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Welcome to our November Issue of The Las Vegas Food & Beverage Professional as the cooling weather mixes up menus with fresh products and presentations. November is harvest time in the Northern California wine vineyards, which bring us great wines to pair with the new menus. A trend we are now seeing in a multitude of restaurants and foodservice facilities is Happy Hour, offered from upscale restaurants to fast casual stores, usually for pre-dinner service, and Las Vegas even offers reverse Happy Hours late night for industry professionals.

Our November Cover Feature supports Alzheimer’s Awareness Month and turning the town purple, the color of mental health awareness. PBS Las Vegas has produced a documentary, The Power of Love, supporting mental awareness and focusing on the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health which has been honored as a “Center of Excellence” by the Parkinson’s Foundation. The Las Vegas clinic, Keep Memory Alive, is the brainchild dedicated to Lou Ruvo, by his son Larry Ruvo, when his father was diagnosed with a brain health disorder.

PAGE 22 Gives us the Best of the Best column by Shelley Stepanek reporting on the following: *Brian Van Flandern with SGWS of Nevada launches his 5th professional mixologist book Whiskey Cocktails...* *The Otheroom at the Forum Shops in Caesars Palace...* *The Underground at the Mob Museum in Downtown Las Vegas...* *The Downtown Plaza presents a new show—“A Mob Story”...* *The Las Vegas Food & Wine Festival...* and *Martha Stewart Las Vegas Wine & Food Experience.

PAGE 26 The Restaurant Expert tells us that “Many Restaurants Fail Because They Fail to Plan” and gives us 6 items to help plan: Sales Forecasts/Budget/Purchase Allotment System/Labor Allotment System/Order Par Levels/Prep System.

A final note for the upcoming holiday season and enjoying all the food & beverage available: Designated Drivers is here to help when you’ve overdone your celebrating and can’t drive. Designated Drivers will pick up you and your car and get you both home in good shape!

CHEERS!
Mike Fryer Sr. Editor/Publisher
HOT OFF THE GRILL!

Zuma Pairing Great Steak with Great Japanese Whiskey
By Max Solano

When pairing food and drink, arguably, is there anything that goes better than a great cut of steak and pour of whisky? What if both were Japanese? Zuma at the Cosmopolitan just may be onto something special. I recently attended a dinner at Zuma to sample their standalone Wagyu beef menu to pair with some of their Japanese whisky selections. May I suggest sampling the delicious Wagyu gyoza with black truffle and pair it with the Hibiki 17-year blended. The 14-day dry-aged Texas Tomahawk steak also served with black truffles (pictured here) was a perfectly cooked cut and if you do not mind some subtle peat smoke, pair this dish with the Nikka Taketsuru 17 Year Pure Malt. And, for a very special treat you can order some certified Japanese A-5 wagyu steak by the ounce and, since you’re already pampering yourself, why not pair this dish with some ultra-rare Hibiki 30 year?
Corks: The What, Why, When and Who

Natural Cork versus screw cap (alternative closures)... this debate has been around for a long time. Let’s look at the Who, What, When and Why about wine bottle closures and you can evaluate for yourself.

What
There are many varieties of wine bottle closures, and they each have their place in the beverage industry. Let’s look at a few of the major types of closures.

Natural Cork: While natural corks have been used since the ancient Greeks, it wasn’t until the 17th century (after the advent of glass bottles) that it became a standard sealing method. The material comes from the Cork Oak (Quercus suber), primarily coming from Spain and Portugal.

Granulated Cork: This type of cork uses granulated pieces of natural cork, forced together to form a composite cork shape (think particle board, recycled plastics, etc.). Obviously, these corks generally cost less, and are generally for wines that should be consumed sooner rather than later.

Technical Cork: This type of cork is kind of a hybrid of granulated and natural cork. The top and bottom discs of the cork are made with natural cork, but the in-between filling is made with granulated cork (e.g., Champagne corks).

Screw Cap or Screw Top: This is exactly what it sounds like. The most well-known brand of screw cap is called Stelvin, which is currently owned by Amcor. These metal caps have a plastic disc interior that seals tightly against the mouth of the bottle, reducing oxidation, and are a less expensive alternative to natural cork.

Synthetic Cork: These corks are made of synthetic materials, such as plastic, rubber or other composite materials.

Capsulated Cork: This type of cork is also known as T-cork (named after its shape), and is primarily used in beverage categories of fortified wine and other spirits. It is again another type of hybrid closure. The bottle part of the cork is made using natural cork or synthetic materials, and the cap on top is made of a separate type of material (e.g., plastic, wood, glass, metal).

Fun Fact! Other than these primary categories of closures, there are other unique products out there! Vino-Lok is a stopper made of glass (or plastic), and has an airtight seal that prevents oxygen or bacteria from entering the bottle. Zork is another unique type of closure that seals like a screwcap, but “pops” like a cork.

Why
Wine closures affect the way a wine tastes. Different materials result in varying levels of cost, sealing capability, protection against oxygen, etc. In recent years, winemakers and consumers now consider carbon footprint and environmental impacts.

Natural cork does tend to be the best form of bottle sealing, as it provides the ideal amount of oxygen entry into the bottle to help wines age. Cork has the ability to maintain the tight seal and resist moisture. Unfortunately, the major factors that negatively affect the cork market is 2,4,6-trichloroanisole compound (TCA), more commonly known as cork taint. Later research revealed that TCA is also found in water, wood, soil, etc., so the wine could have been exposed to TCA before even entering the bottle, but the initial discovery had damaged the cork reputation.

Today, the percentage of TCA presence in corks has reduced significantly (from ~10% to now less than ~4%) due to extensive research and testing. When

During the 1980s, screw caps were still new, and tied to the idea of being “cheap.” Up until that time, the vast majority of bottles were being sealed with natural corks. After the 1990s issues when cork was connected to TCA, the cork reputation was damaged to the point where a wine affected by TCA was considered “corked.” Entire countries like Australia and New Zealand traded natural cork closures for screwcaps instead, and the majority of producers remain loyal to screw caps today.

Who
In general the latest trend towards preferring environmentally friendly, sustainable products have taken the world by storm. This trend applies to the cork market as well. In 2008, Amorim, the world’s largest cork producer, published a report showing that natural cork performed better than plastic and aluminum closures for environmental impacts.

This year, Amorim revealed new research advancements that uses a specialized form of gas chromatography (GCMS) to detect TCA in corks. The technology allows Amorim to offer “guaranteed and insured corks.” This is unheard of, and surely is exciting news for natural cork wine bottlers everywhere.

Some winemakers have begun to shift back to using natural cork, not only because of advancements of natural cork and environmental impact, but also to increase market share in places that continue to have the classic perception of quality wines that natural cork has.

Fun Fact! Two countries that heavily prefer the natural cork (due to perceived quality) are China and the U.S.

The next time you purchase a bottle of wine to drink, think about all the different factors and considerations that go into only one decision point during the winemaking process. For the wine industry professionals, it’s perhaps time to re-evaluate wine closures and the recent technology and research revelations that have come to light.

Until next month, Cheers~!

Alice
what’s BREWING

Vegas Strip Will Once Again Have a Brewery

I hear rumors of new breweries opening up all the time, but very often they don’t pan out, so I refrain from reporting on any new ventures until I can verify they’re actually going forward. I’m happy to report that my friend Chris Walowski, Head Brewer of Trustworthy Brewing, has verified his brewery will be coming to the Vegas Strip this summer, taking over the space of the former I Love Burgers at The Palazzo. The new steam-jacketed 10-barrel brewhouse with full kitchen will be a 2nd location for the brewery formerly known as Verdugo West and will be the only brewery on the Strip, the first to grace Las Vegas Blvd. since Monte Carlo closed its brewpub in 2007.

Since opening in Burbank, CA in Jan. of 2017, Trustworthy Brewing has grown from a three-person team to a 12-person team, increased its four fermenters to nine and doubled its beer production. The name change was due to many having difficulty pronouncing and spelling the name and having Verdugo autocorrected to Vertigo when Googling. The new name made sense as the brewery’s Trustworthy IPA is its most popular beer. MCC Hospitality Group, parent company of the brewery, already has a presence at The Palazzo, at it owns Morels Steakhouse, which has been serving the brews since shortly after the brewery opened (read my reporting on this in our Dec. 2017 issue.

Having tasted Walowsky’s beers at both Morels and at the brewery in Burbank, I can attest that he is a very talented and innovative brewer who makes very clean, well-balanced and flavorful brews. My favorite is his Gigil, a pilsner made with puffed jasmine rice. This new brewery will be a (trust) worthy addition to our local brewing scene and it’s cool that the Strip will once again have a venue in the beer making biz.

Arts District Transitioning into a Beer District?

The 18b Arts District in Downtown Las Vegas may be becoming a beer district. After earlier this year welcoming Three Sheets craft beer bar (which I reported on in our July 2018 issue), now the Nevada Taste Site has opened. The new restaurant and bar by Derek Stonebarger

Trustworthy Brewing Head Brewer Chris Walowski with Bob Barnes at a tasting of his beer at Morels.
is just two doors down from his ReBar and is filled with historical knick-knacks (including the old Davy’s Locker neon fish-shaped sign perched above the bar) from his personal collection. The bar celebrates all things Nevada, including its beer, with 24 taps pouring only Nevada brews, including nearly all of the Las Vegas breweries and several from Reno, including IMBĪB, Pigeon Head and Revision.

The area also has Hop Nuts Brewing at 1120 S. Main (near Charleston), and more beer venues are on the way. In the coming months opening will be Beer District Brewing, a 10-barrel brewhouse which will be situated at 914 S. Main. Expected to open in the spring, CraftHaus Brewery will open a secondary tasting room at 197 California St. just a few doors down from the popular Esther’s Kitchen. The new location will not be equipped with brewing equipment, but will offer specialty beers and one-off brews which will rotate through its twenty-four tap selection. Stay tuned for further reports on these and other openings coming soon.

Ellis Island Hotel, Casino and Brewery Appoints Two New Brewers
Ellis Island has announced changes to its brew staff, naming Michael Key as director of brewery operations and Eddie Leal as head brewer.

Key began his career under an apprenticeship with Dan Gordon (founder of Gordon Biersch) over 25 years ago and has brewed at several breweries, including Steelhead Brewing and Southern California Brewing, and eventually ended up back at Gordon Biersch where he served as Senior Regional Brewer, overseeing brewery locations throughout the company. Key has been awarded medals at the Great American Beer Festival and the Los Angeles County Fair Beer Competition.

Leal began his brewing career at Steelhead Brewing as assistant brewer under Key, until he left and became a head brewer one year later. Leal brings more than 20 years of brewing experience, and has won medals at the Great American Beer Festival and Washington Beer Awards.

