



Chef Chad's Blog

By Chad Johnson, Executive Chef

After a long winter of rich, rustic food, we are starting to see the arrival of spring in the Sidebern's kitchen. No other season provides such a dramatic contrast from the previous as the transition from winter to spring. The beginning of spring brings with it an array of products, many of which are wild and at their peak for only a short moment. As always, our menu will showcase these ingredients, plus the bounty of our farm and other local farmers.

Few things represent spring as much as green vegetables. Nettles, peas, tender lettuces, fiddlehead ferns, the list can go on and on. Of all of quintessential spring vegetables,



asparagus is my favorite to work with. The French refer to asparagus as the 'King of Vegetables'. But because of the ability to source products year round from around the world, this King has lost some of the mystery and grandeur it deserves. The domestic growing season for asparagus is very brief and very fickle, and because we only serve domestic asparagus, when it arrives it will be featured on our menu in a number of ways. We'll be serving chilled poached asparagus, roasted asparagus with a poached egg from Lake Meadow Farms, and it will serve as a garnish for our Filet Mignon.

Salmon is without question my favorite fish to cook and eat. Anyone who has ever started a conversation regarding seafood with me knows my passion for salmon. The fish you see year round in most grocery stores pales in comparison to the seasonal delicacy that will be plucked from rivers along the west coast. The salmon we'll be serving is from the Columbia River on the Washington/Oregon border. Columbia River Salmon contains almost double the fat content of commercially farmed salmon. This fat content is what makes the flavor so intense and the texture so rich and velvety. We'll be offering this treat in a cooked and raw preparation. The filets will get a quick dance across our charcoal grill, just to give the fish a light smoke flavoring before being finished with a simple vinaigrette of local citrus. In keeping with our belief of utilizing the whole animal, the belly, cheeks, and collar will be minced into a tartar that will be accompanied by a riff on a classical tabouleh.

Asparagus and Salmon are only two of the many ingredients that are the essence of spring. There are so many more that it's almost overwhelming. Halibut, morels, miner's lettuce, squash blossoms, the list is exhausting. I can't say for sure which of these amazing items will be on our menu during your next visit, but you can be assured that what is there will only be what is at its peak of freshness.

Napa Valley Pioneers

By Kevin Pelley, Wine Director

Joseph Phelps is the California equivalent of a French First Growth. Founded in 1972, the Joseph Phelps winery is synonymous with quality, innovation and a pioneering spirit. Joseph Phelps was one of the original Rhone Rangers, a coterie of producers who had a love and admiration for the varietals grown in the Rhone region of France, particularly Syrah. In fact, Joseph Phelps is responsible for sparking an industry wide craze in the varietal with the release of their 1974 Syrah, a grape that had seen little or no plantings or production for the last half century in California. This pioneering spirit continued in the Spring of 1978 when Joseph Phelps released their inaugural bottling of Insignia, the first California wine comprised of Bordeaux varietals under a proprietary label.

Today, Insignia is one of California's finest wines, having earned top five wines in the world status from Wine Spectator three times, including Wine of the Year honors with their release of the 2002 vintage. Perhaps lost in this rich history of innovation is Joseph Phelps Vineyards' commitment to the environment and their use of biodynamic farming practices.

Biodynamic Farming is a holistic, sustainable form of farming that views the farm as a unified whole. The movement is credited to Austrian, Dr. Rudolf Steiner, and is based on the farm or vineyard becoming self-contained and self-supporting in every way possible. This is achieved by organic practices including composting, careful water management,

planting cover crops, promoting biodiversity and recycling of nutrients. These measures foster healthier vineyard land than the traditional farming methods of employing pesticides and chemical fertilizers. The Joseph Phelps winery began turning to these vineyard practices in the early 1980's. Their primary philosophy is to maintain, preserve and ecologically enhance their vineyards.

There are seven key ecological elements in biodynamic farming: appropriate production, biodiversity, soil fertility, natural crop nutrition, whole farm self-sustainability, integration of domestic animals and biologically integrated pest, disease and weed prevention and management. One of the more interesting examples of biodynamics is the introduction of beneficial bugs such as butterflies, ladybugs, lacewings, parasitic wasps and honeybees that prey upon vineyard insect pests including sharpshooters, leafhoppers and mealybugs. Sheep have also been introduced during vine dormancy to graze between vines and also provide natural fertilizer (humus), while not causing the common problem of soil compaction and root damage caused by heavy farm equipment.

Ultimately, you can feel good about purchasing wines from Joseph Phelps Vineyards as they are excellent stewards of the land. So raise a glass to your health! Interested in learning more about Joseph Phelps, their wines and biodynamic farming? Joseph Phelps winemaker Ashley Hepworth will visit SideBern's for a dinner on Friday, April 16th to kickoff Bern's 13th Annual Winefest. For more information, please visit www.bernswinefest.com.

This One Goes Out to Ewe

By Kira Jefferson,
Manager/Cheese Director

"Sheep's milk makes the best cheese," states Max McCalman in his book, *Mastering Cheese*, and I would have to agree. With lambing season just around the corner, it is the perfect time to talk up the rich, gamey milk that creates so many wonderful fresh and aged cheeses. During a staff-training course, a server once asked me what was so different about sheep's milk cheeses. To her, they were always a favorite on a cheese board due to their deep character and multiple layers of flavors. There is more to this than just opinion.

