produce Chardonnay in a style that, though delicious, was overly oaky, overly buttery and finished with a hint of residual sugar, due to later than traditional harvest dates. In 1990, when Chardonnay overtook Riesling as the number one planted white wine in California, American palates loved these hugely structured wines with their rich, opulent mouthfeel and off-dry finish. If Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon was the big bold red that most Americans enjoyed, then this King Kong like interpretation of Chardonnay is what followed.

We currently offer five Chardonnay based wines by-the-glass from various regions including: Champagne, Italy's Friuli Venezia Giulia, Oregon's Willamette Valley, and California's Napa and Anderson Valleys. We believe there is a style for every palate.

Like most trends and styles, wine drinker's palates change, too. The current trend is a return to a more balanced, less oaky and

buttery style that complements, rather than dominates food. Here at SideBern's we offer many different Chardonnays from around the world and love pairing them with Chef Chad Johnson's farm fresh cuisine. Now that it is spiny lobster season, one of our current favorite pairings is chardonnay and lobster. These rich, succulent and sweet local delicacies pair beautifully with Chardonnay's rich, yet mineral and crisp characteristics. One favorite pairing is the Spiny Lobster a la Plancha with Newton's "Unfiltered" Chardonnay. The richness and texture of the spiny lobster is matched by the opulence of the wine. The Chardonnay is layered and complex with aromas of citrus blossom and tropical fruits. On the palate the wine is rich, yet balanced, with flavors of grilled pineapple, orange oil, macadamia nuts and caramelized sugar. The caramelized crust of the lobster and tangerine juice in the grenoblaise provide a perfect match for the wine and result in a pairing that we believe is a must try before the season is over!

Ode to Gym Socks

By Kira Jefferson, Manager/Cheese Director

Our sense of smell is sensational. It sharpens our awareness, warns us of danger, influences our mood, and even impacts who we love. Most importantly, smell is responsible for how we taste food. Of course our tongue experiences sweet, salty, sour, bitter and umami, but our nose takes care of the rest, like the emotions we encounter when our smell memory kicks in. As children, our sense of smell is the strongest. If only our first encounter with B. linens (the bacteria responsible for that pungent washed rind aroma) was as a young child in grandma's kitchen along with her warm chocolate chip cookies. Alas, most of us first encounter B. linens while suiting up in our itchy polyester uniform in the seventh grade gym locker room. This emotional memory can make it difficult to take the plunge into the world of washed rind cheeses, but it is worth the risk.

Every Friday night we hold Crush Hour in Bern's Fine Wines & Spirits. It is easy to tell the day of the week by the fragrance lofting through the restaurant. It makes my stomach growl and my energy level increase. My nose gets excited. The five cheese selections for the event sit out in the kitchen for an hour prior, coming to the perfect serving tempera-



ture. The microorganisms inside the cheese wake up and release their scent, permeating the entire property. I know this smell. It is dirty gym socks; it is stinky cheese.

Every time I regally carry my treasures through the dining room crowd to the wine shop, noses crinkle and heads turn. Once, a couple on a first date glanced up at me only to quickly snap their heads back down to look at their menus (better they pretend they didn't smell anything than ask if the other one noticed). Braver regulars have stopped me inquiring about the odor, to which I proudly respond somewhat like the following: "Oh this? It's Grayson, a domestic washed rind cheese made in Virginia. You can order it from our restaurant's list." Then I continue into the shop to place the crowning jewel of the evening on the counter.

Other stink bombs like the rustic Italian favorite Taleggio taste nothing like their aroma. Taleggio is tangy and meaty, but has a pleasant melt in your mouth feel that is quite exquisite. Looking for the perfect introductory washed rind cheese? Try Chaumes from France. It is typical of the French to use this as a cheese for their children. It has a soft, creamy texture and rich cow's milk flavor.

When first attempting this style of cheese avoid the rind. Most are edible, but all are definitely an acquired taste. Work up to it slowly and incorporate small pieces of the rind with the paste of the cheese. It is also best to enjoy washed rind cheeses at room temperature. Allowing the cheese to breathe and warm up will truly enhance your experience. Next time you are feeling adventurous (preferably not on a first date), stop in and sample what I endearingly refer to as a "gym sock cheese"!

The Unusual Suspects

By Dean Hurst, General Manager

Today's cocktail lists are steeped with history. As bartenders study the classics and find ways to reinvent the tried and true combination of yesteryear, we see more of the ingredients that have been long overlooked.



Bitters, amaros, vermouth and even egg whites are utilized to model creations that have stood the test of time.

Egg Whites would seem to be a strange item to find in a drink, but don't think twice. The texture of the drink is greatly enhanced when used properly. First, you have "dry shake" the all the ingredients without ice to emulsify the whites. Then, add the ice and shake it until your hands go numb. All this insures the white is broken down and that velvety texture is achieved. Farm fresh eggs are best, like the ones we use from Lake Meadow Farm in Ocoee, FL. Try our Silver Lining, which is basically a tequila sour with smoky mezcal folded into the egg foam and layered on top.

Next, bitters have made a huge come back. So much so that new products are popping up all the time, from rhubarb to celery bitters. We use them often to bring all the flavors of a cocktail together and add complexity. Peach bitters makes it's way into the aptly named Peach Barrel and Angostura Orange bitters rounds out our Rum Punch #2, which is a nod to the Planters Punch. Autumn is around the corner, in theory at least, and we will be using bitters in a handful of drinks.

The Italian's like bitter flavors, for the most part, and amaro's offer varying degrees. Campari is the most well known, personifying the bitter/herbal edge of this category. If you find it to be too much, try Aperol. Sweeter and less bitter, this liqueur pairs well with fresh citrus, like grapefruit, and can stand in for Campari in cocktails like the Negroni, which has found an almost cult following recently. Speaking of Negroni, inspired by a fellow bar geek from Portland, we aged a large batch in a Palm Ridge Whiskey barrel for 7 weeks with sublime effect. Yet another teaser for the soon to be released autumn list.

The spirits world is expanding at an awesome rate. We are making efforts to keep up with new developments by bringing the goods to you, from new spirits to trends in mixology. The menu might have a few oddities here and there, but don't hesitate to ask us to explain a drink in more detail. We are also hosting our first ever cocktail dinner on Thursday, September 23rd. Chef Chad has matched a selection of cocktails with his cuisine (think wine dinner meets cocktail hour, only with killer cocktails and world class food pairings). Please visit our website for additional details in our events section at www.sideberns.com.



Dine Tampa Bay's Restaurant Week

Starting Monday the 30th and continuing through Saturday the 4th, we will be participating in Dine Tampa Bay's restaurant week. Enjoy a three course meal for only \$35! Options will include items like our Cedar Key Clam Fricassee, Local Chicken Leg Confit and Lemongrass Rice 'Brulee'.

CONTACT

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