Key and Leal have updated the IPA recipe to a hoppier west-coast style, with big citrus and fruity notes; released a Bavarian-style Hefeweizen; and will gift us with a Doppelbock for the holiday season. The goal is to add a new beer each month and eventually tap 12 of their brews.

The two accomplished brewers are being brought in at an opportune time, as the property will expand in early 2019 when it opens the two-story Front Yard outdoor dining, drinking and entertainment venue. To view a video of Key and Leal explaining their new brews visit www.facebook.com/EllisIslandLV/videos/2163669470326989.

Congrats to Joseph James
Congrats are in order for the brew team of Joseph James. Their Bourbon Barrel-Aged Imperial Stout, aged in bourbon barrels for seven months, was named by Thrillist one of the 32 best imperial stouts in the US. In the post, also noted is that this beer is the third highest-rated beer from Nevada on Beer Advocate. (www.thrillist.com/drink/nation/best-stout-beer-top-stouts)
2019 ENTERTAINMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Celine Dion’s residency at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace will end June 8. James Taylor joined by his All-Star Band will have a 12-show run there April 17-May 11.


In partnership with Caesars Entertainment, Jimmy Kimmel’s Comedy Club will open next spring at The LINQ Promenade across from Brooklyn Bowl.

Next year, Britney Spears will have a new residency at Park Theater at Park MGM.

ZZ Top will return for an eight-show engagement residency at Park Theater.

The Venetian will have a new dinner show, “A Mob Story” with 5 and 7 p.m. shows.

“Legends in Concert” at the Flamingo will debut an all-new headlining residency at the Tropicana the second week of February.

The 1975 band will visit The Joint inside Hard Rock Tuesday, April 16 and release their third album, “A Brief Inquiry Into Online Relationships,” this month.

STYX will return to the newly renovated Pearl Concert Theater at the Palms Sunday, Jan. 20, and perform two sets in one night. “Billy Idol: Las Vegas 2019” will have a 10-show run there with five shows in January and October.

2018 ENTERTAINMENT NEWS

Magician Murray Sawchuck moved from Planet Hollywood to Laugh Factory at the Tropicana with 5 and 7 p.m. shows.

After delays mounting a large-scale production show and refurbishing the retro-showroom at the Plaza, “A Mob Story” is up and running.

“Little Miss Nasty” made its Las Vegas-debut in Hooters’ Night Owl Showroom with performances every Friday and Saturday nights at 10:30 p.m.

Rock quintet Good Charlotte’s North American Tour supporting their seventh studio album, “Generation Rx.,” concludes at Pearl Concert Theater at the Palms Saturday, Nov. 24.

Florida Georgia Line headlines Zappos Theater at Planet Hollywood with Mason Ramsey Dec. 1, 5, 7, 8 and 11, while the Wranglers National Finals Rodeo runs Dec. 6-15.

Two-time Grammy-winner, John Prine, whose new album is “The Tree of Forgiveness,” will return to Westgate Wednesday, Dec. 12.

Paul Shaffer and his band The Shâf-Shifters have a return engagement at Cleopatra’s Barge inside Caesars Palace Nov. 29-Dec. 1.

Naturally 7, an a cappella group who toured with Michael Bublé released their seventh studio album, “Both Sides Now,” and will appear at M Resort Saturday, Dec. 15.

DINING • BEVERAGE NEWS

NBA superstar Shaquille O’Neal opened his new Big Chicken restaurant near Hard Rock Hotel.

Ghost Donkey, New York City’s famed mezcal and tequila bar, opened at The Cosmopolitan with an intimate speakeasy style setting.

The Silverton’s newest culinary venture is Su Casa opening inside Mi Casa Grill and Cantina as a full-service restaurant and bar merging Asian and Mexican cuisine.

Next April sixth+mill pizzeria and bar will open at Grand Canal Shoppes at The Venetian in St. Mark Square.

Palace Station’s new Feast Buffet started the only overnight buffet along with an exclusive late-night menu available daily from midnight to 8 a.m.

Ferraro’s Italian Restaurant & Wine Bar has opened its patio for a new late-night, all-you-can-eat grilling al fresco event called Sotto le Stelle on Saturdays every two weeks from 11 p.m. to 3 a.m.

The Galleria at Sunset mall’s newest dining experience is Bobby Mao’s Chinese Kitchen + Mexican Cantina, and the first location in Nevada.

Top of the World restaurant on the Stratosphere’s 106th floor has been remodeled and introduced new lunch, dinner and complimentary wine menus.

In spring 2019 CraftHaus Brewery will open a second tasting room in the Las Vegas Arts District across from Esther’s Kitchen.

Chef Scott Conant’s Italian eatery Masso Osteria at Red Rock Resort started a weekly Sunday brunch with a live DJ.

Family-owned Bok Bok Chicken opened its second valley location in Henderson with plans for two more outlets this year and a fifth site next year in Town Square.

Keith Norman, assistant executive chef and food safety manager at South Point, published his first book, Allergen Awareness: A Chef’s Perspective.

Slater’s 50/50 Las Vegas has two new decadent 24K gold-dusted burgers.

Cabo Wabo Cantina at the Miracle Mile Shops at Planet Hollywood added a new full-service bar seating 10 and opening daily at 10 a.m.

Shake Shack launched The Slapshot provolone double cheeseburger paying homage to the Las Vegas Golden Knights.

MB Steak at Hard Rock Hotel introduced a sharable 16-pound Tomahawk steak with six side dishes.

ABOUT TOWN

The 293-room luxury NoMad Las Vegas opened inside the new Park MGM with a high-limit casino, Moroccan-inspired pool, bar and restaurant.

Park MGM opened a new spa and salon experience.

Aria at CityCenter debuted the Resort Club Lounge and Concierge Lounge offering dedicated gathering spaces with amenities.

Ethel M Chocolates’ 25th annual Holiday Cactus Lights will sparkle from Nov. 6 through Sunday, Jan. 6 from 5-10 p.m.

Rockstar Jonathan Davis, frontman for Korn, unveiled a memorabilia case at the Hard Rock with his typical black AllSaints “uniform.”

Adult revue “Fantasy” at the Luxor revealed the 2019 calendar, “The Golden Goddesses of FANTASY,” showcasing the cast wearing nothing but gold tape.

Indoor 62-bike cycling experience SoulCycle will open a studio in the new Wynn Plaza.

The new Casino Domi nos game made its world debut at the Plaza downtown on table games.
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Origin Gin

After a year of record growth in 2017, the St. Louis-based 4 Hands Brewing Co. recently celebrated its 6th anniversary by branching out from beer to distilling, launching its 1220 Artisan Spirits brand. Its first release is Origin, a 42.5% ABV gin distilled from 75% grapes and 25% corn along with interesting ingredients including Croatian juniper, coriander, orris root, bergamot orange, and neroli (an essential oil extracted from the orange blossom flower). The aroma is delightful and the flavor that follows confirms what your olfactory nerves suggest, a mélange of the aforementioned ingredients with a dominant juniper presence. The gin is packaged in an attractive 750 ml blue-tinted bottle with label art depicting an all-seeing eye, a nod to the 1220 Artisan Spirits logos inspired by the icons of secret societies and freemasons.

1220spirits.com

Two Brothers Atom Smasher

’Tis the season to partake in Oktoberfest beers, but a problem I have with them is most of them taste quite similar. Now the Atom Smasher, a seasonal release from the Warrenville, IL-based Two Brothers Artisan Brewing, steps up adding a twist to the German lager style, as it is aged in oak foeders (large wooden vat used to age beer or wine), bringing complexity compliments of the oak to go along with notes of toasty malts, caramel, toffee and earthy hops. And, at 7.7% ABV and 22.6 IBUs, it’s heftier than the usual run-of-the-mill versions of the style.

twobrothersbrewing.com

Royal Wine

Founded in 1848, Royal Wine Corp. has been owned and operated in the US by the Herzog family, whose winemaking roots date back eight generations to 19th century Czechoslovakia. I had the pleasure to sample a portion of its portfolio of domestic and international sweet wines: Tzafona 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon Ice Wine—produced by Tzafona Cellars in Toronto, Canada, made from grapes that were picked frozen on the vine in Canada’s Niagara Peninsula, vegan-friendly, aromas of cherry, plum and strawberry with a balance of acidity and texture on the palate; Herzog 2016 Late Harvest Monterey County White Riesling—from Herzog Cellars in Oxnard, CA, with pineapple, dried apricot and baked apple aromas and balanced acidity and sweetness; Zahav 2016 Sonoma Mountain Late Harvest Botrytis Chardonnay—from Sonoma County, a dessert wine made in the classic Sauternes method that allows noble rot (botrytis) to perforate the grape skins creating a delicate, sweet, honeyed beverage; and 2005 Porto Cordovero, a late bottled vintage from Portugal aged in oak barrels and bottled in 2009, a full-bodied blend of fine wines produced in the Upper Douro Valley, a classic port with flavors of sweet black currant with a firm tannic backbone.

www.royalwine.com

Funkwerks

A brewery with funk in its name draws my attention, with the hope that its brews will live up to its name. I’m happy to report the good news that such is the case with this Fort Collins, CO-based brewery. Founded in 2009, Funkwerks was selected as the 2012 Great American Beer Festival Small Brewing Company of the Year and specializes in Belgian-style saison and sour beer styles. I sampled the Funkwerks Saison—three-time GABF medal winner, 6.8% ABV, with notes of passion fruit, tangerine and spices; Tropic King—8% ABV imperial saison, with fruity tropical characteristics from the use of New Zealand hop varietals along with notes of pepper and ginger; and Raspberry Provincial—2014 GABF gold medal winner, 4.2% ABV sour ale brewed with raspberries with notes of lemon and tart raspberries. More good news is that Funkwerks beers are now being distributing in California and Nevada (as well as Colorado, Arizona, Texas, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Missouri).

funkwerks.com

Product Review

By Bob Barnes
On a Saturday morning, the scene is a busy food window surrounded by servers, expediters and bussers. It’s early, the place is packed with a line out the door, and the pace is all out. But there’s no tension on the face of any of the employees. Instead, there are smiles all around, an occasional slap on the back, or even a high five. People are offering to help each other. One person is consoling another, saying, “don’t worry about that, we’ve all done it a time or two. It will be okay.” The atmosphere is highly energized and friendly—and surprising. It’s like a sports team has come into the home stretch.

The scene is the Egg Works in the Park 2000 Shopping Center at Eastern Avenue and Sunset Road. The manager is Ashley Heacock, whose goal is to create a hardworking lineup of employees with a chemistry that begets teamwork and support.

“I consider myself to be a good judge of character,” says Heacock. “Part of my consideration for hiring someone is whether or not they will mesh well with our other employees. We recently won the company bowling tournament, and people from other restaurants were commenting on how close we are.”

