



GOOD TASTE



WE ARE HERE FOR YOU.

"One of the things I really like about using Superior Senior Care is their ability to work with my specific goals and interests. I never thought I would find a service that could not only help me with tasks inside my home, but also outside. I was beginning to have a difficult time with my favorite hobby—gardening. Now, with a little help from my caregiver, my garden has never looked better! I can't give you and all of the Superior family enough thanks. – Linda W.

Personal Care • Bathing Assistance • House keeping • Medication Reminders
Meal Preparation • Shopping Assistance • Transportation/Errands



Call Us Today for a
No Obligation Quote.

501-313-1737

www.superiorseniorcare.com

Visit superiorseniorcare.com or call to learn more about professional care in the comfort of your home.

Serving Batesville, Benton, Conway, El Dorado, Fayetteville, Fort Smith, Helena, Hot Springs, Jonesboro, Southeast Arkansas, Little Rock, Mtn. Home, Paragould, Pine Bluff, Rogers, Russellville, Texarkana & Wynne

FIRST TASTE

TABLE 28

FRESH OFF A TOTAL RENOVATION, THIS 3-YEAR-OLD WEST LITTLE ROCK EATERY HAS FOUND ITS PLACE IN ARKANSAS' FINE DINING

BY KATIE BRIDGES | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ARSHIA KHAN



— — —
TABLE 28

1501 Merrill Drive
 Little Rock | (501) 224-2828
 table28lr.com

BEST DISHES

Quail “lollipops”; blackened Chilean sea bass with chipotle-blue-cheese butter and succotash; calamari “schnitzel”; shrimp cake with fennel-apple slaw; meatloaf; cioppino with squid-ink pasta; strawberry crisp

BEST BAR FARE

Fried Brussels sprouts with bacon and pecans; spicy shrimp and bacon grits; street tacos; gin-thyme cocktail

KID FRIENDLY?

Definitely more of a date-night spot—better book a babysitter

PRICE RANGE

\$14 to \$35 for entrees; \$3 to \$8 for happy-hour bites

HOURS

4-9 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 4-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Happy hour runs 4-7 p.m. Monday through Friday

RESERVATIONS

Recommended, especially on weekends

I can't find a place to park. Which is quite surprising, at least at first, especially considering this is west Little Rock, land of big boxes and bigger asphalt lots. And then I remember that the restaurant I'm heading to—the 3-year-old Table 28, housed in Vesuvio's former location—is in a hotel (the recently renovated Burgundy Hotel), and that it's set to be a big weekend for Little Rock (the marathon and all). I wedge myself in between a black Mercedes and a mud-splattered SUV and shrug it off. I've got a reservation to keep.

But although the parking lot's full, there's no one in the lobby. There are no bellhops ushering weary travelers to the rooms, no guests peering down into the atrium. And there's no one at the hotel restaurant's easy-to-miss host stand, located just outside its doors—just to the right of a simple neon sign touting “Table 28.” Until there is.

“Ohmygoodness, I'm so sorry!” the hostess says, hurrying out to greet me. “Please, right this way.”

I follow her the few steps down into the restaurant's newly revamped dining room—so new that an aroma best described as “new carpet” mixes and mingles with the scents wafting out of the kitchen—and I get it. *This* is where everyone is. *This* is why the hostess was out of breath. This is ... unexpected for a weeknight in Little Rock?

It's not a huge space, but it's packed. The lights are low, and ambient music's on, and there's a cacophony of muffled laughter and stemware clinks and the tinny rustling of forks and knives and spoons. I settle into a long gray-leather banquette and start to peruse the menu. And as I look up to glance around the room, taking in the freshened-up space—the sleek modern sconces, the warm walnut walls, the sculptural, bare-wire chandeliers, the minimalist art—my mouth must be ajar because my waiter says, “I know, right? That's a lot of people's reaction. They just stop and stare, especially if they knew what it was like before.”

I try to hide my surprise, not only at the transfor-



mation of the space, but also at the hard-to-miss *busyness* of the place. (Fine-dining establishments, especially places with things like pork jowls and bone marrow on the menu, are typically a hard sell in Little Rock, after all.) Playing it cool, I busy myself with the menu. And editor that I am, the first thing that jumps out at me are the quotation marks—because they're everywhere. Calamari “schnitzel.” Scallops “surf and turf” with beef cheeks. Pork shank “redemption” with candied-apple gremolata. Tongue and cheek “oh yea.” *Clearly*, I'm thinking, *this is a chef who doesn't take himself too seriously*. But then I look closer. There's oxtail with butternut-squash ravioli, but there's also meatloaf. There's scallop-studded cioppino, but there's also sweet-tea-brined fried chicken. There's beef carpaccio with a goat-cheese crème fraiche, but there's also shrimp and grits. And there's something called “quail bird lollipops,” and yes, I'd like

to have those, please.

As I devour them—they're tender nuggets of ground quail, flash-fried and tossed in a Tabasco-tinged sauce; a playful take on Buffalo wings, in case you're curious—I start to wonder about the chef and co-owner, Scott Rains. It takes some serious culinary *cajones* to put together a menu like the one I have in front of me. So why did he do it? *How* did he do it? Was it trial and error? Does he have a screw loose? Did he knock back one too many of those cucumber martinis I've seen floating around the dining room (and yes, I'll have one of those, too, please) before he put pen to paper? I've got questions. But by the time my “blackened” Chilean sea bass arrives on its bed of gussied-up succotash and chipotle-blue-cheese butter, I think I'm starting to put my finger on it.

Maybe he just gets it.

Little Rock's not New York City. It's not

Chicago. It's not even Dallas. It's casual and comfortable. Southern and straight-forward. And sure, we've got some progressive folks here. And of course, we've got a burgeoning “food scene.” But that doesn't make us a city brimming with palates eager to shell out \$65 for a three-course tasting menu—particularly if that menu includes things like crispy chicken skin and calamari filets and confit of cabbage, like Scott's. But his dinner menu also offers a killer burger and a shrimp po'boy. It's high-end, it's low-end, but to me, it seems like it's all got something in common: creativity, tempered by a healthy dose of accessibility.

A few days later, sitting down with Scott—who's swapped his chef whites for loose-fitting jeans and a blue-camo Patagonia trucker hat—at his bar, I get confirmation that my observations weren't far from the truth. It's 1:30 in the afternoon on a Wednesday, and Scott's restaurant is quiet. Empty. He leans



“I FEEL LIKE I’LL DO THINGS HERE THAT I REALLY DON’T SEE OTHER PEOPLE TRYING— LIKE, IF I WANT TO PUT A PIG FACE ON THE MENU, I’M NOT SCARED.”

back in his bar stool as he talks, and his words are slow and thick with the South. Within minutes of visiting with him—learning of his two decades as a chef in San Francisco; of his first Arkansas restaurant, the now defunct (but much-loved) Horseshoe Vineyard near Hot Springs; of his passion for fishing—I start to put together the pieces.

He’s got a big-city background, but as a Malvern native, he’s as small-town Southern as they come. He’s willing to push boundaries—“I feel like I’ll do things here that I really don’t see other people trying here,” he says, “like, if I want to put a pig face on the menu, I’m not scared”—but he’s also been in charge of enough establishments to know what sells. He’s innovative but doesn’t stray far from solid, time-tested technique—the tools and tricks his grandfather might have employed when he was executive chef of The Arlington Hotel in the ’40s. And he’s constantly evolving and evaluating, tweaking and toying, trying and trying again. And as we chat, and I think back over the menu, it’s all there. It’s him. And darn it if it doesn’t just *work*.

As I walk out of the lobby and back into the day, already making plans to pop by later for happy hour since I can’t get that cucumber martini or those quail lollipops off my mind, the parking lot’s empty—but I know it’ll be wedging-room only by the time the sun sets tonight. **AL**



PHOTOGRAPHY
BY ARSHIA KHAN

MADDIE'S PLACE CHEF
BRIAN DELONEY KNOWS
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO
CELEBRATE THE WEATHER
TURNING WARM—AND
THAT'S BY BOILING UP A
POT OF MOUTHWATERING
MUDBUGS, *CHER*

BY
MARIAM MAKATSARIA

WORTHY CRAWLS



FROM LEFT Even though a crawfish boil is typically a stand-around affair, a festive table is set on the rooftop patio of Argenta Place in North Little Rock. Nearby, chef Brian Deloney preps his haul for the big moment.

