

HAVE FORK WILL TRAVEL

Weihbrecht Beefing Up For Beard

A column about restaurant happenings and food musings, home and away.

BY MARISA MARSEY

BEFORE THERE WAS TV Food Network rocketing chefs to stratospheric stardom, the James Beard House was the premier showcase for toque talent.

And no matter how saturated we are with "Bam!" and EVOO, the mythic Greenwich Village townhome of the late, larger-than-life "Dean of American Cooking" remains the culinary Carnegie Hall, the *ne plus ultra*, for professional chefs. So it's big news that Jerry Weihbrecht, executive chef of Zoës, will perform there October 17. He's participating in the Great Steak Celebration to commemorate the Certified Angus Beef® brand's 30th anniversary. (In case you hadn't heard, beef is the new "it" meat; bone up before your next bone-in with the protein primer in this month's *Esquire*). One of six renowned chefs selected to create a course, Weihbrecht is wrapping tatsoi (an Asian green like bok choy), green papaya, coconut and lime vinaigrette in a rib fillet for an inside-out summer roll.

Get a taste of it when Zoës hosts a Beard Preview Dinner on Monday, September 15 at 6 p.m. Certified Angus Beef corporate chef Scott Popovic will join Weihbrecht in preparing beef lollipops with sweet potato and Ohio maple syrup; duck sausage with red and green pepper syrups and caramelized onion gougère; and other "bites" served cocktail-style. Price for the red meat/red letter day warm-up is \$50 and proceeds will benefit Samantha Trost, a Hampton Roadster battling osteosarcoma.

Zoës, 713 19th Street, Virginia Beach, 437-3636, www.zoesvb.com. For more information about the James Beard Foundation and tickets to the James Beard Dinner go to www.jamesbeard.org



I SCREAM, YOU SCREAM, EVEN IF IT DOESN'T RHYME WITH GELATO

If you've fallen in love with gelato locally (perhaps at Reginella's, Steinhilber's, Leaping Lizard Café or Elevation), it's likely due to Ivan Gherardini. The Italian ice cream impresario has been supplying Seven Cities restaurants and shops for nearly a decade. Call him the guru of gelato or the sommelier of sorbetto (he's even got a fanciful spoon tucked into his breast pocket, not so unlike a tasteevin), he recently teamed with Larry Epplein of Virginia Espresso to produce and distribute all-natural mixes so that not only restaurateurs, but also home cooks can whip up these ethereal Italian desserts. Just add fresh cream and milk for gelato or water for sorbetto and splash in Monin syrup (also all-natural) then proceed with a conventional ice cream maker (if you don't have one, they're available in both commercial and home models at Virginia Espresso). With the trippy, rainbow-colored Monin selection, at least 40 different flavors are imaginable, from blood orange and pomegranate to desert pear and habañero lime.

Virginia Espresso, 1914 Granby Street, Norfolk, 373-2907

A MOVIE TO WINE ABOUT

Go see *Bottle Shock*. Despite flaws (some glaring enough to press me to label it *Smokey and The Bandit Goes Sideways*), the film focuses on Chateau Montelena's journey to the 1976 "Judgment of Paris," the historic blind tasting where California wines bested the French, making the world sip up and take notice of the

American parvenus. Revolutionary!

"The best part of the movie is when [Gustavo, played by Freddy Rodriguez] identifies the 1947 Cheval Blanc," pours forth esteemed local sommelier Marc Sauter, now at the Surf Club at the Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront. (Surf Club bartender/server Mario Vendetti plays a valet in *Bottle Shock's* country club scene.) "It's one of the finest wines ever made and to see them drinking wine like that in a bar like that..."

You can practically hear the taste memory dripping from Sauter's voice as the man who knows Napa like a native reflects on his own wine country experiences, including becoming acquainted with Heidi Barrett, the wife of Bo Barrett, son of Montelena's founder Jim Barrett, and herself the maker of several California top cult wines including Screaming Eagle.

"It will be interesting to see if this film impacts the industry the way *Sideways* did," Sauter says, noting that after that independent hit, worldwide sales of pinot noir (put on a pedestal in the film) increased 15% and merlot (maligned in it) decreased 8%.

Ironically, the Barretts sold Chateau Montelena to France-based Chateau Cos d'Estournel in July, just days before *Bottle Shock* premiered.

MORE TO DIGEST

The Route 58 Delicatessen has settled into its new home at Loehmann's Plaza (4000 Virginia Beach Boulevard, #156, Virginia Beach, 227-5868, www.route58deli.com). Thankfully the thick slice of New York, all schmaltzy with

BEEFY NEWS: Our own Jerry Weihbrecht brings meaty delights to NYC

Reubens, chopped liver and homemade matzo ball soup, just moved five miles up the pike, so the name is still legit...To Bolivian, Peruvian and Brazilian, add another South American country's cuisine now available locally: Colombian. **El Desorden** at **Newtown Baker Crossing** (665 Newtown Road, #111, Virginia Beach, 497-4141, www.eldesordenva.com) serves *bandeja paisa* (rice, beans, grilled top round, chorizo, fried yellow plantain, crispy bacon and avocado) so authentic and homey, you'll think you've inherited a cumbian-swaying grandmother. As soon as you sit down, your server will plant a container of *aji*, a spikey salsa verde, on your table that tastes great smeared on everything from breakfast dishes like *migas* (a scramble of eggs, grilled corn cake, scallions, tomatoes and bacon or sausage) to entrees such as fried red snapper. Televisions tuned to TVColombia amplify the casual eatery's transporting Latino lilt...Although it's order-at-the-counter, ultra-casual, don't call it fast food implores Khaled Jebrail of his **Baladi Mediterranean Café** (640 Hilltop West Shopping Center, Virginia Beach, 425-8877, www.baladicafe.com). It occupies the spot that was Back Bay Pizza (known for the "take and bake" pie), which expanded into **Back Bay Pizza Co. & Bistro** and moved to nearby Hilltop East (178 Hilltop East, Virginia Beach, 425-2550, www.backbaypizza.com). Jebrail, previously with Au Bon Pain in New York City, offers mezze including hummus and *maqdoos* (baby eggplant stuffed with crushed nuts and herbs), *fattayer* (savory turnovers), kebabs and vegetarian sandwiches...Mark these dates and call to reserve a table at **Comfort Restaurant** (725 High Street, Olde Towne Portsmouth, 393-3322, www.comfortrestaurant.com): **Saturday, September 6 at 7 p.m.** for an "Americana Buffet for the Taste Buds & Ears," quilting together chef Jason Alley's knee-slapping fare and the swingin' hipster sounds of Tidewater's The Pawn Shop Lifters (\$25 in advance, \$30 at the door); **Monday, September 8** starting with a reception at 6:30 p.m. for "Beers From Around the Planet," a four-course brew dinner presented in tandem with Legendary Beer Distributors (\$45). ●

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