Heacock has been known to test a potential employee’s helpfulness level by dropping a pen or piece of paper, noting whether or not they bend down to pick it up. It is not a deal breaker if someone doesn’t jump to pick up the item, but it certainly figures into the overall hiring equation.

On the job, Heacock likes to keep it light, while letting her employees know that she has high expectations. “I try to set the example for the teamwork mentality,” she says. “I will buss tables, serve food, seat guests—anything that needs doing. When we’re busy we’ve all got to work together. We have an unwritten rule that no one goes back to the kitchen area emptyhanded or passes a table without pouring more coffee or removing an empty glass.”

The employees are also encouraged to engage the guests in conversation and making them laugh is always a plus. “Sometimes I’ll put a child’s plate in front of one of the adults at the table,” says Heacock. “Everyone laughs at the child’s indignant reaction of “that’s mine!””

Employees at Heacock’s restaurant not only seem to be happy, they seem to be content. “We have a few employees who work second jobs, but not many,” Heacock said. “My impression is that everyone is getting the hours they need. Because we are often so busy, tables turn over several times during a shift and tips seem to be good. Also our hours are reasonable, we open early in the morning, but the last seating is at three, giving everyone time to be home in the evenings.”

Heacock is not only a restaurant manager, she is a full-time student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, majoring in finance. Her work ethic is highlighted by the fact that she just recently started allowing herself to make a “B” now and then. She said her father had to convince her that “B’s” were decent grades and she didn’t need to push herself so hard.

Although Heacock plays an obvious role in the success of the restaurant, she gives the credit to her boss and the company’s owner, Brad Burdsall. Heacock will tell you that the standards are set by the company and that Burdsall is an example to all of the employees. He is deeply involved in the day-to-day operations of the company, communicating continuously with all six general managers through group chats, weekly notes, restaurant visits and monthly meetings. He continues to hone his chef skills, creating his own spice blends and hot sauces, and he developed many of the restaurants’ signature dishes including the banana muffins, corn beef hash and “gumbabalaya.”

The tagline, “family restaurants” for the Egg Works and Egg and I really says it all. According to Heacock, Burdsall works hard to ensure employee success, both personally and in their careers.

“Brad has been such a help to me,” said Heacock. “When I had a car accident and was without transportation, he temporarily transferred me to one of the restaurants close to my home so I could ride my bicycle. He also works to ‘save’ employees facing challenges in their current jobs by allowing them to try various locations and positions to see if there might be a better fit elsewhere.”

It is always a pleasure to visit one of the “Egg” restaurants. You can’t beat good food, fast service and servers and others who are truly happy to be there.
Hey Chef!

What happens when you team an established award-winning celebrity chef with an up-and-coming rising star chef? An unbelievable, unforgettable event! Just such an occasion took place at Libertine Social, as the restaurant’s co-owner James Beard Award-winning Chef Shawn McClain teamed up with Esther’s Kitchen chef/owner James Trees. Part of Mandalay Bay/Delano’s EPICurean Experience encompassing five events over the weekend of Oct. 12-14, the Hey Chef! dinner was a tag team of dishes created just for this event by these two multi-talented chefs.

We began with “The Big A” cocktail curated by the legendary Tony Abou-Ganim (who is known far and wide as The Modern Mixologist, and is also co-owner of Libertine). This version of a Tennessee highball was a delightful and refreshing concoction with Jack Daniels Single Barrel, Canton Ginger Liqueur, apple cider, orange bitters and lemon sour that went down way too easily.

Chef Trees brought to the table (literally) Truffle Pizza, which he delivered personally and shaved the prized black truffles onto the cheese pie; Squash Agrodolce salad with Santa Barbara Pistachios, frisse and caramelized onion jus; Lobster Ravioli “Harleyquinn” with truffle lobster reduction, fennel and tarragon; and Barolo Braised Beef Cheeks with horseradish and cacao e pepe risotto.

Not to be outdone, Chef McClain wowed us with Steamed Cockle Clams with guanciale, French butter and umeboshi; Primi Bucatini with crispy shredded duck and nutmeg; and Wood-Fired Branzino with warm brown butter vinaigrette and grilled celery hearts.

Our feast was capped off with an assortment of cheeses and marinated olives and we left with parting gifts of the menu signed by both chefs and an autographed recipe and bottle of The Modern Mixologist’s aforementioned cocktail.

Marche Bacchus Debuts New Bar and New Cocktail Menu

Marche Bacchus French Bistro & Wine Shop opened in Desert Shores 17 years ago and has built a reputation as one of the best wine bar/restaurants and retail shops in Southern Nevada, and until now has only had a wine & beer license. The obtaining of a full liquor license was more than an excuse to remodel the front entrance and bar, for on President’s Day, Feb. 19, a drunk driver plowed through, causing quite extensive damage. Thankfully, no one was injured, and amazingly the restaurant never closed during the remodel, using creative restructuring of the restaurant’s entrance point.

A media reception to unveil the new bar and entrance was held on Oct. 16, just one day after the 11th anniversary of Jeff and Rhonda Wyatt taking over as owners in 2007. The new digs include dark wood flooring, new wood ceiling, bartop with inlays resembling sea shells and a bar that has extended to three times its former length.

Also revealed was a new cocktail menu containing specialty drinks, aperitifs and martinis, most of which are classic cocktails with a twist. Max Solano, Mixologist and Spirits Educator for Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits of Nevada (who also happens to write the Spirits Confidential column in this publication), is credited with helping to design the menu. Examples of creations in keeping with the uniqueness and twists are the “Oh, Grasshoppah”—Crème de Menthe, Crème de Cacao and vanilla ice cream—which Rhonda explained is a revival of the green minty drink that today you can only find in a handful of places in town; The “Bacchus Bloody Mary”—Belvedere Vodka, Lefty O’Doul’s San Francisco Mix, worcestershire, horseradish and bacon; and “The New Old Fashion”—Suntory Toki Japanese Whiskey, Cocchi Vermouth Di Torino, orange, Peychaud’s Bitters, sesame seed, espelette, pineapple and Amarena cherry. As Robin Leach was a great friend of the Wyatts and oftentimes patron of their restaurant, created in his honor is the “Robin Leach Martini”—made with your choice of one of eight of the best vodkas in the world, such as Russian Standard Platinum, and comes with an art-deco spoon on top of the glass with a dollop of Bulgarian caviar.

In addition to the cocktails are several high-end cognacs, extra and ultra ahejo tequilas, specialty whiskeys, bourbons and ryes, most of which you may not find anywhere else in town. The selection includes more than 60 single malt Scotches, such as Glenmorangie Highland Single Malt “The Quinta Ruban”—aged 12 years in bourbon cask and finished in port cask.

Other reasons to visit Marche Bacchus are its ample outdoor seating with tranquil views of the lake, a well-rounded reasonably priced menu (which James Beard Award-winning Chef Luciano Pellegrini consults on) and the fact that you can purchase any bottle of wine in the retail shop and enjoy it with your dinner for only a $10 corkage fee (most restaurants charge a 300-400% markup!). Congrats to Jeff and Rhonda on their 11 year anniversary and on their beautiful new bar and cocktail menu.
SPIRITS CONFIDENTIAL with Max Solano

From Slave to Distilling Legend

By Max Solano

Max Solano is a principal mixologist at Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits of Nevada and is considered one of the most respected and premier authorities in the West Coast on all matters whisky. He also serves as a Spirits Judge at the coveted New York World Wine & Spirits Competition, International Whisky Competition and world-renowned San Francisco World Spirits Competition.

Without question, the further we delve back into history, the probability of there being inaccuracies and/or lost and missing records or dates becomes greater. We know this! For example, the Reverend Elijah Craig is often credited as being the founding father of the bourbon whiskey category and having his very own distillery established in 1789. I do not think you’ll find too many historians arguing that Elijah Craig did not play a major role; however, what about the many other individuals who were already making this corn-style whiskey in the very same region at the same time as the Reverend such as Watty Boone (yes, a relative of the famous frontiersman and early-day explorer, Daniel Boone), Jacob Briar, Jacob Spears, Evan Williams (who founded his own distillery in 1783), etc. just to name a few? Maybe I am just being controversial and wanting to stir up the proverbial pot...

Let’s shift gears to another important and less discussed American whiskey category: Tennessee whiskey. Tennessee certainly produces a very unique style of whiskey, which is also known as the Lincoln County process. Early American whiskies were often harsh, and their coarse, uneven flavors made them unpalatable to drink neat. Alfred Eaton, a Tennessean, is associated with the creation of the Lincoln County Process (circa 1825)—a technique that mellows and smoothens whiskey by filtering it through sugar maple charcoal before it ever enters a barrel. Charcoal mellowing reduces the grainy characteristics of freshly distilled whiskey, removes the fatty acids and softens the mouthfeel. There is debate as to whether Eaton deserves all the credit for this technique. Historically, Tennessee whiskey has been produced identically to that of the bourbon-making process. However, it’s been legally defined that for bourbon there can be nothing added to it except for water, to prohibit from anything enhancing the whiskey’s flavor aside from the oak barrel(s) it’s aged in.

For Tennessee whiskey, this unique maple charcoal filtration process is said to not only mellow the whiskey, but also add a subtle sweetness to it. In May of 2013, Tennessee whiskey officially became a distinct style and category. Whereas, bourbon can be made anywhere in the United States (including Tennessee), Tennessee whiskey can only be made in that particular state and has to use the Lincoln County process, with one brand (Benjamin Prichard’s) as the lone exception.

Tennessee is becoming a hotbed of amazing spirits producers. Some of the most notable producers are Corsair, George Dickel, Nelson Green Brier (Belle Meade), Tenn South, Jug Creek, Popcorn Sutton, Pennington Distilling, just to name a few. Of course, the biggest name in Tennessee whiskey in the last century plus is the Old No. 7 Distillery, better known as the Jack Daniel’s Distillery.

Interestingly enough, in 2016, there was an article published by the New York Times alleging that in actuality Jack Daniel himself, learned how to make whiskey from a slave by the name of Nathan “Uncle Nearest” Green. Brown Forman, owner of the Jack Daniel’s Distillery and brand, finally recognized this story as being factual and now pays tribute to Uncle Nearest and the Green family for his great contributions.

The company’s decision to recognize its debt to a slave is a momentous turn in the history of Southern foodways. Even as black innovators in Southern cooking and agriculture are beginning to get their due, the tale of American whiskey is still told as a whites-only affair: about Scottish, Irish and German settlers who brought Old World distilling knowledge to the frontier states of Tennessee and Kentucky. Green’s story changes all that by showing how enslaved people likely provided the brains as well as the brawn in what was an arduous, dangerous and highly technical operation.