HE STRIDES DOWN

the open terrace on Argenta Place's rooftop, through the chattering guests, all the way to the railing, and lights a cigarette. He's engaged in a conversation with his father, a clean white dish towel clutched between his pinkie and palm. Brian Deloney—amicable, casual, the kind of guy you'd expect to see behind a grill next door—is the man of the evening, the chef of this meal his friends and family have come to enjoy. But in looking at them as they stand elbow to elbow, in hearing the sounds of bottle caps and corks popping open, in listening to Brian's country music blaring through the speakers, it's clear this is more than just a bunch of people congregating around a well-planned, well-cooked and well-prepared meal. This is an *event*, a simple one at that, an entire-evening affair of food, booze, conversation—and very little else.

It's spring in the South, and for Brian,

the chef at Little Rock's Maddie's Place and a one-time resident of New Orleans, that means one thing: crawfish. Although his bona fides include stints at fine restaurants in NOLA and Las Vegas, and working with the likes of Emeril Lagasse for all of 10 years, Brian's no stranger to throwing a gratifying "crawfish party" (as he calls it). And when he's not having a crawfish boil, he's at one—even though you'll never see one taking place at his restaurant. Because to Brian, it's not a "restaurant, sit-down-type thing." It's not something he can ladle in a fancy bowl. And just like gumbo in New Orleans, there are no hard-and-fast rules as to what makes a good pot of crawfish. Everybody's a little bit different somehow. And you never know why, he says. It's just the way they were taught—recipes passed down, tweaked or, perhaps, changed altogether.

Brian makes his way back to the aluminum stock pot, which sits on a four-legged patio

CONTINUED ON PAGE 59



BOIL UP SOME MUDBUGS THE BRIAN DELONEY WAY P. 54

"IT'S ALL ABOUT FAMILY AND FRIENDS AND, OBVIOUSLY, GREAT FOOD," BRIAN SAYS. "IT DOESN'T GET ANY BETTER THAN THAT."



BLACK-EYED
PEA HUMMUS
P. 54



BRIAN KEEPS APPETIZERS LIGHT AND MELLOW—LIKE THE CRAB CAPRESE SALAD (P. 54) BELOW—AT HIS "CRAWFISH PARTIES," SO HIS GUESTS' PALATES AREN'T OVERWHELMED WHEN IT COMES TIME TO DIG INTO THE SPICY MUDDUGS. FOR DESSERT, HE RELIES ON SIMPLE, COOLING TREATS, LIKE A TRIED-AND-TRUE BANANA PUDDING (P. 55).



JUMBO LUMP
CRAB CAPRESE
SALAD
P. 54



"Sometimes too much to drink is barely enough."
Mark Twain

BLACK-EYED-PEA HUMMUS

By swapping out chickpeas in favor of good ol' black-eyed peas, Brian puts a Southern spin on this picnic-friendly favorite.

Serves 12

- 4 cups black-eyed peas, cooked (or substitute 3-4 cans)
- 1/4 cup ground cumin
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon Creole seasoning
- Salt to taste

Combine all ingredients in a food processor, and process until smooth. Serve with pita chips—Brian likes to fry his, then spice them with Creole seasoning.

JUMBO LUMP CRAB CAPRESE SALAD

Tossing a pound of jumbo lump crab into Brian's take on a Caprese amps up a simple, spring-y salad. "It's hearty, but not too bold," he says, "which is perfect before things get spicy with the crawfish."

Serves 12

- 1 pound jumbo lump crab meat
- 8 vine-ripened tomatoes, diced
- 1 red onion, diced
- 10 basil leaves, sliced into a chiffonade
- 6 ounces fresh mozzarella, diced
- 2 tablespoons balsamic syrup*
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Toss all ingredients together until mixed well.
Serve with grilled toast points.

*To make balsamic syrup, simmer a cup of balsamic vinegar over low heat until reduced by half. Allow to cool.

CRAWFISH BOIL

The first rule of crawfish boils is that there are no rules, Brian would be quick to tell you. But there are some guidelines, like the ones the chef abided by for this celebration. "Everyone kind of makes it their own way, you know?" he says. "And that's the fun part."

Serves 12

FOR SPICE MIX:

- 4 cups Creole seasoning
- 3 cups kosher salt
- 2 cups black pepper
- 2 cups cayenne pepper
- 1 cup granulated garlic

'TIS THE SEASONING

No two families do a crawfish boil quite the same. Some purge the mudbugs, others don't. Some use pre-made seafood-boil seasoning products, others make their own. It goes without saying that there is no right or wrong way to go about doing it. But to prepare his seasoning mix, Brian pours granulated onion, granulated garlic, black pepper, salt, creole seasoning and cayenne pepper in a white plastic bucket with halved lemons and onions. And lastly, he trickles Crystal hot sauce into the vessel, splattering the sides and painting the lemons and onions a vibrant orange-red.



- 1 cup granulated onion
- 5 jumbo white onions, peeled and quartered
- 20 lemons, cut in half
- 1/2 gallon Crystal hot sauce

FOR BOIL:

- 50 red bliss potatoes (plan for 3-4 per person)
- 1 40-pound bag live crawfish
- 5 pounds andouille sausage, cut into chunks (plan for 2-3 sausage chunks per person)
- 15 ears of corn, shucked and cut in half (plan for 2 halves per person)
- 30 garlic cloves, peeled
- 5 pounds gulf shrimp

FOR SPICE MIX:

In a large container, combine the spices. Toss in the lemons and onions. Drizzle the hot sauce over the top, and mix to combine.

FOR BOIL:

Fill a 40-gallon boiler 3/4-full with water. Add spice mix and bring to a boil. Once boiling, add potatoes and cook for 10 minutes. Add corn, sausage, garlic and crawfish and cook for 15-20 minutes. Turn off heat and add shrimp. Let sit for 15-20 minutes to soak up seasoning. Drain and spread on a paper-lined table.

M.J.'S BANANA PUDDING

A good friend of the Deloney's—the eponymous M.J.—makes this on the regular for gatherings and get-togethers. "It's great for parties," says Brian, "because it makes a lot. And the leftovers are just as good!"

Serves 12

- 1 5.1-ounce box of instant pudding mix (vanilla or banana)
- 1 box vanilla wafers
- 2 cups cold milk
- 1 14-ounce can Eagle Brand sweetened condensed milk
- 1 16-ounce container Cool Whip
- 3-4 bananas, cut into rounds
- Caramel sauce, either store-bought or made ahead of time

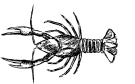
Combine pudding mix and milk in a large bowl. In another, mix condensed milk and Cool Whip.

Fold together. In a 13-by-9-inch pan, begin layering wafers, then bananas, then pudding mix, ending with pudding mix on top. To finish, crumble vanilla wafers on top, and drizzle with caramel sauce. Chill 2-3 hours before serving.



THE
BEST BREW
FOR A BOIL?
"LOUISIANA-MADE
ABITA," SAYS
BRIAN.

TIP: There usually aren't many crawfish remaining at the end of a boil—it's surprising how many of those crustaceans you can put away—but if you do have leftovers, Brian says to shell them, keep the tail meat, and save it for a crawfish pie or a chowder (which would also put those potatoes and corn to use).



HOW TO EAT A CRAWFISH:

- 1 Make sure you're holding the crustacean correctly, with the head between your index finger and thumb, and the tail between your dominant index finger and thumb.
- 2 Twist the tail (to the left or right) until it comes off. Discard the head.
- 3 Peel the first, widest layer (closest to the meat) of the tail's shell, like you would a shrimp's.
- 4 Pinch the tail, and pull the meat. Again, like you would with a shrimp.
- 5 Not satisfied? Try sucking the juices out of the mudbug's head. And if your crawfish is on the larger side, its claws can be cracked open for some more glorious meat.



"AFTER ALL THIS COOKING, I WIND UP NOT EATING ANY OF IT," BRIAN SAYS.

