



## Chef Chad's Blog

By Chad Johnson, Executive Chef

Many times with food the simplest things are the best; a perfectly crisp apple, a sweet juicy strawberry or a succulent slice of Prosciutto di Parma. The latter is one of my many food obsessions. Over the past couple of years our restaurant has put a focus on offering an array of charcuterie. We started with importing the best the world has to offer, from Spain's famous Jamon Iberico Bellota, to the lesser know Bresaola from Italy. In addition to the classic hams and other cured meats we've added a variety of preparations made in house, including pates, terrines, rillettes, and much more.

The best way to savor the options we offer is to try our Charcuterie Tasting. The tasting is a nightly changing selection of five different preparations, all served with a house made accompaniment designed to bring out the best qualities of the meat. On the tasting you may find anything from Jamon Serrano, a dry cured ham from Spain, garnished with coffee flavored mayonnaise (my homage to the southern red eye gravy), or a rich country style pork terrine, seasoned with cognac and studded with pistachios.

You will also see many forms of charcuterie



turning up in various preparations on our dinner and tasting menu. One of my favorites is our dish showcasing a Lake Meadow Farm's egg and chorizo. The egg is cooked en sous vide to achieve a very rich poached egg like texture, then garnished with a jus of chorizo, more chorizo shavings, and crispy fried snails, it all adds up to a very unique take on the classic combination of sausage and eggs.

In our lounge we offer an a la carte menu with eleven different charcuterie preparations. One of the most popular selections is our Foie Gras Chicken Liver Rilette. The Rilette is a classic French preparation that results in a silky mousse like texture. We contrast that richness with an apricot mostarda and crispy grilled slices of baguette. Many of the charcuterie preparations contain no more than three or four ingredients, yet they are so complex and flavorful. I'm still constantly amazed at how satisfying the simplest of things can be. Next time you visit us have a glass of wine and some cured ham and see for yourself.

## Amarone, That's Amore!

By Kevin Pelley, Wine Director

As the Florida summer finally ends and the cooler weather arrives, so does our desire for richer, fuller and heartier food and wine. This time of year makes me think of red Bordeaux, California Cabernet Sauvignon, Cote-Rotie and especially Amarone. These wines have more body, richer and more robust flavors that seem out of place in the warmer months. Like the weather, Chef Chad Johnson's menu incorporates richer flavors like winter mushrooms, chestnuts and pumpkin fondue with heartier dishes like elk striploin, braised lamb shank with crispy sweetbreads and house-made charcuterie. One of my favorite wines for the flavors of winter and dishes like these, is an Amarone della Valpolicella Classico.

Amarone is one of Italy's greatest red wines and literally translated means bitter-strong, which is an apt description of the wine's style due to a unique method of production known as appassimento. Appassimento is the process of partially drying the regions three indigenous grapes: Corvina, Rondinella and Molinara on straw mats in well ventilated lofts. The fruit is left to resonate for approximately four months which intensifies the grapes flavors and concentrates its sugar levels resulting in a dry wine with flavors of cherry, black plum, raisin, dried fig, dates, cocoa powder and earth. Amarone is a natural match with rich dishes such as stew, game meats, grilled beef and strong cheeses.

At SideBern's we offer numerous Amarones from great producers such as Bertani,

Remo Farina, San Giuseppe and Masi and are proud to offer a great range of vintage depth including Amarones from 2004, 2002, 2001, 1993, 1990 and even a bottling from 1988! On your next visit to SideBern's, please consider one of these incredible wines with one of Chef Chad Johnson's dishes that feature the flavors of winter.

## Cheese Art

By Kira Jefferson,  
Manager/Cheese Director

Many restaurants create cheese programs to complement already existing wine, cocktail and beer lists. However, for us, the artisanal cheese program grew from a rather different seed. Chef Chad's imaginative and seasonal cuisine is loaded with affection and soul. The local and small farms whose products grace the menu at different times of the year share this passion. Dairy farms and creameries also exude this same love for the land and the animals they tend. These examples of commitment provided the motivation to round out our patrons' dining options with thoughtfully designed cheese art, showcasing the devotion in every cheese course we offer. Blissful combinations of cheese and seasonal ingredients adorn the tables in our dining room, and in two short years the list has grown from a modest variety of five to a dazzling selection of eighteen. However, after a lot of research and a gluttonous amount of tasting, it quickly became apparent that we needed to offer more than just individual cheese selections. Soon Chef Chad was creating composed cheese courses as appetizers, desserts and for his daily tasting menu.