According to the co-founder of the independently-owned Uncle Nearest Tennessee whiskey, author and historian, Fawn Weaver, Green was rented out by his owners, a firm called Landis & Green, to farmers around Lynchburg, including Dan Call. Mr. Call was a wealthy landowner and preacher who also employed a teenager named Jack Daniel to do chores around the farm, and, eventually, help make whiskey. When young Jack was ready, Mr. Call made the introduction to Uncle Nearest. Green, already adept at distilling, took Daniel under his wing and, after the Civil War and the end of slavery, went to work for him in his fledgling whiskey operation.

Furthermore, Uncle Nearest Premium Whiskey is inspired by the best whiskey-maker the world never knew and the first African-American master distiller on record in the United States. The Uncle Nearest brand, wholly owned by Uncle Nearest, Inc., encompasses a Premium Aged, distilled, aged, bottled and hand-labeled Tennessee using locally sourced grains and using whiskies in the range of 8-11 years of age and bottled at a deliciously smooth 100 proof. Aside from this tremendous honor, Green is also thought to have helped perfect the Lincoln County Process. Again, re-writing history.

And, if Fawn’s discoveries weren’t admirable enough, through archives she located the actual farm in the Nashville area where Nearest was enslaved and first distilled whiskey, purchased it with her husband, Keith, and will now be the site of the new distillery in 2019. Cheers, to you, Nearest Green!
After years of working in the best kitchens in the United States and Italy, Chef Marc Vetri and business partner, Jeff Benjamin, opened Vetri Cucina in their hometown of Philadelphia in 1998. Vetri Cucina prides itself on offering rustic Italian cuisine, handcrafted pastas, innovative flavor combinations and unparalleled hospitality. This fall, Vetri and Benjamin are launching their second location at the Palms Casino Resort with its grand opening slated for November 19. The restaurant’s brand-new wine program is being curated by Rafael Garcia, Director of Wine, who recently took some time to chat with us about the process.

What most excites you about this new restaurant?

Chef Marc Vetri’s cuisine, his commitment to exceptional service, “The Vetri Culture” and the dining room’s panoramic view of the Las Vegas Strip.

Vetri’s Company Culture Book states that “since opening Vetri Cucina’s doors in 1998, Chef Marc Vetri has created a unique culture and outlook for our co-workers so that they can be proud of their team and love coming to work every day. We care deeply about everyone on our team and want to give you every tool that you need to succeed. This is a nurturing environment where you can make mistakes and not be put down for them. We like to think that mistakes and missteps are an opportunity to learn and grow. You will notice an exciting energy where we work hard and invest a significant amount of time in you to ensure your happiness at Vetri Cucina. We understand that there will be challenges and obstacles that you will face daily, but we want to approach these daily events together.”

What was the path that led you to this opportunity?

The journey to this incredible opportunity began in 2012 when I started working at B&B Ristorante. There I worked with a very authentic Italian menu and a wine list that was almost exclusively Italian. After almost two years at B&B and a brief stint at BLT Steak, I joined the team at L’Atelier de Joel Robuchon where I refined my wine and food pairing skills. The experience at both restaurants makes for a perfect transition into an international wine list that is driven by Italian wines.

Do you have any favorite pairings you can share from the menu?

The Borgogno Dolcetto d’Alba with the onion crepe. The kitchen team reduces 50 pounds of onions to 4 pounds and then a two-day cooking process caramelizes and concentrates the flavors of the onion. The freshness of the fruit in the Dolcetto brightens and amplifies the rich earthy flavors of the onion crepe.

Did you inherit inventory for your wine program or are you having to start from scratch?

We are starting from scratch.

What is the most difficult thing about building a wine list from the ground up?

Ensuring a balance of regions, vintages, styles, flavor profiles and price points.

How many selections are you aiming to have at opening?

We will begin with approximately 380 selections.

What will be your process in maintaining such a substantial list?

I plan to continuously meet with vendors and visit winemakers in order to find wines from unique regions, innovative winemakers and library selections.

Are you approaching buying for this program differently than you would for a restaurant on the Strip?

Honestly, no. My approach is always to feature the best and most interesting wines available at varying price points.

We noticed that the original location only has a tasting menu. Will you continue this same concept?

We will open with an a la carte menu but will offer a tasting menu in the future. Although we have not been allowed a sneak peek at the actual space, we have been assured that it will be well worth the wait. For more information about this exciting new restaurant, visit https://vetricucina.com/vegas.
Chef Spotlight
Megan Shaver

Following an early career of moving across the country, Megan Shaver is ready to plant her roots firmly in Las Vegas. Shaver recently returned to Las Vegas and her previous employer JW Marriott Las Vegas Resort & Spa as the executive chef at Hawthorn Grill. She’s traversed the country, from New York to Hawaii to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Back in Las Vegas, she’s excited to wrap all those experiences into the menus she’ll create at Hawthorn Grill.

You were in Las Vegas, where’d you go?
I was here for seven, but left about four years ago for Denver.

Prior to that move to Las Vegas, where were you?
I had been living in Hawaii for four years, working at the Four Seasons Resort Lanai. It was getting a little small and I wanted to see some new things, maybe a little bigger. I had an opportunity to start at the JW Marriott with Chef Bruce [Knapik] and I felt like I needed something different. Once in Las Vegas, it was all here at JW.

Where were you working in Denver, and how’d you end up there?
There was a chef I knew from New York at the Inverness Hotel & Conference Center and had family there, plus it was nice to see some snow. I worked at two separate places, mostly big banquets, but with locally sourced food and a smaller level than Las Vegas and the Art Hotel, and that taught me a lot of really creative plates.

It seems like you’ve been all over the map. How’d that happen?
It wasn’t really planned, when I was in Denver I got the opportunity to get to know a chef at the JW who moved to the Caribbean, then the opportunity to go St. Thomas to work at Marriott’s Frenchman’s Reef. We go down there, and not even a year and Hurricane Irma destroyed the hotel, and I was thrown for a loop. I thought we’d be down there for a while with an island lifestyle. It was devastation, but a quick relocation to Atlanta and after, I worked at the largest hotel in Atlanta, the Atlanta Marriott Marquis. It was 1,600 rooms. I knew I wanted to get back to a smaller scale and I came out here for vacation and Chef Bruce reached out and said the chef was leaving and it just felt right.

What are you most excited for about being back?
Just kind of putting my background on the menu and to make it more user friendly. Getting my team involved in the menu. I always like input from the team, because they feel more involved and see their influence in it too. I like to present my ideas and bounce back and collaborate.

Is there one particular region you draw most of your influence?
I think I draw from everywhere. I loved Hawaii; parts I still use in the cooking, but I draw from everything. I try to go to the Asian markets and find different things and get like green mango and get the Philippine and Hawaiian foods.

Any new menu items you’re really excited about?
We have some cool things, but the grilled octopus, how to get it the most tender, that was great team effort. We have some new lunch menus to check out too. It’s just changing it up a little bit, taking classics and spicing them up a little bit. We’re excited for the future.

How’d you get into cooking?
I grew up in upstate New York and a neighbor was Mr. Food, this local celebrity chef always filming in his backyard and a whole kitchen in his basement. When I was a kid, my uncle opened a deli in New York.

I always liked to spend more time there than other extracurricular activities. Then at 15 my parents opened a restaurant and I continued working then got my B.S. in nutrition at Russell Sage College, then a degree at the Culinary Institute of America.

What’s your favorite thing about being a chef?
There are some guys I hired here as cooks seven, eight years ago now who are as sous chefs. Watching them lead the line, I passed along my knowledge and helped them get there and you see some of yourself in them.

What’s the best part of the Las Vegas food scene?
I love that there is so much variety. It’s what do you want? French? Moe’s French Steakhouse & Bistro. Echo and Rig for steak. I love that there is so much. Hawaiian food, the poke in North Las Vegas is on par with Hawaii. I like to eat in Chinatown a lot. That’s fun!
Las Vegas will be treated to a spectacle on November 5, when a giant highball glass full of indigo-hued gin will meet gallons of tonic water and magically turn pink. The feat at the Apex Social Lounge at the Palms Casino Resort will set a world record for largest mixed drink for the U.S. Bartenders’ Guild (USBG) Las Vegas Chapter, but will also serve a greater purpose.

“We’re creating awareness Las Vegas style,” said Livio Lauro, of Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits of Nevada, and lifetime member of the USBG. The record breaking drink is just one of many events throughout the month of November to help highlight National Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness & Family Caregiver Month through Keep Memory Alive’s Month of Memory. Keep Memory Alive is the fundraising arm for the Cleveland Clinic’s Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in downtown Las Vegas. It’s the second year for the Month of Memory, which was created to help spread the awareness beyond the typical community who frequent and support the Lou Ruvo Center.

“Last year, we were doing different promotions to not just raise money, but also raise awareness right here in this community, local and homegrown, doing a lot of good,” said Anna Robins, senior director of Keep Memory Alive. “Not everyone knows what goes on in our cool building downtown. We created this (Month of Memory) as a way to hopefully speak to a different audience.”

Breaking the Guinness book of World Records will certainly reach an audience. The cocktail, made with Empress Gin, Fever Tree Tonic Water and giant ice cubes from Ice Occasions, starts out a shade of purple because of the botanicals used and will turn pink because of how one of its botanicals—Butterfly Pea Flower—interacts with acid. Made in British Columbia, Empress Gin also features Empress tea, juniper, grapefruit peel, coriander, rose petal, ginger root and cinnamon bark. “It’s a very crafty gin, and it’s not just the gimmick of turning purple to pink,” Lauro said. “It truly is a good gin and is noteworthy for a lot more than just the color change.”

Roughly 400 bottles of Empress Gin will be used for the mixed drink, along with about twice as much tonic water, fresh lime juice and the ice cubes, mixed in a giant glass made by SRS Fabrication. Spectators will be able to try the gin and tonic. At the right time, the tonic will be poured in, forcing the change from the gin’s natural color to pink. “That color change is sudden and dramatic,” he said. “It’ll go viral, but we’re creating much more than a stunt.”

Lauro helped put together the event, as a member of the Guild and wanting to help it break a world record.

“The members of the USBG are the heroes behind this,” said Lauro, who co-founded the Nevada chapter in 2001. “The mission of the Guild is to enhance the image of the bartender and the cocktail itself, so this is all right up our alley. It’s a community event and we plan to have the Vegas community there. It’s greater than just the Guild and the Palms.”

But it is the location, the Palms, that helps highlight why some of the partners of Month of Memory are so special. The resort was chosen because the cure to this disease is very near and dear to their executive team and they have been supporting the cause for a long time. The choice of gin runs deeper than the color purple, as does the partnership with Crown Royal, which is packaged in a purple bag. Lauro said, “The reason behind Empress, is the ownership of that brand had loved ones affected and they’ve been supporters from day one, as has Diageo, the owner of Crown Royal. Purple is cool, but the involvement is even cooler.”