EVENT DESIGN CREDITS

LOCATION: Argenta Place Rooftop by New Argenta Fund LLC
STYLIST: Rosemary Hallmark
FLORAL: Becky Clement, Inspired by Nature
DECOR: Sweet Home | Clement, Mid-Towne Antique Mall
TABLES: Hank's Event Rentals

"THE DELONEYS ARE NEW ORLEANS PEOPLE," SAYS BRIAN'S FATHER, PHIL. "WE USED TO GO DOWN THERE ALL THE TIME. WE HAVE FAMILY THERE. HE'S GOT IT IN HIS BLOOD, TOO."

stove 2 feet from a propane tank and 3 feet away from a purple mesh sack hefty with close to 40 pounds of beady-eyed crawfish crawling on top of one another, feisty claws jutting in and out in a way that's more than a little unsettling. Reaching for a metal paddle, he lifts the hot lid off the pot with his towel and stirs the broth. A bright-orange foam has already begun forming on the surface around the bobbing halves of lemons and onions. It's a delicious moment. The air, already laden with spice and citrus, becomes even heavier with the aroma. He replaces the lid, and the steam continues to seep around the dented edges.

"It's all about family and friends and, obviously, great food. It doesn't get any better than that," he says, punctuating every other sentence with a short, abrupt chuckle. *Simple, good food.* He throws the phrase around like most Southern chefs do when describing their dishes, which are, to say the least, not so simple at all. "It's about getting away, getting to see people, 'cause life can get hectic."

The sleeves of his pastel-blue shirt are rolled up, revealing four tattoos, two on each forearm. A cap emblazoned with the letters "PK" (from a PK Grills steak cook-off he's just participated in) and that he doesn't take off the whole evening, sits on his head, and the floppy ends of hair at the nape of his neck look either wet or gelled. Brian's daughter, Madeline, after whom his restaurant is named, scampers by, a blur of purple pants and bright-pink bow on top of a high ponytail. The guests occasionally hover near the pot, beckoned by the siren call of the intoxicating smell. After a sniff and a "this smells great," or a "that looks good," they retreat to the bar tables at the far end of the rooftop, dipping Brian's creole-style pita chips into the black-eyed-pea hummus he has whipped up as an appetizer, or going for beer number two—or six.

For 30 minutes, Brian allows the slurry of seasonings he's prepared himself to soak into garlic cloves, andouille sausages, corn, potatoes and shrimp (for those who don't like or don't want to like crawfish). Then it's time. Brian and a friend, Jon Honeywell, lift the strainer basket and haul it to the table, the broth drip-drip-dripping a path. It takes two people to spread the mountainous heap of the bright-orange crustaceans on a brown-paper-lined table. Someone yelps as a couple of stray shrimp and potatoes tumble to the floor. Another shouts, "Five-second rule!" And "Incoming!" And "Hot stuff, right there!" There's more vapor waft-

ing from the scene than you'd see around a small bonfire.

After 10 minutes of incessant photo-taking, the guests start digging in. *Twist, snap, peel, pinch and tug. Repeat.* "You gotta suck the juices from the head," says Brian's friend Vince Foster as he throws his head back and takes it like a shot.

"The Deloneys are New Orleans people," says Brian's father, Phil Deloney, who's done his part to be festive by wearing a lobster-patterned shirt—but lobsters look like crawfish, so tonight it's a crawfish-patterned shirt—he'd gotten at a crab boil in Louisiana some years ago. His wife, Brian's mother, is sporting an identical shirt. "We used to go down there all the time. We have family there." Pointing at Brian, Phil adds, "He's got it in his blood, too."

But it's not just the Deloneys who pay homage to their Cajun roots. Hang around by the table enough, and you'll hear Louisiana-native Kellie Whilhite talk about the last time she and her husband Michael hosted a boil and gobbled down 32 pounds of crawfish—just between the two of them—before the guests had even arrived. It's easy to see why. Being from Louisiana, Kellie and Michael were weaned on annual crawfish feasts. She eats them at lightning speed, the way some people crack, pull apart and nibble on sunflower seeds—without much thought, almost second nature. "It's

funny, but the one sack that we do between our family, it's like the ritual, the rejoice of the season, you know?" she says, her fingers glistening wet. "We want to make that time the best. We want to make the next boil the best that it can be. That's our trial, for the right seasoning, the right spice, the right combination of everything. It's a time for us to celebrate, just the two of us and to bring the Louisiana tradition up here. We just indulge. Completely indulge." And when the real feast begins, Kellie and Michael, completely full and satiated, kick back and watch their entourage have at it.

A few hours on, the sun has already slinked out of sight. The patio heaters have kicked in. The cafe lights are on, shining against the dark sky. At the dining table (one of two tables on the rooftop), the candles are glowing but the chairs are empty.

"See?" Brian chimes in, glancing over at the crawfish table, which has slowly become more of a discarded-crawfish-shells table. He has finally let go of his dish towel. It now sits on the outdoor kitchen's countertop, splattered with orange stains. "This is where a crawfish boil winds up. Every single time." **AL**

TO PURGE OR NOT TO PURGE?

A lot of crawfish enthusiasts will tell you that the cardinal rule of a boil is to purge the mudbugs, which, simply put, means to rinse the crawfish in salt and water before cooking them to cleanse them of mud and debris. But there are others, like Brian, who think it's an old wives tale and that the saltwater bath doesn't do much at all. "I read a lot of articles that said [purging] doesn't do anything," he says. "I just wash them real good without salt. Everybody's got their own opinion on it, though. I just think it's an extra, unnecessary step."

LEFT A craft-paper-lined table loaded with the good stuff beckons just beyond the diners. Eventually, it's just too much to resist.

CELEBRATE YOUR FAVORITE ARKANSAS OUTDOOR ACTIVITY.



AT THE **CAMPSITE**. BY THE **POOL**. AFTER THE **RIDE**.

The Natural State has plenty of places to celebrate more this summer. Colonial has plenty of refreshments to make your outing complete.

MORE BRANDS. MORE STYLES. MORE VINTAGES.



11200 W. Markham St. • 501-223-3120 toll free: 866-988-8466
ColonialWineShop.com • facebook.com/ColonialWines
youtube.com/ColonialWineShop • find us on Yelp • Celebrate responsibly.

Enjoy big savings
each Thursday!

3

for
THURSDAY

15% OFF your
purchase of 3 or
more 750 ml bottle
SPIRITS.



WHEN YOUR FAMILY IS GROWING BUT YOUR SPACE IS NOT.

WE'RE HERE.



Mortgage Services

At First Security, we know home is where your heart is. We also know that your heart is sometimes happier with an extra room or two. Fortunately our mortgage team is ready to help make it happen, with local lending options that fit your family – and your budget. So bring on the nursery. When you're ready for a new home, First Security is here for you

ONLY **IN** ARKANSAS

FirstSecurity
Bank Better.

onlyinark.com | fsbank.com



FIRST TASTE

THE SOUTHERN GOURMASIAN

FOLLOWING THE DRAGON, HEAD TO TAIL

BY JORDAN P. HICKEY | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ARSHIA KHAN





Something is the same this afternoon. Fixed and familiar. Half of a steamed bun left on the oblong rectangular plate—half-eaten with the shadow of a thumb depression left in the side. Dollops of root-beer-colored hoisin shaped like fat teardrops and the state of Maine. Looking up, I see chef Justin Patterson of The Southern Gourmasian, a towel draped over his shoulder, chatting with our photographer about the dishes he's laid out for the shoot, so I return my attention to the plate in front of me and take the last bite.

It's something that sends the mind's projector clunking into motion, the dust cleared by an influx of familiar flavors: Here, the memory of a summer day on Capitol Avenue's broken-brick plaza. The sun is shining. A chorus of gas generators brap and punish ears, feeding their respective trucks with coiled lengths of hose like spaghetti. And out of one yellow-framed window comes a foil-lined Styrofoam box. Popped open, and there are hand-cut potato chips floppy with runoff from the adjacent pickles and mango salad. A trio of steamed buns are held upright by the close quarters; removal requires a little coaxing, and the bond between them is like skin to leather on

THE SOUTHERN
 GOURMASIAN
 219 W. Capitol Ave., Little Rock
 (501) 313-5645
 theSouthernGourmasian.com

BEST DISHES

Chicken wings with Thai peanut sauce and pickled pears; Thai chicken burger; Korean barbecue lettuce wraps; dark chocolate bread pudding

KID FRIENDLY?