The creative process begins with the ordering. Chef Chad and I research hundreds of cheeses and decide together what to bring to the restaurant. We anticipate each cheese delivery as if Santa Claus himself were driving the truck. The kitchen staff gathers around as packaging paper piles precariously on the floor and the newest treasures are unearthed on the stainless steel prep table. From the moment each cheese is unwrapped, it is examined, sniffed, washed, allowed to breathe, and repackaged by the adoring SideBern's staff. With each new taste and aroma, there is a memory of a past ingredient that will perfectly highlight the new cheese, or the tasting begins anew until the next euphoric combination is found.

One of the creative compositions you can look forward to seeing on the winter menu is Chef Chad's Orchard Salad. This gem starts with lettuces from Cahaba Clubs



Farm in Odessa. The greens are tossed tenderly in pistachio vinaigrette then studded with poached Bartlett pears, medjool dates, more pistachios and Fourme d'Ambert blue cheese from France. To top of this stunning salad, a see through layer of port gelee rests over the greens gently forming to the shapes underneath and adding a vibrant ruby red color. The blue cheese Chef Chad picked for this starter is creamy and moist. It is a very compact blue with rich mold pockets. Fourme d'Ambert's full-bodied flavor is the perfect salty contrast to the other winter ingredients in the Orchard Salad.

Another clever masterpiece rounding out the salad selections this winter is the Roasted Root Vegetables. Beets, turnips and carrots are tossed in sherry vinegar and glazed in their own juices to intensify their natural flavors and create a vibrant shine. A trilogy of unique mustards specks the plate while duck ham, baby lettuce crowns and raw radish complete the dish. All of the above ingredients are perfectly matched, however, the crowning moment for this menu item is the addition of our house-made farmer's cheese. Chef Chad coagulates milk by adding cider vinegar and salt. The result is a soft pillowy fresh cheese that adds silky texture to the vegetables and cools the sharp radish and mustard layers.

Our regular, tasting, vegetarian, lounge and dessert menus are completely inundated with artisanal cheese. Chef Chad believes that the natural beauty, depth and flavor of a product will always be apparent to you, our SideBern's guest. Just as he pours his heart, soul and imagination into



his food, he knows that the same devotion has gone into the production of the artisanal cheeses he uses. Cheese is one of the most ancient and honored tools available to a chef, and here at SideBern's, Chef Chad takes full advantage.

## Old is New Again

By Dean Hurst, General Manager

Prohibition brought an end to all the glory that was the American cocktail culture, sending our best bartenders across the pond to establish great watering holes in London, Paris and all around Europe. These dark ages of drinking brought us bath tub gin, artificially colored whiskey and the complete absence of quality cocktails. Only in the last few decades have we seen a rebirth of the art of bartending and a return of well crafted drinks that have stood the test of time, and with good reason.

We spend days shifting through out of print cocktail books looking for inspiration; a recipe that appeals to our seasonal themes or reminds us of something we once had poured in our glass. The East India Cocktail is just that type of cocktail. Cognac is the base spirit, which implies winter, and red curacao is a favorite cordial behind our bar. Add pineapple, maraschino and dash some bitters to unlock a tremendous drink for the season, straight from 1882 to your martini glass.

On the other hand, I take great pleasure in retooling a classic to make it our own. The Sazerac dates back to the mid 1800's, but to this day is a whiskey drinkers delight: rye, Peychaud bitters, a sugar cube, absinthe, easy. We replaced the rye with Woodford Reserve Bourbon and the absinthe with Yellow Chartreuse to create something new for the modern palate. I call it the Big Easy in honor of it's birthplace, New Orleans.

Finding the right balance between new and old, sweet and dry, even the right color or name can be a challenge for a drink list. Variety is the key. Also, familiarity. We give to you the classic eggnog. Chef Chad worked through the recipe a number of times to get it just right, hence the name Chad's Nog #3. Tuaca, an Italian liqueur, gives the perfect aromas and palate pleasing spices to this December tradition, but only through Christmas.

Today's cocktail enthusiast looks for an attentive bartender with quick wit and a finesse behind the stick. Pouring a top notch drink every time is a sure way to build a devoted group of loyal tipplers. This Saturday, lift your drink in honor of the 21st Amendment, which repealed the Volstead Act on December 5th 1933, and celebrate the cocktail, or wine and beer for that matter! One good thing about Prohibition: women could drink right beside the men in the speakeasies and they never looked back. I say, "Cheers to that!"

SideBern's  
Winter's Wonder

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