Purple is the color of Alzheimer’s awareness, the same way pink is for breast cancer awareness. Month of Memory is a major initiative by...
Keep Memory Alive to spread awareness of everything the local Lou Ruvo Center does. The center also works with multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease and ALS.

While there are epic events like the giant mixed drink, Keep Memory Alive’s partnerships also include little activations, dollar donations per check, round ups to the check or even little plastic brains that can be sold for a dollar.

There’s also the Audi Henderson Lake Las Vegas Classic on Nov. 1-3 in Henderson, a two-part golf tournament and culinary event with proceeds heading to Keep Memory Alive. Other events happen throughout the year, including the annual Keep Memory Alive Power of Love Gala (which has raised millions of dollars for its cause), a Texas Hold ‘em Charity Poker Tournament and Summer Social and Rodeo.

“There are all sorts of creative ideas partners come up with,” Robins said. “There are all sorts of ways, but no matter what you’ll be doing to participate, we get a chance to spread awareness.”

Robins added that an important part of the awareness is to spread the word on where the money actually goes and explained they felt they hadn’t done a good enough job educating the entire community about how much the center does beyond treating patients. In addition to treatment, the center also offers free social services, social workers, care groups and more.

“We don’t just treat patients and these diseases,” Robins said. “We wrap around the entire process and help the families get through the journey of diseases with no cures. It’s our job to make that process better.”

That’s not to take away from the research happening at the center, which is the largest research study on Alzheimer’s, including 21 clinical trials. More than 70 clinical trials in all have been conducted at the center.

“There is a really rich story happening in downtown Las Vegas,” Robins said.

To help really spread the message of the Lou Ruvo Center, PBS will be airing a three-part educational series on Keep Memory Alive and the Lou Ruvo Brain Center. One part will focus on the creation of the center and how it stems from “one man’s promise other families won’t go through what he went through with his own father,” Robins said.

The Lou Ruvo Center opened in 2010, founded by Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits senior managing director Larry Ruvo in dedication to his father, Lou, who suffered from the ravaging disease of Alzheimer’s, from which he passed away in 1994.

The other parts of the series will highlight the state of the clinic, talking about the doctors, programs and research to all of the center’s support for caregiving.

Robins also highlighted a program throughout schools in Clark County, which teaches them about Alzheimer’s, but also how to have a healthy brain and ensure that it’s healthy now and throughout their own aging process. The program also depicts children going through couch cushions and car seats finding coins. The hope is to teach the children every little bit counts, what people are going through and, maybe, inspire them to go into medicine. “All these little guys come in with change and raise thousands of dollars,” Robin said. “It shows together we can raise a lot of money in small amounts. That’s probably one of our favorites. It gives us that platform into the younger generation. They might see relatives struggling and they didn’t understand what was going on and we can help them, at least a little bit.”

The entire month of November is dedicated to making sure the city of Las Vegas is aware of the work being done right here in the city at the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health and about the diseases in general. Here’s to investing in a penny for your thoughts (which happens to be the name of a very worthy children’s program): While some of the events can generate thousands of dollars and others can generate a lot of buzz, like the record-setting giant cocktail, even the smallest actions matter, as Robins explained: “I think the important thing is for people to understand every penny really does count and really does make a difference in someone’s life. Maybe a family can get extra services, or access to food stamps. Whatever is going on, the philanthropy underwrites it.

I think a lot of the community maybe thinks we’re just a hospital, but we’re so much more than that.”

With Las Vegas already doing so much, why not take part in helping the city achieve more? It’s as easy as checking out the world’s largest gin and tonic. For more information on the event, the Alzheimer’s Awareness Month of Memory, and what you can do to support awareness of brain health, visit Keepmemoryalive.org.

www.lvfnbpro.com

November 2018 | The Las Vegas Food & Beverage Professional

17
Sarah brings a two-fold approach to bartending that we can all learn from: “1. Make ordering drinks fun and approachable. 2. Stay hospitality-minded. Whether a guest is interested in classic cocktails, beer or shots, no one should be made to feel that they don’t belong somewhere simply because they don’t know about every aspect of the craft.”

She has recently returned from an extended stay in Montana and now is back and ready to give the city her all. This drum playing, motorcycle enthusiast and Massachusetts native can be seen sipping reposado at a number of our industry meccas. Herbs & Rye and the Sand Dollar rank at the top of her list. When behind the bar at The Kitchen at Atomic, she loves to make Aviations. Do yourself a favor and go see her soon!

“Remaining hospitality-minded is just a quick way to remind myself not to take things personally. Life is hard. People from all walks of life go to bars for a variety of reasons. It is our job as bartenders to be malleable and to adapt to our guests’ needs.”

DYLAN WEEMS

Meet one of your newest members, Dylan Weems. While his time in the USBG is little, his excitement about things to come is huge. Originally from Orlando, FL, he now calls Vegas his home. When he’s not working at The Golden Tiki, Dylan spends time studying the craft and looking for the prefect mojito. “I love mojitos. Growing up in Florida we would have mojitos by the beach and the pool. It’s a staple and a classic.” While he was attending University of Miami, he spent time entertaining students as the official team mascot, Sebastian the Ibis. At UM, Dylan was a journalism major, but now is taking on our industry with a vengeance and has become a student of the art of hospitality.

“Hospitality is about communication. Things won’t always go perfectly so how effectively you communicate with your guest can keep them happy even in a busy or stressful situation.”

Being a recent addition to our chapter he already sees the benefits of the Guild. Be sure and say hi to him at our next meeting.

“The USBG allows someone brand new to the industry the opportunity to network with and learn from some of best around.”

By Adam Rains

Adam has a true passion for food, wine, beer & spirits. He is tiki-attaché and lead bartender at The Golden Tiki, a long-time cocktailian, and a member of the Health & Wellness Committee for the United States Bartenders’ Guild in Las Vegas. Adam strives to learn every day and during his career he’s studied at SDSU, USBG, BarSmarts, International Sommeliers Guild, Certified Cicerone Program and the Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits Academy. His mantra with both food & cocktails is, “Fresh is best.”
Chef Talk
A Beta Feta Cheese

I’ve recently been pondering a trip to the Mediterranean, especially Greece, so I’ve started eating at all of the Greek restaurants in town to start getting a taste for that style of food and food preparation. There are a lot of common foods amongst all of the Mediterranean restaurants, especially Greek restaurants. The ingredient that intrigues me the most is feta cheese, which appears in many dishes in Greek culture and cuisine.

Traditionally feta cheese is a white curd cheese that is brined and made from sheep’s milk or a combination of goat and sheep’s milk. There are other types of cheese called feta cheese that are made from cow’s milk, but the traditional style is made from the sheep’s milk or the combination milk.

True feta cheese has its Designation of Origin, DOO (there are other terms used but they all begin with D) protection in the European Union. What that means is that to call something feta cheese it needs to be produced in the traditional way and in a particular place. Greek feta cheese can be made from pure sheep’s milk or a mixture of up to 30% goat’s milk with the rest being sheep’s milk. The European Union does a very good job of protecting their quality food products. These laws protect the names of wines. Champagne can only be called that if it comes from the Champagne region of France; if not it must be called Sparkling Wine. Other foods that have this protection include many cheeses, olives and olive oils, beers and balsamic vinegar. Europe is not the only area with this form of a “trademark.” Mexico has tequila that can only be made from agave of the Tequilana Weber blue variety. The United States has a few, not many. One example is Vidalia onions, which must come from Vidalia, Georgia. These designations are mainly due to soil conditions, rain, sun and preparation technique.

Feta cheese is used in many dishes across the Greek cuisine including the common Greek salad as well as a popular phyllo dough dish called Spanakopita, which means spinach pie. It also is considered a table cheese, which is added to many other dishes. Feta cheese can also be cooked as part of a grilled cheese sandwich or in omelets. If you’re going to use feta cheese, realize that it is saltier than many other cheeses that are commonly used, due to the brining of the curds.

Feta cheese can have a maximum amount of moisture of 56% of its volume and a fat content of at least 43% and is traditionally categorized into two varieties. The first is firm and the second variety is soft. The firm is usually higher in quality and is used for crumbling while the soft is almost spreadable, and much cheaper than the firm variety.

Feta cheese, which has about a 3% salinity content, is made like most other cheeses. The milk is heated up to kill any bacteria and when it cools down rennet is added, which allows the cream to coagulate. Rennet traditionally comes from the stomach lining of calves, but there are vegetable-based rennets made from a specific mold. The curds are then placed in a cheesecloth to allow the whey to drain out. The curds are then put in the molds for several days. Aging at room temperature can take several weeks and then the cheese is refrigerated for at least two months to create the end product.

Many other countries make feta-like cheeses with different standards, but the most common available in the United States is Greek. Other countries are mostly Eastern and Western European, but it is also common in Northern Africa.

When possible, you should always buy feta cheese in brine. Feta in brine means the cheese comes packed in a plastic container full of salt water liquid, which is compared to the pre-crumbled or vacuum-sealed varieties. Not only does the brine intensify flavor and add to feta’s life span, it also improves the cheese’s creamy texture. You can use that brine to marinate chicken, thin out dips, build flavor in broths and braising liquids, and it can be used to cook grains and beans.

There are some substitutes for feta cheese. They include Ricotta cheese which is the most similar. It’s crumbly like feta but is much less salty. There also is Halloumi from Greece. This has a similar texture but a much milder flavor than feta. Mexican Queso Fresco can also be a substitute, but it is moister. Or you can use Tofu as a substitute.
FATTO A MANO
by Riedel

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Goose Island Remains Committed to Chicago and Good Beer

More than seven years ago, the beer world was shaken by the Anheuser-Busch deal to purchase Chicago’s Goose Island.

The impact of Anheuser-Busch, now part of AB InBev, has certainly divided parts of the beer industry as the company has gone on to purchase more craft breweries and seemingly dominates the separate, but all too included beer distribution industry.

I often see the divisiveness as a national beverage writer—even among writers—between people who happily still drink those beers or are oblivious to ownership and those who protest the global conglomerate’s ownership. I couldn’t tell you the last time I bought a Goose product, but I’ll happily drink it when I come across it, even before I was invited on a press trip to Chicago in September.

The trip was meant to showcase this year’s Bourbon County Stout variants, but also the commitment and investment within the Chicago Goose Island brewery. It’s a little jarring to me that so many people outside of employees of the craft beer industry are concerned with the deal, but I do understand those employees’ issues. Having once worked at a brewery, I understand the desire for many owners to accept a deal—Goose Island sold for $38.8 million and a few years later, Ballast Point sold for $1 billion to Constellation Brands. At the time of the deal, it was understandable that Goose Island founder John Hall was nearing retirement age and wanted to recoup his investment.