Sure! There's not a kid's menu, per se, but if you've got little kimchi-eating gourmasians, there are plenty of dishes that may pique the kiddos' palates

PRICE RANGE

\$5 to \$10.50 for apps; \$7.50 to \$9 for steamed buns; \$7.50 to \$9 for sandwiches; \$8 to \$13 for main plates

HOURS

11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday to Thursday,
 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday

RESERVATIONS

Unless you're interested in nabbing a spot at one of the beer dinners, not necessary

a hot day. Two bites. A thumbprint depression denting the side.

Recalled now years later, as the aforementioned projector wheezes and the present reassembles and resolves into focus, it feels as though very little has changed. That is, of course, with the exception of The Southern Gourmasian's brick-and-mortar storefront, just a block west of the plaza regularly appropriated by food trucks, that the restaurant has called home since early 2015. As our photographer steps outside to grab something from her car and Justin ducks into the kitchen, I get up from my table, curious to see what dishes have been prepared for the day's shoot.

There are no steamed buns, no chips. Rather, there's a plate of chicken wings with a Thai peanut sauce and pickled pears. Chicken-fried cauliflower steak paired with a pear-ginger relish, snow peas and sauteed vegetables. Pork-belly corn dogs plated with pickled red onions and sweet-and-spicy mustard. Leaning over to examine a salad with pickled watermelon rind, pork belly and feta, I'm struck by how it all appears so new and different—that so little feels the same.

Or at least that's how it seems on the surface.

BUT OF COURSE something was going to be different.

As is the case with just about anything in this world, the more time you spend away from a given place, the more likely you are to be blindsided by change upon returning. And if you've been gone an especially long while, there's a fair chance what you remember of the original has been all but absorbed by the present iteration—the equivalent of taking an elevator up the evolutionary ladder, going from blobby single-celled microbe to iguana without knowing much of anything of the intervening floors. All of which is a very roundabout way of saying: There's been a pretty remarkable evolution at The Southern Gourmasian since the food truck first hit the streets in 2012, since the brick-and-mortar storefront opened in early 2015—and even, for that matter, in the past few weeks and months.

The truth is, in looking around the space, it's not terribly difficult to find reminders of that past, vestiges large and small, that suggest just how far the restaurant has come—largely because it's all in plain view. Recent visitors may have noticed a copy of *Southern Living* propped open just beside the cash register that names The Southern Gourmasian as one of the finest food trucks in the South. Said visitors may have also noticed a sheet of paper taped to the front door indicating the expansion of dinner hours and a black sandwich board asking patrons to seat themselves. (Also, if the western wall, the one on your right upon walking in, seems a little longer than you remember it, that may be because the black dry-erase-board menu is no longer there—a casualty of the new emphasis on full-dining service.)

And really, there's plenty more that could be said of the space—say, the well-loved copies of *Lucky Peach*, a quarterly food mag co-founded by Momofuku's David Chang, a pioneering NYC chef whom Justin counts among his key influences, stacked just in front of the back bar; or the copies of *The Modern Arkansas Table*, a very fine cookbook, indeed, some might say—but of course, none of these changes really matter so much as this: There's a menu. A printed one—with eight subsections and close to 40 options.

Now, for those who've been away for a very long while, this may come as something of a surprise. (Perhaps you've even thrown the magazine across the room, yelled "Zounds!" and spooked the dog.) And this would be an acceptable response because, again, for a long time, the menu wasn't like this. Items listed on the truck were broken into "Steamed Buns," "Sandwiches," "Bowls" and "Desserts," and marked off as they were sold out, which was often the case. On the restaurant menu—recently expanded back in late March—the same offerings continue to make appearances, but so, too, have others. Yet, for as different as those new dishes might seem, one point bears noting: The guiding principle behind most every item on the menu has been consistent ever since The Southern Gourmasian started, and that principle is balance. In terms of texture, in terms of flavor.

For the most part, even when more disparate flavors are thrown into the mix, the restaurant does a fine job in striking that balance. On the chicken wings, the Thai peanut sauce pairs nicely with the pickled pears. On the chicken-fried cauliflower steak, the flavors are subtler, the breading a fine foil for the pear-ginger relish and sauteed veggies. Perhaps the dish that fares best in this respect is a Thai chicken burger that tastes like summer, with cilantro playing off piquant red onions and pockets of edamame hummus that, when you find them, are like secrets.

In fairness, there are times when the marriage of flavors can be a rather shaky one, as if the things required to catalyze the fusion had been misplaced, with the flavors merely juxtaposed for the sake of it—where there's just a casual across-the-room nod of acknowledgement, as opposed to a full-on embrace. This is the case with the



corn dogs, where the batter all but blunts and masks the flavors of both the pork and the sweet-and-spicy mustards and pickled red onions. With the Korean fried chicken, it's more a matter of overcompensation; the entire dish is a take on the traditional Southern plate of fried chicken, greens and cornbread. But with nothing to provide the counter element—with the lack of an equal and opposite force coming up against it—the balance gets upset, skewed and lopsided with an emphasis on the salty. With those few exceptions, however, it's worth mentioning that the flavors are more often than not equally weighted—and a successful equilibrium established and maintained.

AS I'M MENTALLY interrogating the pork-belly-topped salad, I see Justin come around the corner. Looking over the dishes, he describes what's on each plate, calling out a few ingredients—the feta that comes from Kent Walker, the pork belly from Grass Roots Co-op—and telling the story behind the deceptively simply named “pork kimchi stew.” (Apparently, he listed it on the menu before he'd decided on a fixed recipe. And yes, you *really* ought to try it.)

As we return to my table, Justin moves my now-empty steamed-bun plate to the side (which I later decide must be a metaphor for something), and I ask him about the deliberateness of that balance—the extent to which that principle is in mind before he sits down to create a dish.

“It's just kind of intuitive in cooking, the goal when you create dinner,” he says. “Where it might be for some people balanced in terms of, *I want to have a starch, a vegetable, a meat*, from a chef's point of view, it's probably going to be more balanced in terms of, *I want to have something with textural contrast*. Let's take the salad that we just looked at with the pork belly. It's got something very rich and fatty, and on top of that, it's got a pickle, so it's sweet and acidic to cut through that. It's also got a little bit of raw onion.

“You're always thinking when you create a dish of how it's going to balance in the end,” he goes on to say. “Maybe the word balance isn't on your mind, but I think that kind of sums up what you do when you create—almost anything, really. I'm a musician, too, and when you talk about writing music—it gets mixed, and it gets edited, and it gets built into this thing that you can digest for your consumption. And we do the same thing with food. We take these different ingredients, and we put them on a plate, and we try to make them pleasing



to the eye and pleasing to the lips and fulfilling to the stomach.”

As he says this, I can't help but think about the piece of paper folded in my notebook—the menu for the restaurant's upcoming beer dinner with Stone's Throw Brewing, a monthly collaboration they started just about 2 1/2 years ago—and which never repeated a dish until they celebrated the dinner's two-year anniversary this past January. (In July, the five-course dinner will include Freckle Face pork loin, bourbon-braised peaches and sweet-corn-and-edamame succotash, and a peach rice-pudding brûlée.) In that moment, I'm struck by the fact that, despite all the steps The Southern Gourmasian has made forward, there's still consistency—because that guiding principle of balance has always been there.