What strikes me as the most pertinent (and perhaps romantic) fact about sheep is that they are survivors. Sheep thrive in conditions of strong wind, temperature extremes and rocky footing that would be intolerable to cows. Sweet and crunchy Zamorano from Spain, creamy and tart Dodoni Feta from Greece, and the oily, slightly sharp Istara from the French Pyrenees are examples of sheep's milk cheeses from such places.

Another important point is that sheep



have a shorter lactation period than cows and produce less milk per day in relation to their body weight. Mother Nature makes up for the lesser quantity with milk that contains more fat and protein. Because it is thicker, with a higher percentage of solids, it is closer to the final product of cheese than cow's milk, which holds more water. If your heart skipped a beat when you read "more fat" in a previous sentence, remain calm. The fat globules in sheep's milk are smaller, making them easier to digest and quite good for you.

In comparing sheep's to goat's milk, the distinctions are decidedly fewer. However, since I have to agree that sheep's milk makes the best cheese, certainly there must be some differences between the two. Sheep's milk pairs naturally quite well with a wide variety of wines and beers. Depending on the cheese and its age of course, you can sip Sangiovese, Burgundy, Chianti, Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier, Rose, Sherry, Amber Ale, Rioja, Prosecco, Brown Ale, Tempranillo, Riesling and an abundance of others while noshing on sheep's milk cheeses. Sheep's milk is also quite hardy and stands up to treatments like pasteurization, thermization, freezing and even storage in plastic wrap. It will maintain its unique characteristics through all of the above and live a lot longer than counterpart cheeses put through the same set of circumstances.

Indeed, apart from the milk type used, other factors like terroir, production, and cheese making method significantly affect the final product. However, with spring finally around the corner, it's a perfect time to join us for a plate of our beautiful sheep's milk selec-

tions. As the days grow tantalizingly warmer, put a spring in your step with silky, tangy and perfectly ripe Cana de Oveja paired with Quince Paste or balsamic and juniper rubbed Pecorino Ginepro accompanied by candied black olives. The complex and creamy San Andreas made at Bellwether Farms in California is the perfect indulgence when drizzled with hazelnuts and lavender honey. Stop in and see, ewe deserve it!

Strawberries –

The gateway fruit

By Dean Hurst, General Manager

Strawberries mark the beginning of the fresh berry season. From now until late summer, berries become a controlling factor on our drink list. Muddled, infused or pureed into a syrup, our cocktails take on the flavors and colors of these delicate fruits. Let's discuss a few uses for this local produce and see why it is so alluring. Strawberry and basil is a classic profile that makes for a great cocktail. I really like bourbon with this combination, but most spirits could fit in this recipe. Muddle the strawberries, add basil, bourbon, lemon juice, a bit of simple syrup and shake with ice. Taste with a straw while your mix is still in the shaker to see if you need to adjust, then pour into a martini glass. Now, place a few drops of aged balsamic on top and finish with a basil sprig. The combination is as timeless in a glass as it is on a plate!

Next, strawberry and rhubarb perfectly share the piecrust with a balance of sweet and tart and the glass is also a welcome



vessel for this pair. We made a syrup last year with berries and fresh rhubarb juice for our rum based Rum Berry drink. This year's Soju Berry combines fresh strawberry syrup, rhubarb bitters and Tyku's soju, a distillate made from rice with a clean flavor and low alcohol (less than 24%). This bright, refreshing blend fits nicely into the calorie conscious trends without sacrificing flavor. Aromatic bitters is a great way to add depth to a drink, but watch out for the heavy hand. It can also take over every aspect of your new creation.

A final recommendation is experimentation. The Mojito and Margarita are top of mind, but don't stop with the easy drinks. Muddled fruit can jump in to replace, or enhance, cordials in most libations, like the Cointreau in a Cosmopolitan. The Strawberry #9 is one such trial that produced a winner for the list. Belvedere released a new vodka with awesome botanicals and herbs called Belvedere IX. We jumped at the idea to test it out and strawberries happened to be in the cooler that day. The recipe is not that different from the Cosmo. Fresh berries, lemon juice, simple syrup and a touch of Rex Liqueur des Alps from Bern's cellar brought out all the cool flavors in just the right layers.

Florida almost lost it's prized crop this year due to day after day of record lows. Alas, we find ourselves overwhelmed with beautiful berries once more. Try one of our new concoctions or bring a bunch home and see what you can create to put in your glass.



BERN'S
WINEFEST
#13

WINEFEST TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE!

TICKETS FOR THE 13TH ANNUAL BERN'S WINEFEST ARE STILL AVAILABLE ON THE WEBSITE & INSIDE BERN'S FINE WINES & SPIRITS. SIDEBERN'S IS PLEASED TO PRESENT THE KICK-OFF WINE DINNER FEATURING OUR AWARD-WINNING CUISINE PAIRED WITH THE WINES OF JOSEPH PHELPS. FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT-

WWW.BERNSWINEFEST.COM

CONTACT

We are open:

Monday- Saturday 6 - 11pm.
813.258.2233

please visit our website
www.sideberns.com