The ensuing investment in Goose Island, and the other brands it’s since purchased, has been a boon to the brewery and its employees and likely the entire industry.

Walking through the brewery, it looks like many of the other large craft breweries across the U.S., an expected picture given Goose Island’s influential status as it’s now in its 30th year of operation. But with production of its major brands, like 312 Wheat Ale and IPA farmed out to AB’s massive breweries, the brewers in Chicago are given a long leach in terms of innovation. Those beers often start as taproom-only releases and Chicago-only releases, eventually graduating into full distribution, but still brewed at the Chicago brewery.

We also walked toured Intelligentsia Coffee, the brewery’s coffee provider, and the barrelhouse with thousands of barrels of beer aging. While in the barrelhouse, we tried this year’s Bourbon County variants: Bourbon County Brand Wheatwine, Bourbon County Brand Stout, Reserve Bourbon County Brand Stout, Bourbon County Brand Coffee Barleywine, Bourbon County Brand Midnight Orange Stout, Proprietor’s Bourbon County Brand Stout, Bourbon County Brand Vanilla Stout and Bourbon County Brand Bramble Rye Stout.

While in Chicago, I chatted with an innovation brewer, Tim Faith, whom I knew from my days at the Grand Rapids Business Journal and his at New Holland Brewing Co. His wheatwine will be among the variants of Bourbon County releases this year.

He spoke to me about the great opportunities the brewery has now because of AB’s investment, including research, quality tools and educational experiences. A quality assurance employee at another major Midwest brewery I recently had drinks with, said the research and advancements made at the major brewery-owned production facilities benefit the entire industry, backed up Faith’s statements.

Then when you start to look at the beer scene in Chicago (and Midwest) and notice how many of the founders and brewers came from Goose Island, it’s startling.

I’ve always been on the side of drink what your palate likes and I still am. If one of the AB breweries (Goose Island, 10 Barrel, Golden Road, Blue Point, Elysian, Wicked Weed, Karbach, Devil’s Backbone, Four Peaks, Breckenridge, or even the CBA breweries like Kona) tastes good, drink them! I’m also of the belief it’s important to try, and support, local beers wherever travels take you and in your neighborhood.

Yes, some of AB InBev’s tactics can be a bit predatory. Does that stop consumers from buying products from other major corporations? No. Does their investment in breweries help the entire industry? Yes and I have no doubt, while AB wants to make the most money it can, that it also cares about beer as a whole.

The trip to Chicago could have altered my view, especially if they were trying to hide behind a veil, but the entire time they talked freely of their experiences with AB. I respect those who disagree with AB InBev, but I also don’t feel like beer (or politics) should be like sports fandom, it’s not cut or dry.

No matter how you feel this year’s batch of Bourbon County Stout variants are definitely worth a try, no matter how you feel about the brewery’s ownership.

Tim Faith discussing his beer
By Shelley Stepanek

Shelley Stepanek is President of DSA, the oldest non-profit tourist association in the state, along with being on the board of ticket brokers. Shelley has previously owned three restaurants.

Best of the Best

BRIAN VAN FLANDERN, one of America’s top mixologists, has launched his 5th book in a series, this one entitled Whiskey Cocktails. The book is filled with recipes, stories, hints of serving the perfect cocktail in the perfect glass, and Mr. Van Flandern, entertained with stories at an opening event at the exquisite Baccarat store in the Forum Shops at Caesars. The book is a beautiful masterpiece for anyone who loves whiskey and new recipes. Check out his entire series. If you wish to see superb Baccarat crystals, from glasses, decanters to clocks, stop in. Located at the North end of the shops.

(Editor’s Note: Brian Van Flandern, Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits of Nevada Executive Director of Mixology, Spirits Education and Special Events, was featured on the cover and in a feature story in our August, 2018 issue.)

Another nice place to visit in the Forum Shops is theotheroom. Yes, it is spelled right, all small letters, located as the first restaurant inside the north valet. Small, intimate, with great bartenders, they have a new menu tasting of donut courses paired with various Champagnes and wine. Four small donuts, featuring a flaky croissant, a fluffy, “salad” course, the main course of a yeast-raised donut with mascarpone filling and a dessert course, with blackberry glaze and cream cheese Chantilly with a lovely glass of Shiraz, is truly something unique to the city.

Kick off an evening at THE UNDERGROUND, the new speakeasy in the basement of the Mob Museum. With a secret password to gain access, this historically factual place is a great opening act for an evening downtown. There are two happy hour times, early and late, artifacts to look at, and a private room to book. Top the evening off with a short walk to the Plaza to see the new show, A MOB STORY, Wed. thru Sat. starring a real-life mobster, Michael Franzese of the Colombo crime family. Truly a fantastic show with 16 song and dance numbers, produced by Jeff Kutash, with plenty of commentary from Mr. Franzese. This is what the real mob was all about.

LAS VEGAS FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL held at Tivoli Village on Oct 5 & 6 had over 2,000 attendees each night. With over 50 vendors serving up their best bites and plenty of name brand liquor companies participating, everyone dined from 8 p.m. till 11. There were enough wine glasses engraved with the event to make sure everyone had plenty to taste. Executive chefs from Katsu-Ya Group, Lotus of Siam, Café Americano, Roy’s and Tivoli Village all participated. Kitchen Table Squared, Hamptons, The Orleans Arena, Capital Grill, Mastro’s and Echo & Rig brought out their finest dishes. There was music and plenty of entertainment along with lots of places to do selfies. I personally always enjoy the chance to taste numerous ceviches on the same night. A portion of the proceeds went to the American Cancer Society. Be on the watch for the next one.

MARTHA STEWART Las Vegas Wine & Food Experience was held at the Festival Grounds on the Strip, across from SLS on Oct 13. The gourmet Grand Tasting had everyone sampling some of LV’s finest in food, wine and craft beer. There were unlimited samplings of chef creations, from the very best of local restaurants. Urban Seed, Milos, Bardot, Fiamma Italian Kitchen, Heritage Steak, Hecho, Libertine Social, Andre’s, The Steak House, Black Sheep and Pampas to name a few. Chefs held demonstrations on the Culinary Stage and there was access to some of Martha’s newest productions, cooking classes, plenty of art and entertainment. The hit of the day, of course, was Martha herself cooking. The Cellar provided rums of Puerto Rico. Hoping this will be a yearly event.
Atmosphere is without a doubt one of your restaurant’s biggest selling points. Just as you’d modernize your menu to meet your guests’ evolving taste, updating your restaurant’s overall look and feel is vital to long-term success. A beautiful restaurant will make the food even better, while a dated ambiance can detract from even the best culinary creations.

Changing your restaurant’s atmosphere can appear daunting on the surface, but rarely will you need to knock down walls or undergo the overhauls found on Restaurant Impossible. Oftentimes it’s the little things that will make a big difference. Yes, they will require some money and perhaps a bit of elbow grease up front, but should pay dividends down the road.

**Lighting**

Lighting sets the mood, and can be one of the quickest simplest ways to change the feel of your dining room. Changing recessed bulbs to those of a different temperature can make your restaurant feel more intimate or exciting, depending on the look you’re going for. Try adjusting the lighting in your own home first, or in your restaurant during off-hours, and have staff, friends and family verify if they like the difference.

If you have chandeliers or other light fixtures that aren’t as easy to change out, then best to consider other tactics before committing to a lighting overhaul.

**Color**

Your color scheme works hand-in-hand with lighting to create the atmosphere you’re going for. White walls are often being subbed out for darker colors, exposed wood and other earthy undertones, but you should stay true to the mood you’re looking to convey. This change can involve a simple paint job. Get some swatches and gather feedback from peers before moving forward, and then test in one room [if you have multiple sections in your restaurant] before changing color across the board.

**Tables and table settings**

New tables and settings can go a long way to convey new-age elegance, as well as maximize your floor space. Tables will likely be a larger expenditure, so be sure to have your other elements in order prior to making this change. Modern-looking tables would look pretty out of place against old-school walls.

Silverware, plates, bowls and glasses should be consistent with the look you seek to establish. Fancy, heavy silverware may fit well in a nice gastropub, but not necessarily in a family-oriented pizza joint.

Don’t forget about the host booth in this mix. The host booth is one of the first impressions guests will have of your restaurant, so it should match the theme of your dining room.

**Server uniforms**

Your service staff are walking ambassadors of your restaurant’s atmosphere, and should dress the part. If your menu is all that is hip and trendy, then the rustic look that’s swept through venues across the country may be a great fit. If you’re a high-volume Asian looking to make a loud impression, perhaps a bolder look is in order. Flat colors and ultra-thin pinstripes are trending, but in any case uniforms should complement the other elements in the room.

An intricate balance between standing out and blending in exists, whereby guests will be able to easily distinguish staff from fellow guests but at the same time feel comfortable approaching a staff member as if they were a friend.

**Music**

In addition to the visual components, altering the sound of your restaurant can dramatically change the attitude of your dining room. There’s no shortage of spots that blare club beats at a near-deafening level to increase their ‘hip’ factor. Conversely, soft tunes can make a spot feel more romantic, and adjust guest conversation volume levels accordingly.

Music is by no means required to lift a restaurant’s mood, and can certainly detract from the experience, so closely monitor any changes you make in this area.

If you pride your restaurant as a ‘blast from the past,’ then by all means keep it that way. There will always be a niche for shiny red booths, tuxedo clad servers and framed photos all over the walls. Just be sure to see eye-to-eye with your guests in terms of how they perceive your restaurant. If they want you to change, it’s important to listen to them.
The restaurant industry is one of the most diverse industries in the country employing more minority managers than any other industry. It is also one of the most charitable industries in the United States. Currently, nine out of ten restaurants are actively involved in charitable activities on a daily basis. To help celebrate these industry stars making a difference each and every day, the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF) has teamed up with American Express, PepsiCo Foodservice and Ecolab to honor individuals with the annual Restaurant Neighbor Award, Faces of Diversity American Dream Award and Ambassador of Hospitality Award.

But while nine in 10 restaurants are reportedly active in their communities, consumers are largely unaware of their work. To that end, the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF) teamed up with American Express 16 years ago to start the Restaurant Neighbor Awards, annual accolades meant to educate the public and inspire other restaurants to similarly serve their communities.

Different companies have different strategies driving their philanthropic initiatives. For some, fighting hunger is a natural fit, whether through donating meals or raising funds. Others give away their time and their money to causes like multiple sclerosis research or literacy promotion.

The Restaurant Neighbor Awards have four categories: Large Business, for sales of more than $100 million; Mid-Size Business, for sales between $10 million and $100 million; Small Business, for $10 million and below; and a Cornerstone Humanitarian Award, which honors an individual for his or her long-term charitable commitment. After winners are selected at the state level, judges review those restaurants for the national awards. In making their selections, judges look at factors including impact (such as dollars raised or people fed), and staff involvement.