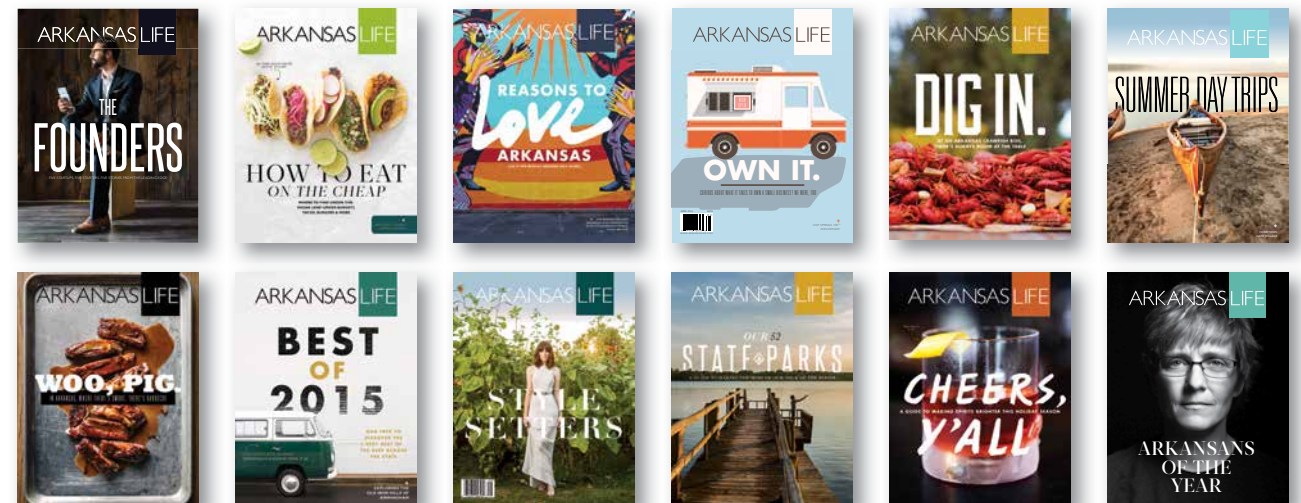
It's not until a few minutes later, however, that I really begin to understand the extent to which balance governs not only Justin's cooking but his business—something which, at face value, seems almost paradoxical. He talks about the “whole new menu thing” as

something that allowed him to feed both his creative and business-minded inclinations. There's movement forward while staying true to roots. There's being creative while maintaining the business. The concept is fluid, given to change, adjusting to whatever it needs to accommodate.

A FEW DAYS LATER, I happen to walk by the broken-brick plaza and see the yellow truck brapping away, along with a few others, a canister of propane perched on the back. Around front, I see a new-ish sign to the left of the window that reads, in part, *We began as a food truck in 2012 and we have grown to have a “brick + mortar” location in downtown Little Rock! The food truck scoots around + we cater like crazy! Thanks for your business! :)*

Stepping right, I look at the menu written on a narrow black dry-erase board, not quite wide enough to cover the old white one sticking out on either side, which are like wings with spidery cracks and the partial profile of a red dragon mostly obscured by the new menu. Written on the newer board in neon-green capital letters that slant up from left to right, there are subsections for bowls, sandwiches, buns and “everything else.” Best I can tell, they've already sold out of the shrimp grits, the almond-crust-chicken sandwich, the soy-and-ginger-braised short-rib buns. Then I see the steamed pork-shoulder buns and realize something is the same. **AL**

Enjoy *Arkansas Life* all year and at the best rate.



12 issues just ~~\$59.40~~
\$20!

ARKANSAS **LIFE**

Order online at www.arkansaslife.com
or call 800-482-1121.

FIRST TASTE

BRUNO'S LITTLE ITALY DELI

A TASTE OF HISTORY ON MAIN STREET

BY KATIE BRIDGES | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ARSHIA KHAN



There's something about the marinara. Something about the way one bite of it—one taste of its savory, herb-spiked tomato-ness—pretty well allows you to transcend time and place. I know this because I'm sidled up to a Formica bar in Bruno's Little Italy's new deli, all bright lights and white subway tiles and deli cases and metal shelves stocked with Italian dry goods, and if I close my eyes as I take another bite of this meatball sandwich, I could easily be lingering over a candlelit, red-and-white-checked table two doors down. I almost instinctively reach for my glass of Chianti.

"Oh," my husband says, lost in his veal ala Parmigiano sandwich. "Oh, that's good."

I take another bite, and this time I open my eyes to find the forest-green-walled dining room of Bruno's former Bowman Road location, which was very much "our place." It's 2009, and we're dawdling past closing time over a meat-sauce-speckled legal pad, chewing on pens and sipping wine while nervously jotting notes in columns denoted "PROS" and "CONS," stewing over whether or not we should up and move to Washington, D.C. (The "pros" had it, in case you're curious.)

"Order up!"



BRUNO'S LITTLE ITALY DELI

308 Main St., Little Rock
(501) 313-4452

BEST DISHES

Jimmy's Poor Boy; meatball ala Parmigiano sandwich; Italian roast beef sandwich; verdure grigliate (veggie) sandwich; Gio's pasta salad; insalata miscolanza

KID FRIENDLY?

Your tots will likely be in the school cafeteria during the deli's business hours, but if they weren't, they'd be into it

PRICE RANGE

Sandwiches, \$7.25-\$8.25; soups and salads, \$3.50-\$13; and French-bread pizza, \$6-\$8.25

HOURS

Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

RESERVATIONS

Nope—counter seats are first-come, first-served

I'm broken from my reverie by the teenager behind the counter in his "Legalize marinara!" ringer tee who, bless his heart, is struggling to keep up with "two meatballs" this and "three Jimmy's Poor Boys" that. It's the fourth day that the deli has been open after months and months of "will they?" and "is it ready yet?" and I can tell that I'm not the only downtown who's been very much anticipating this moment—this glorious, *glorious* moment. In fact, from the line out the door, it seems that all of downtown has been more than ready for an Italian roast beef sandwich. Because, in a word, it's chaos.

People are everywhere. Huddling outside. Queuing up at the register. Congregating by the front door. Hovering around the deli's 10 bar stools, ready to pounce. In other new restaurants on other Main Streets, this might all be too much. But here, no one shows any sign of frustration. It's almost uncanny, really: These folks, hungry as they may be, seem to know, almost instinctively, that it'll be worth the wait. They know why they're here, after all. And sure, that reason has a lot to do with the marinara—but I'd venture a guess that it's got even more to do with the folks behind it and everything they represent.

UNTIL AUG. 9, IT HAD BEEN—and this is an approximation—10,645 days since Gio Bruno had had an Italian roast beef sandwich. Or at least the *Bruno's* version of an Italian roast beef sandwich. The kind he'd grown up on, the kind his father, Jimmy, had crafted in the family restaurant's kitchen for decades, the kind Gio served at Bruno's Old Forge location after he and his brothers had taken up the torch in the late '70s.

"And it was just as great as I remembered," he says, taking a long drag of a cigarette during a much-deserved break on the humidity-soaked patio of his Main Street restaurant, two doors down from where, just hours ago, a line had snaked out of the newly opened deli he owns with his brother, Vince. "Did you serve them at the Bowman location?"

"Y'know, I don't think so," Vince says. "We did serve sandwiches there for a hot minute, from, like, mid '89 to '94? February of '94."

Dates related to the restaurant come easy to Vince Bruno. 1947: The year his father opened the Little Italy Cafe on Pike Avenue in Levy. 1948: The move to the West Roosevelt location, as well as the adoption of the restaurant's current moniker. 1978: The move to Old Forge Road, and the year that he and his brothers, Gio, Jay and Wayne, took over. 1988: Another move, this time to Bowman Road, with Jay and a partner. 1995: The year Jay left the business to pursue wine sales (he's still the restaurant's distributor). Oct. 9, 2011: The day Bruno's closed for good, or so Vince thought. And Oct. 1, 2013: The day Gio helped him bring it back to life on Main Street.

"OK," Gio says, standing up suddenly, stubbing out his cigarette in a black plastic ash tray. "We can retreat to the cool."

As I follow them inside the restaurant, and as we get settled at a table clad in those ever-familiar red-and-white checks, I ask them to back up to that second date: 1948. The first Bruno's Little Italy.

"We grew up in a house that was built on the parking lot, so it was part of our home," Gio says. (*Aha, I think. Bingo.*) "When I was 8 or 9 years old, I remember standing on a chair drying dishes. There was a gas burner under the sink to boil the water to wash the soap off, and then they'd be real hot, so I'd have a towel in each hand and an apron tied up to my neck so it wouldn't make me trip. So I was a dish dryer, and I went from that to being a pizza maker rather quickly."

"And when I came along, Roosevelt was still coming along," Vince

pipes in. "I had been hanging out in the kitchen since birth. For some reason, I'd always watch the saute person, so that's what I wanted to do. Gio was pizza master, and I wanted to be skillet master. I just kind of took over that position at 13 and started learning, learning, learning."

As they go on reminiscing, talking over each other as brothers tend to do, I start to piece together the Bruno brothers' story—one that's founded on family legacy, sure, but also on a series of near misses that's forged in them a commitment to keeping this thing alive at all costs. I learn that, except for the in-between years—the year after the Old Forge location shuttered and the two years that eclipsed between the closing of the Bowman location and the opening of the restaurant we're sitting in—Vince has never left Bruno's kitchen. It's all, he says, he's ever known. And though Gio left the family business in 1988 to pursue a career in advertising, he'd always longed to find a way to bring Bruno's back under the family's control: no partners, no investors. Which brings us to today, to this restaurant, to the deli down the street: "This is my retirement," he says, throwing up his arms and casting a glance around this space. "My retirement is on the walls here." He pauses, quiet for a moment. "It worked out perfectly."

And that's just it: It did. Perhaps, if you're one of those Arkansans who cut their teeth on Jimmy Bruno's chicken ala Parmigiano, or if, like me, you came to it, spellbound, as an adult, you remember what it felt like when you heard the news that Bruno's was closing. And if so, you surely remember your reaction to the news, back in 2012, that longtime patrons Jimmy Moses and Rett Tucker had convinced the brothers to open downtown. And then you remember waiting. And maybe, if, say, you work in a building at the corner of Scott and Capitol, mere blocks away, you'd counted the steps from your office to the restaurant (396), hoping and praying that the brothers would decide to open for lunch. And then, God bless them, they did, by taking over the empty storefront two doors down and turning it into their eponymous deli—though they opened a year after they thought they would (a year after they signed the lease on the space). Thing is, it was on *their* time. Because it had to be right. Because you don't rush 69 years worth of history.

"Dad always said, 'You dance with who brung ya,'" Gio says, in a way that would lead you to believe that he's quite accustomed to saying it. "We have a customer base who wants it to taste like it



did when they first came to Bruno's when they were a kid. I have two stories a night, at least—people wanting to tell me their Bruno's story. *We went on our first date here, that kind of thing.*

"I get that all the time, even when I'm just stopping at the store!" Vince says.

Which, I learn, has everything to do with that marinara. You can pretty well taste the history—decades upon decades of proprietary, passed-down know-how—when you taste that sauce. Whether it's smothering meatballs on a hoagie roll at the deli or bubbling around a fresh-from-the-oven lasagna at the restaurant—heck, whether it's 2004 and you're on your third date or it's 2014 and you're on your first date since welcoming your firstborn—it's the same. And I have to wonder, since I've only been making memories at Bruno's for a mere dozen years, has it *always* been the same? Has it always been this ... deliberately delicious? And if so, how?

"Oh, it's definitely intuition to us now. We could do it in our sleep," Gio says. "Dad never wrote anything down. He would make you watch him a couple of times, and then he'd have you do it, and if you did something wrong, he'd tell you."

"Everyone wants me to write down measurements, and I don't measure," Vince says. "I was showing our manager at the deli, Pearl, today, and she said 'Let me watch.' I said, 'OK, but you've got to do it like this because I don't know the amounts.'"

"Our dad could take this," Gio says, picking up a salt shaker, "take the top off, pour it into his hand and then into a teaspoon, and it'd be perfect. Tablespoon, same thing. I mean, how many things do we do a handful of this ..."

"... and a handful of that, yeah," Vince finishes. "And that's *my* marinara sauce, I don't let anybody else make it because I



don't want nobody else to make it. People tell us that they've eaten pizza all over the world, and they like this pizza better. And this marinara."

And that's when I realize I'm very much and most definitely one of those people.

"THAT'S MY GRANDFATHER," Gianni Bruno, Vince's son, says to me a few nights later in the main dining room. I've snuck away from my red-and-white-tablecloth-topped two-top, where I've been lingering over a cannoli, and he's caught me staring at a framed photo of a dark-haired Jimmy Bruno leaning on a jukebox and clad in white toque, white tee, white apron, at what I imagine must be the first Bruno's Little Italy.

"It's OK," he says with a laugh. "I find myself staring at it, too."

My cheeks redden, and I smile at him, embarrassed that I've been caught in the act, though I'm certain it must happen often. After all, black-and-white photos cover almost every spare inch of the restaurant's back wall. Smoked-glass mirrors interrupt the gallery every few feet, almost inviting you to picture yourself among the Bruno family faces.

"We kind of ran out of room," Gianni says, nodding at the collection. "Thank goodness, there's more wall space over at the deli!"

Which makes me start to ponder the connection between the two Bruno's—between this one and the new deli. As the brothers made certain to point out to me, the food served in the main dining room is "linger food," which might explain why so many folks feel so *connected* to the place. The menu at the deli, on the other hand, is the antithesis of that—it's quick, it's served in a box, it's in-and-out food. The magic, then, is in the Bruno brothers' ability to imbue even a boxed-up sandwich with seven decades of family legacy—and by "family," I don't just mean their own. I mean that by creating a place that feels like home and a pizza that tastes like home and a marinara that's just *so damn good*, they've been able to make generations upon generations of Arkansans part of their brood. And as I look at the photos of Jimmy on the wall, I know he'd approve of the new place. That he'd be proud of all his sons have endured to get to this point—to this duo of family-owned storefronts on Main Street—so that his great-grandkids might one day take over as his children once did for him.

The new deli might not be a "story" place like its big sister up the street. But one thing's for certain: It's a place where certain editors might go to escape from it all—a place where notebooks can be speckled with marinara, and where one bite is all it takes to be lost in a hundred memories. **AL**





The Family Meal

When our local chefs sit down to their own tables—that is, at home, with loved ones—what’s on the menu? (Hint: It’s not your typical turkey-and-dressing to-do.) To find out, we asked five culinary creatives with roots ranging from Chicago to the Czech Republic to share the dishes they plan to serve for family and friends this holiday season. The dishes, they say, that mean the most