These can be anything: the creativity of the program, a personal story or inside knowledge a judge has about the company, or if it is a replicable model for others.

A 2018 study found that when companies supported social and environmental issues, 94 percent of global consumers had a more positive image of the company, 95 percent were more likely to trust the company, and 91 percent would show more loyalty to them. In addition, given comparable price and quality among competitors, 93 percent would switch to brands associated with a good cause.

“Restaurants are gathering places, and they know the people in their community and know what they need,” says Katherine Jacobi, President-Nevada Restaurant Association. “They’re the first ones to respond in times of need.”

There is a balancing act that companies must walk in order to expose their consumers to their worthy endeavors without crossing the line into public relations overdrive, experts say. Syncing up the message with the medium is also important. For example, selling desserts to raise money for juvenile diabetes might not be the best way to go.

Today consumers are not only expecting restaurants to support a cause and to stand for something good, but nine out of 10 of them also look to their purchase power as a way to get involved themselves.

One example is family-owned Panda Restaurant Group, parent company of Panda Express, which won a Restaurant Neighbor Award in 2014 for the work done through its Panda Cares program, which was founded 16 years ago. The company has donated more than $48 million to a variety of programs since 1999, including to Children’s Miracle Network, the American Red Cross, and a program called The Leader in Me, which is a school-based program focused on building character that Panda administers with a partner.

**Face of Diversity American Dream Award** – The American Dream Award honors individuals from a diverse background who, through hard work and determination, have realized their American dream. Three winners are honored each year with this award and three $2,500 scholarships are awarded to ProStart students in the names of the winners. This award is sponsored by PepsiCo Foodservice.

**Restaurant Neighbor Award** – The Restaurant Neighbor Award recognizes restaurants for outstanding community service and philanthropy. National winners are chosen from a pool of state winners to win $10,000 to support their favorite charity or non-profit. This award is sponsored by American Express.

**Thad and Alice Eure Ambassador of Hospitality Award** – The Thad and Alice Eure Ambassador of Hospitality Award honors an individual who has shown extraordinary achievement and exemplary leadership in the restaurant and hospitality industry. This award is sponsored by Ecolab.

To apply, contact the Nevada Restaurant Association at 702-878-2313 or visit https://restaurantindustryawards.secure-platform.com/a.
We all know that you “get more flies with honey than vinegar”—but can we actually embrace that concept? It may be second nature to focus on what went wrong and the negative. Rather, I believe that we should turn the tables and focus our efforts on learning from our mistakes, moving on, and by looking at what we could have done differently, need to improve on and as an opportunity for growth. I think of our need to reprimand as a flaw in our nature. We seem to spend an inordinate amount of time on negativity. But, it doesn’t have to be that way if we understand the enduring impact of negative feedback. With a different approach, we can turn the tables toward the positive.

The impacts of negativity, scolding and reprimand are far more damaging that we can imagine and are highly dependent upon how we handle these situations. When we reprimand someone in a manner that is embarrassing, overly strong or without cause or future direction, we damage self esteem and ego. And then the individual is not focused on making changes or improvement, they are focused on how their intellect can handle the humiliation or recover from the scolding. We need to move our focus to learning and changing behaviors!

Every mistake, challenge or slip up creates an educational opportunity, a learning moment. And when you look at how you handle these “moments”—you can turn them into a positive situation as opposed to a negative one. What I mean is, instead of reprimanding and scolding someone, why not ask them “how could you have done this differently or better?” or “What can we do to avoid this issue in the future?” What individuals, our employees, truly need is reinforcement, learning, positivity, recognition and reward.

How can we implement a mindset of positivity, reward, recognition and engagement? Here are some steps that I think can help in that endeavor...

1. Give your employees an opportunity to contribute to the work by providing an “open door” for ideas, input and feedback on work processes and standards.
2. Train all employees thoroughly on service standards, operations steps/procedures and job expectations.
3. Change the mindset and focus on “corrections” to a learning moment—and ask for ways to “improve.”
4. Implement recognition and reward programs and support those ahead of reprimand, where management and co-workers can nominate a co-worker for a job well done or an accomplishment. Do not limit these “moments of recognition” to work matters—recognize someone who has a new baby in their family or achieves a milestone such as a college degree, etc. Be creative with this effort.
5. Create an area at work to highlight accomplishments and post various achievements and recognition.
6. Allow your employees to be engaged in the service repair process—give them leeway to fix problems and take pride in their jobs, contributions, and value.

In my opinion, we all understand the purpose and value of positive reinforcement and employee recognition, but we fall into our old ways and traps, and have difficulty getting out of those behaviors and mindset. It takes a lot of desire to change—but change is the one thing that can have the most enduring impact and influence not only on our employees BUT on us. When we embrace change and learn from our mistakes, we take a step in the right direction toward self-improvement, learning/growth, and toward the embracing the Golden Rule for life.

HR Question of the month: Please send your HR questions and concerns, or share your thoughts on your human resources challenges via email to the following address. Send input to vegaslinda89129@yahoo.com. Your comments, questions or concerns will help determine the direction for my next month’s column and earn you a copy of my book. Include your mailing address when sending your responses.

www.lvfnbpro.com
Many restaurants fail because they simply failed to plan. How do you avoid failure—small or epic? It's simple really. You plan for success. You put yourself and your restaurant in a prepared state that can handle anything that is thrown at it.

Planning for success requires the implementation and consistent execution of a list of very specific systems and more importantly, someone inspecting that the systems are followed on a daily basis. Here are the top six systems you can't survive without.

**Sales Forecasts**—Predicting sales is critical to any restaurant. If you don’t document what you think you are going to do in sales for each day of the week, you run the risk of buying too much or not enough product. You run the risk of bringing in too many or too few employees. Each scenario results in lost opportunity and profits because you probably wasted products, 86’d items, lost money at the time clock or provided your guests a terrible experience at every turn, virtually destroying your business as they go off and tell everyone they know and on the Internet, through Twitter, Facebook, Yelp and more, how you suck!

**Budget**—A budget is critical to the successful implementation of systems, because it gives you cost of goods sold and labor targets. Without targets, you simply cannot make the right decisions and cannot measure your success, because you don’t even know what success looks like. (Check out our free restaurant budget report for a step-by-step guide in creating an effective budget for your restaurant.)

**Purchase Allotment System**—The purchase allotment system is based on sales forecasts for the entire month, your actual sales for the entire month as they happen, as well as your food or beverage purchases as they are delivered each day. This system ensures that management knows how much money they have to spend to not only make sure you have enough product, but to do it within budget, making it easier to keep your cash in the bank and not on the shelves being risked to waste, spoilage or theft. Most of my most successful members pin their restaurant’s turnaround to this system.

**Labor Allotment System**—Labor allotment is a system that’s based on sales forecasts for the next week and the actual hours worked and sales for last week. With it you can easily alter your schedules to meet budget by letting each manager know how many hours and dollars they have for next week’s schedule so they can adjust them appropriately. For most restaurants, this is the first step in making sure you don’t schedule too many or too few hours to insure the guest has a great experience and you don’t lose money at the time clock.

**Order Par Levels**—The days of your chef or kitchen manager ripping off a cardboard box lid and heading into the walk-in cooler with a grease pencil just staring up at the shelves like a tourist in New York City with their mouth wide open and ordering based on their intuition need to end. By asking your vendors for a descending case report and some simple formulas in a spreadsheet, you can easily calculate how much of each product you need to have based on your anticipated volumes, like clockwork. Creating ordering pars means that anyone who is trained to count the product on the shelves accurately can create an order that puts you in a position to succeed.

**Prep System**—This is one of the most amazing systems because it really is a simple clipboard system that promotes teamwork, trust and a kitchen that is always prepared for anything that comes its way. It promotes teamwork and trust because as a shift is finishing up, those cooks are counting prepped products in their stations so the next shift walks in knowing exactly what is needed to be prepped or gathered to run a successful shift without running out of product in the middle of the shift. The simple byproduct is a shift where no one leaves the line during the busiest times of the day to find or prep product to complete tickets.

Let me be perfectly clear, the implementation of these systems is extremely important to your success. They are the keystone to your planning process and will guide you to a successful shift each and every day. But the piece of the puzzle that makes this all work is someone on the management team or in ownership that inspects that the systems are not only being used, but completed on time each and every day.

While we hope that we can simply count on everyone on the management team to be an adult and do what is required, there are many things that can derail the process. A simple inspection is all that is needed to get things back on course.

Implement these six systems and then inspect what you expect to be on your documents and tell everyone they know and on the Internet, through Twitter, Facebook, Yelp and more, how you suck!

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By David Scott Peters

David Scott Peters is a restaurant consultant, coach, speaker and founder of TheRestaurantExpert.com, a company committed to the success of independent restaurants. Peters is a restaurant industry-recognized blogger and his writing is regularly published in restaurant industry publications, such as Restaurant Hospitality, Catersource, and QSR Magazine. Learn more at www.TheRestaurantExpert.com.
Warmth coursed through the UNLV community during a chilly month: October highlights the continuation of collaborative organizations and programs. Epicurean Society, while a student club focused on food enthusiasm, assisted and provided programs on campus with small bites and even lunch. Our partnerships with local groups have deepened through social and professional interactions.

The first collaboration happened with UNLV’s SNDA (Student Nutrition & Dietetic Association) for their meeting in October. Made from scratch, Epicurean Society offered snacks. SNDA members helped themselves to fish tacos, corn slaw, Mexican rice, mango salsa and beet chips.

Fish tacos were made from extra-virgin olive oil, juice from 1 lime, chili powder, ground cumin, cayenne pepper, cod, vegetable oil, corn tortillas, diced avocado, lime wedges and sour cream. Our organization also offered chickpea tortillas as an alternative for individuals who have dietary restrictions, or many who only eat vegan and/or gluten-free foods.

The corn slaw was made with mayonnaise, the juice of 1 lime, freshly chopped cilantro, honey, shredded purple cabbage, corn kernels and minced jalapeño. However, our enthusiasm did not stop there. Our back-of-house committee created the Mexican rice dicing onions, using minced cloves of garlic, olive oil, ground ginger, ground coriander, ground cloves, fresh ground black pepper, white rice, diced pureed tomatoes, salt and water.

Epicurean Society’s freshly-made mango salsa came from chopped cilantro leaves, seeded and minced jalapeños, juice from a large lime, salt and mangoes. Our beet chips were a well-thought-out option to balance the amount of heavy palate dishes we offered.

Committee members peeled large beets, tossed them in olive oil, baked them in olive oil for a maximum of 30 minutes, set them to cool and added sea salt and freshly-cracked black pepper to finish the chips.