As told to Katie Bridges | Photography by Arshia Khan

Recipes on page 50

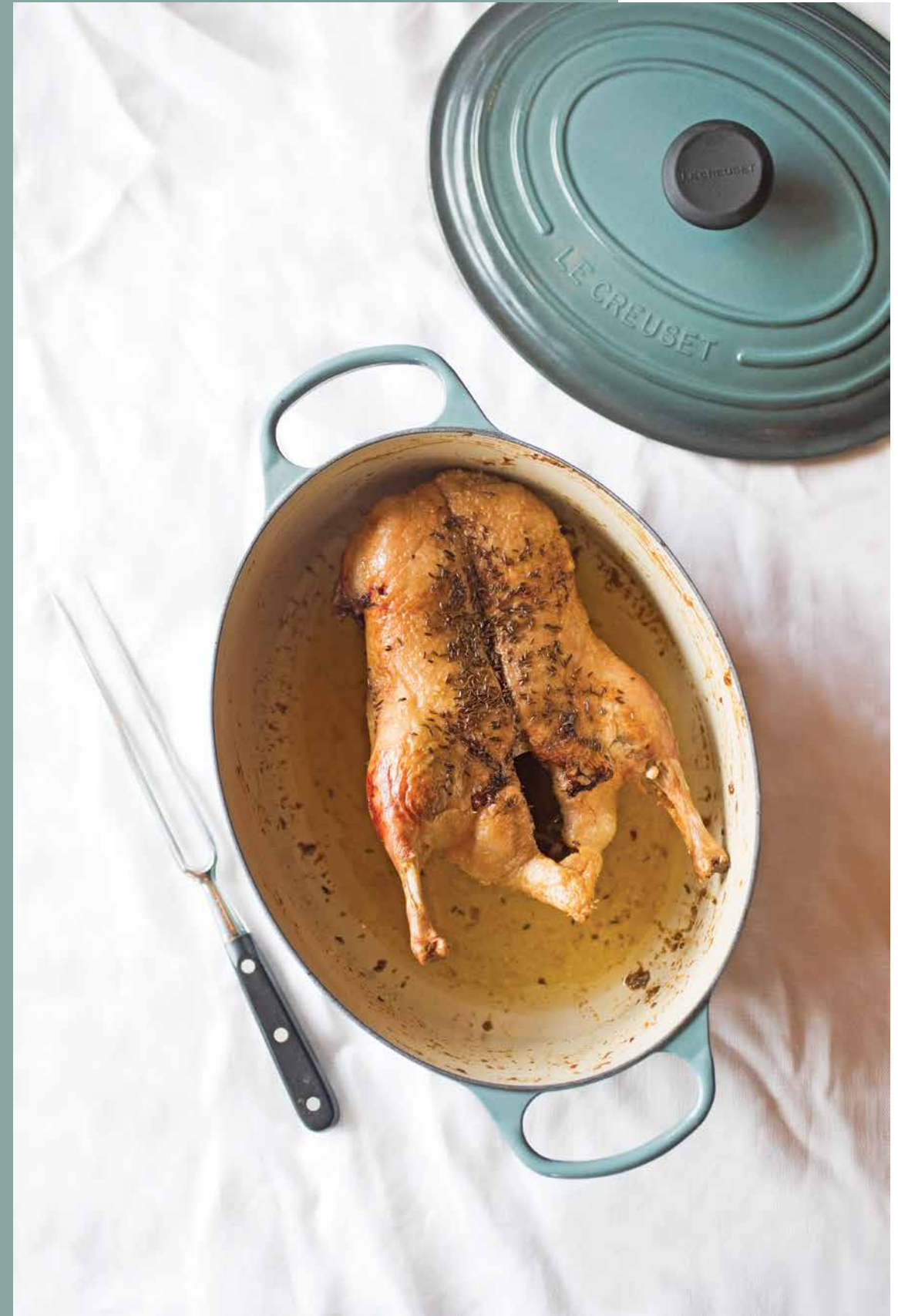


THE PANTRY & THE PANTRY CREST

T O M A S B O H M

Roast duck

“**W**hen I was little, people had ducks and geese and rabbits, and every meal was truly farm to table,” Tomas Bohm says of his rearing in rural Czech Republic, near the German border. “We didn’t go out to eat—you didn’t even *think* of that.” This nostalgia for the food he was brought up on—hearty, salt-of-the-earth kind of food—is the reason his mother’s roast duck is something he craves during the holidays. “Honestly, I would never compete against her, because she’d win,” he says, laughing. “Every time I go home she makes this for me. Here in Little Rock, it’s one of those things where it’s like, *You guys come, we’ll pop some bottles of wine or drink some beer, and I’ll cook you something really special.* It’s that kind of thing.”



L I S A Z H A N G

Stewed green beans with bacon

Back in 1999, when Liza Zhang and her family moved to the map-dot town of Redfield from their native northeast China, she found “a little church in that little town,” and an American family who adopted hers as their own. The first Thanksgiving the two families spent together, Lisa lightened up a quintessential American dish—creamy, goopy green-bean casserole—using traditional Chinese flavors and techniques. Seventeen years later, it’s still the star of the families’ holiday spread. “We are really close, really like family, so sharing meals with them is not just a one-time, two-time thing,” Lisa says. “Sometimes, when they’re out hunting in the woods, I’ll cook chicken drumsticks with mushrooms and serve this dish—it *always* goes quick.”



H E I N Z K O E N I G S F E S T

Pique a lo macho Cochabambino



Even though Heinz Koenigsfest is some 4,000 miles away from his college town of Cochabamba, Bolivia, he's still reliving his glory days the best way he knows how: through food. More specifically, through a more-is-more dish called *pique a lo macho* that's meant, as the best things are, to be shared. Lingered over. Served as the perfect backdrop to beer-fueled banter between friends. "The name comes from 'picar,' which means 'to snack,' and 'a lo macho,' which means a little bit spicy," Heinz says. "'Macho,' because if you can take the heat, you know? I love to share this with my friends here, because it's not something that would scare folks away. It's something you can put together easily, and it's fun to eat, too."



M I R A N D A K O H O U T

Butternut squash mille-feuille
with ginger-candied squash and
whipped five-spice crème anglaise



Peruse Pressroom's dessert menu, and it's easy to see that Miranda Kohout is no traditionalist. (Lemongrass granita with Champagne gel, anyone?) Turns out, though, for all her dishes' wit and whimsy, they've all got one thing in common: her past. "This one has hardcore childhood roots for me," Miranda says. "My aunt Karen made wedding cakes when I was very little—she was the dessert maker of my mom's side of the family. Every year, she made me Napoleons for my birthday. I don't even know why we had Napoleons the first time—if it was leftover puff pastry, or something she just threw together—but I remember thinking, *I love this.*" This butternut squash confection is a grown-up version of that birthday treat, "kind of a fantasy dessert of mine," she says.



When the weather turns colder, as it's wont to do this time of year, Richard Glasgow turns to a dish the northern Thai prepare in cooler months: a curry called *hanglae*. "When I go to Thailand, that's where I spend all of my time," he says. "I guess I've associated myself with them, because to me, they're kind of the rednecks of Thailand. They eat pork and sausage. Fried chicken. They speak with a drawl, and more slowly. So, being from north Louisiana, you know, a lot of it's the same. I'm just trying to do right by these folks. I found this thing that I think is really great and the food is some of it, but not all of it. It's the best way I know to present the culture to others."



kBIRD

RICHARD GLASGOW

Hanglae curry



Roast duck

One 2- to 3-pound duck, wings cut at the elbow joint

1 tablespoon caraway seeds

1 tablespoon salt

pinch of pepper

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Rinse duck inside and out. Place breast-down in roasting pan (cast iron is preferred). Season duck inside and out with caraway seeds, salt and pepper. Add ½ inch of water to pan and place in oven, uncovered.

Baste every 30 minutes with pan juices. After 2 hours, turn duck over (breast-up) and raise heat to 375 degrees. Keep roasting and basting for another hour or so until golden brown. If meat is loose on thigh, it's ready to come out.

Side with braised red cabbage, Brussels sprouts, sauerkraut, roasted potatoes or dumplings.

Stewed green beans with bacon

2 pounds fresh green beans or 4 (15-ounce) cans, washed and trimmed/draind of canning liquid

10-12 strips of bacon, sliced crosswise into 1-inch strips

1, 1-inch cube ginger, minced

4 shallots, sliced

6 medium-large cloves garlic, minced

3 tablespoons soy sauce

1 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon sugar

Heat 1 tablespoon cooking oil in a pan over high heat. Add bacon and saute for 30 seconds until fat becomes transparent. Once fat is rendered, add ginger, garlic and shallot. Saute until fragrant.

Add soy sauce, then green beans. Saute for 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Add enough hot water to almost cover green beans, about 4 cups. Sprinkle in salt and sugar. Stir to combine. Once sauce comes to a boil, cover and reduce heat to medium. Simmer until sauce is reduced and thick, about 15 minutes.

Pique a lo macho Cochabambino

2 pounds top round steak (or any soft, lean beef), cut into 1-inch cubes

8 large potatoes, peeled and cut into large wedges

4 uncured beef hot dogs, sliced thin

4 eggs

1 large tomato, julienned

1 small red onion, julienned

1 small green pepper, julienned

1 locoto pepper or jalapeno, julienned (optional)

3 cups vegetable oil, plus 3 tablespoons

½ cup soy sauce

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

½ cup light beer

1 teaspoon white vinegar

⅛ teaspoon cumin

1 garlic clove, peeled and mashed

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon ground black pepper

4 slices of baguette

Mix vegetables with red wine vinegar, 1 tablespoon vegetable oil, ½ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper. Set aside.

Heat 3 cups vegetable oil in a skillet over medium heat. Fry potatoes, possibly in 2 batches. Cook slowly so they are crispy outside but slightly soft inside. While cooking potatoes, hard-boil eggs, peel and cut into wedges.

When potatoes are halfway cooked, heat 2 tablespoons oil in a skillet over high heat. Add steak and brown, being careful not to burn, about 5 minutes. Once browned, add ½ teaspoon salt

and ½ teaspoon pepper, plus cumin and garlic. Reduce heat to medium.

By this point, potatoes should be cooked. Remove to a paper towel to drain. To the hot oil, add hot dogs and cook until crispy and browned on the edges, about one minute. Remove to a paper towel.

To steak, add the hot dogs and white vinegar, soy sauce, beer, ½ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper. Reduce liquid by half, about 1 minute.

To serve, layer potatoes, meat, vegetables and eggs.

Butternut squash mille-feuille

with ginger-candied squash and whipped five-spice crème anglaise

FOR THE CRÈME ANGLAISE:

1 cup heavy cream, plus 2 tablespoons

3 large egg yolks

¾ teaspoon five-spice powder

Place egg yolks in bowl of a blender and process a few seconds. Bring cream to boil in a small saucepan. With blender running on low, carefully pour hot cream over egg yolks in a steady stream. Increase speed to medium and process for a few seconds. Transfer anglaise to a small metal bowl and place in a larger bowl of ice water. Once anglaise has cooled, whisk in five-spice powder. Cover and chill overnight. When ready to use, whisk with electric beaters or in a stand mixer until fluffy.

FOR THE GINGER-CANDIED SQUASH:

1 small butternut squash

¾ cup water

¾ cup sugar

½ teaspoon ground ginger

Use a vegetable peeler to remove the skin from a small, long section of squash. Continue to use peeler to

create strips of squash. Strips of any width are fine, but try to make sure strips are as long as possible. Place strips in a shallow bowl or container.

Combine water, sugar and ginger. Bring to a boil and stir occasionally to make sure sugar is dissolved. Pour hot syrup over squash strips and allow to cool to room temperature. Strain strips from cooled syrup and allow strips to drain on a cooling rack. The strips can be stored, flat, between layers of waxed paper and kept in refrigerator.

FOR THE BUTTERNUT SQUASH CUSTARD:

1 medium-sized butternut squash

2 tablespoons butter, softened

Salt and nutmeg to taste

½ cup brown sugar

3 large eggs

½ cup heavy cream

½ teaspoon allspice

¾ teaspoon ground ginger

½ teaspoon nutmeg, freshly grated

½ teaspoon cinnamon

½ teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Cut squash in half lengthwise. Scoop out seeds and discard. Rub cut side of each half with about a tablespoon of butter and sprinkle with salt and nutmeg to taste. Place halves cut-side down on a foil-lined sheet pan. The amount of time required to bake the squash will vary depending on the size. Check for doneness after 20 minutes, then every 8 minutes until squash is soft to touch.

Allow squash to cool, then remove skin with a large spoon. Puree roasted squash in a blender or food processor until smooth and silky. Measure out 2 cups of puree and save any extra for another use.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Whisk squash puree and remaining ingredients together in a large bowl until completely incorporated. Pour into a foil-lined quarter-sheet pan. Place pan containing

custard into a larger pan at least 1-inch deep. Place the pans in the oven, then fill the outer pan with hot water so that water reaches about ¾ of the way up sides of smaller pan.

Bake for 20 minutes, then check custard. When done, it will be set throughout. Continue to check every 5 minutes to prevent over-baking. Allow cooked custard to cool to room temperature, then cover and store in refrigerator until you're ready to use it.

FOR THE PUFF PASTRY:

NOTE: Using purchased puff pastry from the freezer section of your local supermarket is also perfectly acceptable. Follow package instructions.

3 cups all-purpose flour

½ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon baking powder

4 sticks cold butter, cut into ½-inch pieces

1 cup sour cream or whole-milk Greek yogurt

Combine dry ingredients in bowl of a food processor. Sprinkle butter pieces over dry ingredients and pulse in food processor until largest piece of butter is size of a whole almond. Transfer butter mixture to a large bowl and stir in sour cream or yogurt by hand. Once sour cream is completely distributed, transfer mixture to your countertop and knead until it just comes together. Divide dough into 2 roughly equal pieces. Wrap 1 piece and store in refrigerator.

Roll or pat remaining piece into a rectangle about the size of a piece of paper. Try to keep edges and corners as straight and square as you can. Fold rectangle in thirds, like a letter. Turn your "letter" 90 degrees, so that short sides are at top and bottom. Roll again into a rectangle about the size of a piece of a paper and fold in thirds. Wrap dough and allow it to rest in refrigerator for at least an hour, but ideally overnight. Repeat process with second piece of dough.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Remove dough from the refrigerator and roll first piece to ¼-inch thickness, maintaining rectangle shape. Cut larger rectangle in half and place each half on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Repeat with second piece of dough. Prick each piece of dough with fork, covering entire surface of the dough. You will need only 3 sheets of baked pastry for the mille-feuille. Save extra dough to make turnovers.

Bake for 10-15 minutes, until golden brown. Allow to cool on pans.

FOR THE MILLE-FEUILLE:

About 20 minutes before you're ready to build the mille-feuille, move custard to freezer. This will help it firm up and make it easier to handle.

Flip semi-frozen custard out of pan onto a plastic-wrap-lined cutting board. Carefully remove foil from custard. Cut custard in half, lengthwise.

Working quickly, transfer one custard half onto one sheet of baked puff pastry. Top custard with a second piece of pastry. Transfer second half of custard to the top of this stack. Top with final piece of baked pastry.

With a large, serrated knife (a bread knife is ideal), trim edges of pastry and custard to a tidy rectangle. Cut this large rectangle into your desired shape. Mille-feuille are commonly cut into small rectangles, but size and shape is up to you. The mille-feuille can be assembled up to 4 hours before you are going to serve it. Any longer and the puff pastry will absorb too much moisture and become soggy. Serve on top of crème anglaise and top with ginger-candied squash.

Continued on page 108

ZEPPELIN

Where Family Heirlooms Begin!

ELLIS
JEWELERS

2927 LAKEWOOD VILLAGE
NORTH LITTLE ROCK
501.753.7267

Continued from page 51



Hanglae Curry

FOR THE CURRY PASTE:

Dry ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon coriander
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- 1 large pod star anise
- 4 cloves
- 3 pods green cardamom
- 1- to 2-inch piece cassia bark
- 2 diiplii (long peppers)

Wet ingredients:

- 24 dried puya chilies, stemmed, seeded, cut into 1-inch pieces and soaked in lukewarm water for 15-20 minutes, then drained well
- ¼ ounce cilantro root, chopped
- ¼ ounce galangal, peeled and chopped
- 1 ½ ounce lemongrass, finely chopped
- ½ ounce ginger, peeled and chopped
- 1 ounce orange turmeric, chopped
- 1 ounce garlic, peeled
- 2 ounces Asian shallots, peeled and chopped

Roast dry ingredients in dry skillet until fragrant. Pound in mortar and pestle until powderlike. Add chilies and pound until smooth. Add remaining ingredients, in order listed, pounding each one until smooth before adding next.

FOR THE CURRY:

- 1 pound uncured, skin-on pork belly, cut into ¾-inch matchsticks

- 2 pounds pork ribs, cut into 2 to 3 rib sections

- ¾ cup fresh ginger, grated
- ½ cup pickled garlic
- 1 cup pickled garlic liquid
- 1 cup roasted peanuts
- ¼ cup grated palm sugar
- ½ cup Thai fish sauce and/or Thai thin soy sauce
- ½ cup naam makhaam (tamarind water)
- Cilantro, sliced shallots and julienned ginger, for garnish

Boil ribs 10 to 15 minutes in water, skimming frequently. Turn off fire and set aside.

Gently fry paste in 2 ounces lard until fragrant, about 2 to 4 minutes. Stir in pork belly. Stir in ribs, reserving boiling liquid. Add pickled garlic and its liquid. Then add remaining ingredients in order listed. Add enough rib-boiling liquid to cover. Simmer on low for 2 to 3 hours.

Before serving, add more fish sauce, palm sugar or tamarind water to taste. It should be salty, tart from the tamarind and just a little bit sweet. Garnish with cilantro, sliced shallots and julienned ginger. Serve just above room temperature with freshly steamed Thai sticky rice and fresh vegetables. **AL**

Butterfield TRAIL VILLAGE

Simply the Best
for 30 Years and Counting

Featuring premier amenities and a variety of impressive living options, come discover the Butterfield lifestyle for yourself - celebrating 30 years as Northwest Arkansas' BEST RETIREMENT COMMUNITY. Call to schedule your tour today!

Village Homes

Apartments

College

1823 E. Joyce Blvd. | Fayetteville, Ark. | 479.643.8812 | butterfieldtrailvillage.org



Shop with a Purpose at

Your purchase helps support ICM's programs for developmentally disabled Arkansans.

1525 MERRILL DRIVE STE 100 | LITTLE ROCK, AR 72211 | 501-228-0063
ICM-INC.ORG