As we welcomed SNDA members, they helped themselves to Mexican-influenced dishes and beet chips as small bites. In the blink of an eye, Epicurean Society was already faced with their most anticipated and major contribution to the UNLV community: the school’s annual Art Walk. Hosted by the College of Fine Arts, UNLV’s Art Walk took place on October 12 from 5-9 p.m. The event is an evening program dedicated to showing respect to the Las Vegas arts community. It was a free and publicly open celebration to attend. Event attendees are able to explore the seven areas of the fine arts college: Dance, Film, Theater, Architecture, Music, Art and Entertainment Engineering and Design. Friends, families and artists were immersed into a cultural night which entailed performances by a band or choir, an art gallery visit and tastings of foods and beverages.

In preparation for UNLV’s Art Walk, Epicurean Society spent two whole days in the kitchen assembling mini-beef skewers. Our skewers were inspired by a Korean tradition, the Korean kalbi: We used boneless beef short ribs, marinated them in a mixture made with soy sauce, rice wine vinegar, garlic, sesame oil, mirin, brown sugar, green onions and sriracha. To finish off the skewers, our green bell peppers and red onions were the perfect diffusers for the strong marinated taste. Kimchee was set on the side for Art Walk attendees to enjoy as a snack.

Our Caesar chicken wraps were put together by rolling large flour tortillas with romaine lettuce, sliced bacon, shredded boneless chicken, Caesar dressing and Parmesan cheese. After finishing, we halved each whole wrap to provide a total of 120 servings. With the preparations complete, our organization provided lunch on October 20 for Las Vegas Walk attendees.

Epicurean Society brought pasta salad, veggie ceviche with toasted baguettes and Caesar chicken wraps as lunch. Our committees decided to provide 110–120 servings. Throughout the week, our teams prepared a penne pasta salad by combining chopped red and yellow bell peppers, halved grape tomatoes, sliced black olives and chopped basil to a large container. We finished it with Italian dressing, pepper and salt. Our back-of-house members then proceeded to make the veggie ceviche. It was cooked with fresh baby lima beans, finely grated lime zest, cups of fresh lime juice, extra-virgin olive oil, thinly sliced scallion, seeded and thinly sliced jalapeño, thinly sliced shallots, nectarines, avocado, julienned orange bell peppers, halved cherry tomatoes, coarsely chopped cilantro and French baguettes.

Our last project for the month was being involved with the first annual Las Vegas Make-A-Thon which took place at the UNLV School of Architecture. From October 19-21, The Las Vegas and Boston Hubs of the Global Shapers partnered with the UNLV Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering. Epicurean Society brought pasta salad, veggie ceviche with toasted baguettes and Caesar chicken wraps as lunch. Our committees decided to provide 110–120 servings.

By Justin Leung

Justin Leung, a Hospitality Management student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, represents the Epicurean Society, a collective of food and restaurant enthusiastic students. As the journalist on their leadership team, Justin desires to share the club’s experiences with the public. He is from Georgia and decided to pursue his passion for hospitality in Las Vegas.
Virgil's Barbecue Adds a Little Bit of Country to LINQ Promenade

A bit of Texas. A bit of Carolina. A bit of Kansas City. Virgil's Barbecue combines them all and many more styles under one roof along the LINQ Promenade. Getting its original footing in New York, the Vegas location is the restaurant's first expansion, and has been well-received by many a patron looking for hearty taste in this bustling thoroughfare.

Virgil's is about the closest you can get to a Southern backyard summertime gathering on Las Vegas Blvd. Casual tables, dish rag napkins and oversized silverware, as well as an indoor performance stage and an outdoor patio make you feel right at home.

The menu focuses on pit master classics, and does them well. The dry-rubbed pork ribs, smoked for hours on end, are packed with flavor and that hearty, feel-good quality you look for in American comfort food. The beef brisket boasts many of the same qualities, as do all of the classic sides—mashed potatoes and gravy, mac and cheese, cheesy grits and so on. Also factor in the Texas barbecue nachos, where tortilla chips are simply a vehicle to house as much pulled pork and barbecue sauce as humanly possible.

A fun-filled drink list brings together country flavor and Vegas pizzazz. The bloody Mary is exceptional, with just a hint of barbecue sauce to make it something new and different, garnished with a piece of homemade secret recipe beef jerky. Just about every part of the drink program is homemade for that matter, with fresh-squeezed juices and house made mixes, making each order rise above the norm. Another star player is the electric lemonade, which packs a much stronger punch than the taste gives off.

A few more fun gimmicks add to the dining experience. For one, most orders are served in either cast iron skillets or, more likely, on metal trays. And, while it’s not often that a bathroom feature makes a restaurant story, every guy who’s used the facilities will attest that urinals made out of retrofitted kegs are simply hilarious.

Slice of Vegas Does Casual Pizza and More at Mandalay Place

Slice of Vegas has called The Shoppes at Mandalay Place home for more than six years, joining the ranks of its wildly successful neighbors along the stretch of casual eateries within. Part pizza joint and part sports bar, it’s the friendly neighborhood destination you never knew existed on the Strip; a safe haven of sorts to eat pizza, drink beer and watch sports in a homey environment that doesn’t break the bank.

While finding a quality low-cost meal on Las Vegas Blvd. can be a challenge, Slice of Vegas saves the day with surprisingly affordable pizzas and other American-Italian menu options. Pizzas that feed two hover around $15-20 and include toppings spanning from your basics, like pepperoni and sausage, to the more exotic, such as three-meat meatballs and truffle oil. With both featured specialty pizzas and build-your-own options, Slice of Vegas is sure to cook up a pie for just about anyone.

Non-pizza lovers will still find themselves at home with a list of salads, pastas and other entrees to choose from. Vegans will be equally pleased, as there is an extensive plant-based menu.

And what would a Las Vegas pizza place be without an extensive drink lineup? Slice of Vegas features a rotating draft beer list, which highlights craft brews local to Las Vegas as well as favorites from across the
country. The bottled selection rounds out strong coverage across lagers, pilsners, IPAs, ciders and just about everything else that pairs perfectly with whatever sports might be showing on the many TVs throughout the restaurant.

In the mood for something sweet? The skillet cookie and its mound of vanilla ice cream on top melds hot and cold with a chocolatey, brown butter taste that will put a smile on your face.

**The Shoppes at Mandalay Place, 3930 S Las Vegas Blvd, near Ri Ra and Burger Bar. 702-632-6470 SliceOfVegasPizza.com**

11a–11p Sun–Thu, 11a–midnight Fri–Sat. Average out-the-door price for split appetizer, split pizza, and 1-2 drinks is ~$32/person.

**Hussong’s Cantina Brings a Bit of Mexican History to Mandalay Place**

Unbeknownst to most, Hussong’s Cantina is one of the oldest, most storied Mexican dining destinations out there. Its roots date all the way back to the late 1800s, when German emigrant Johann Hussong opened up his first eatery in Ensenada, Mexico. Hussong and his team have been credited with inventing the margarita, and while this and many Mexican favorites have been replicated across the US, Hussong’s Cantina itself has made the jump to Las Vegas.

A humble setup in the Shoppes at Mandalay Place, Hussong’s delivers the laid-back experience you’d hope to find at a beachside eatery in a quiet Mexican fishing village (yes, Ensenada was a quiet place back in the day). But don’t fool yourself: With a margarita recipe that’s more than 125 years old, Hussong’s knows how to make a mean drink and get the party going. Seriously though, they make a darn good margarita, and many variations of it. If you can’t decide on just one, they also serve them in flights of four.

Tacos are, of course, a specialty. You’ll certainly have your bases covered with your classic carne asada, which boasts a rich meatiness not found in most cuts north of the border, as well as the fish taco, beer battered with excellent texture and consistency. Hussong’s has gotten inventive over the years, with new creations such as the pork belly taco topped with cabbage and crushed chicharrones. The taco selection is mix and match, so patrons will be able to enjoy a happily satisfy their curiosity.

Enchiladas are another iconic favorite, where guests can customize the selection with their choice of filling from land or sea as well as any of three sauces—red, green, or signature cheese—or they can go with all three for a meal that resembles the Mexican flag.

Quite a bit of American influence has taken over the dessert menu, but with good intention and even better results. Fried ice cream with a Frosted Flake coating and sweet tomatillo glaze is just as decadent as it sounds, and the churros are top notch, served a la mode atop a mountain of candied walnuts.

**Shoppes at Mandalay Place, 3930 S Las Vegas Blvd, 702-632-6450, HussongLasVegas.com.**

Open 11a–11p 7 days/week. Average out-the-door price for split appetizer, entree, split dessert and 1-2 drinks is ~$53/person.
EVENTS

There are several major food & beverage industry events coming up this month. Here is a sampling of some of the events we highly recommend, so if planning to attend you can start booking now.

November 3 the 16th Annual Lee’s Wine Experience will be held at the Thomas & Mack Center and will feature unlimited sampling of more than 1,000 different wines from around the world and a variety of beer, vodka, tequila, rum, whiskey and liqueurs. leesliquorlv.com

November 8-9 Supply Side West at the Mandalay Bay Expo Hall will bring together more than 16,000 ingredient buyers and suppliers from the dietary supplement, beverage, functional food, personal care and sports nutrition industries and will offer an opportunity to explore new trends from over 1,300 exhibitors and 140 hours of educational and conference programming. west.supplysideshow.com

November 9-11 the Cigar Aficionado Big Smoke Las Vegas Weekend at The Mirage will include daytime seminars with Cigar Aficionado editors and renowned cigar makers and two Big Smoke evenings with attendees receiving premium spirits and food and 30+ premium cigars. www.thebigsmokes.com

November 12-14 the Restaurant Finance & Development Conference convening at Wynn/Encore Las Vegas is the largest industry event that is exclusively focused on the finance side of the restaurant business. Designed for multi-unit restaurant operators and senior executives, the conference has become the “must attend” for many in the industry. www.restfinance.com/RFDC

November 17-18 the Las Vegas Culturefest FoodieNation 2018 taking place at the Fremont Street Experience at 3rd and Ogden is the largest free foodie event on the West Coast and will offer an opportunity to explore tastes of Caribbean, jerk, BBQ, Indian, Greek, Cajun/Creole, Asian, Mexican and soul food. www.eventbrite.com/e/las-vegas-culturefest-foodienation-2018-tickets-50803362224
CHARDONNAY SUMMER SHAKE-UP!

“Lift Your Glass to Sunshine & Good Times”

Please enjoy our wines responsibly. ferrari-carano.com
IN THE TIME IT TAKES TO READ THIS AD, WE’VE MADE LITTLE TO NO PROGRESS.

We slow-roast the finest 100% Weber Blue Agave for more than three days and then slowly crush it with a two-ton tahona stone wheel. The result is an earthy, complex taste that’s more than worth the wait.