

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2009

FOOD ARTS

AT THE RESTAURANT AND HOTEL FOREFRONT

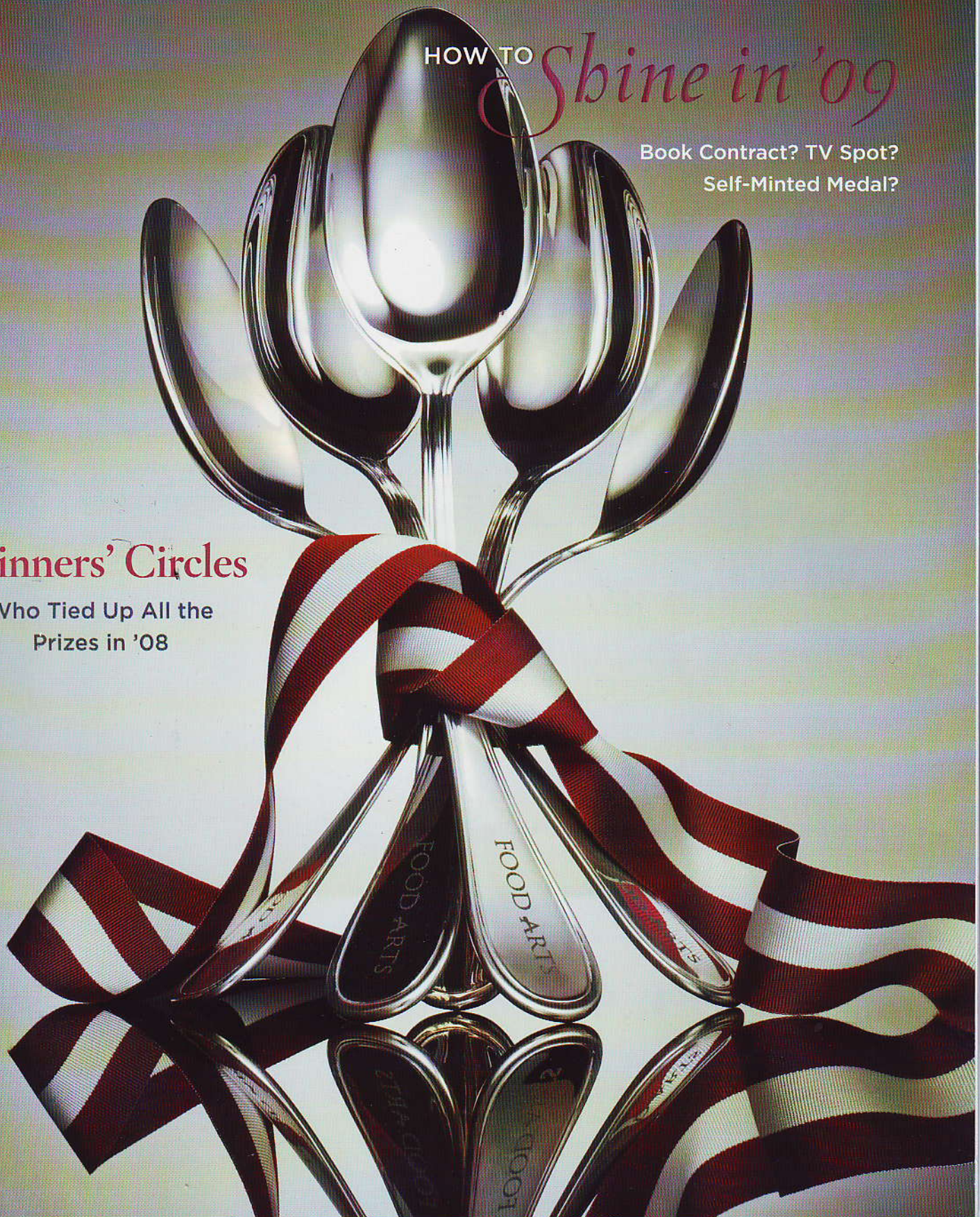
HOW TO

Shine in '09

Book Contract? TV Spot?
Self-Minted Medal?

Winners' Circles

Who Tied Up All the
Prizes in '08





Deep Dish

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA—After struggling on life support for months, Copia: The American Center for Wine, Food & the Arts (Napa) took a definitive turn for the worse in December. Just shortly after cutting back to a limited schedule, Copia closed and filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. However, a U.S. bankruptcy judge denied the request, and at press time it appears that the institution's closure is permanent. • **Cyrus** (Healdsburg) has a new pastry chef: **Roy Shvartzapel**, a former Israeli professional basketball player turned pastry chef.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA—In July **Daniel Patterson**

(chef/owner of **Coi**, San Francisco) will open **Bracina**, serving moderately priced Northern California fare, in Oakland's up-and-coming Jack London Square (55 Harrison St.) with chef **Lauren Kilno**, who got her kitchen chops at **Delfina** and at **Coi**. • In the spring **Tyler Florence** will open his first restaurant, **Bar Florence**, in San Francisco's **Hotel Vertigo**. • **The Stanford Court, A Renaissance Hotel**, which just completed a \$35 million renewal, unveiled its new restaurant, **Aurea**, in November. **Jeffrey Surprise**, who has been with the hotel since 2007, is chef, and he raises the locavore bar by sourcing meat and produce from within a 50 mile radius, rather than the now common 100. • San Francisco-based **Bacchus Management Group**, which owns **Spruce** and **The Village**

Pub, among others, is opening **Mayfield Bakery & Café** in Palo Alto in January. In addition to the retail business and full-service cafe with wood-fired eats by Bacchus exec chef/partner **Gordon Drysdale** and Mayfield chef **Andrew Hash** (a vet of **Spruce**), the bakery will supply breads to all the other Bacchus establishments. Pastry chef/baker is **Nancy Pitta**, recently of **Boulevard**. • San Francisco's **Bushi-tei** spawns the casual sibling **Bushi-tei Bistro** in February, across the street at 1581 Webster St. **Seiji "Waka" Wakabayashi** is chef at both kitchens. • In November **Jose Luis de Cossio** left **La Mar Cebichería Peruana** (San Francisco) to return to **Andina** (Portland, OR). **Victoriano Lopez**, head chef for all of **Gastón Acurio's** venues, is running the kitchen while Acurio

Front Burner

EDITED BY BEVERLY STEPHEN

You go, cowgirl! Paris—American journalist **Ellise Pierce** was miserable in Paris. A Dallas, Texas native, she had moved to the City of Light to join her French boyfriend, Xavier, but found herself missing just about everything, particularly “big skies, blazing sunshine, Target, and Tex-Mex.” To ease her homesickness, she started cooking in her tiny 16th arrondissement apartment, inviting the few people she knew in town to come for chili and Margaritas. Traveling to the States for work or family events, Pierce schlepped *fleur de sel de Guérande* and **Patrick Roger** chocolates from France, filling her bags with canned jalapeños, chipotles, Crisco, Whole Foods’ peanut butter and bubble-wrapped jars of salsa verde on her return.

“I carefully weigh every jar and can, to stay within the 50 pound per bag limit,” she says, “but I always end up paying extra at check-in. When every jar of Arriba salsa weighs two pounds, it doesn’t take much to tip the scales.”

When friends came to Paris, one brought chili powder and Mexican oregano; another, a tortilla press.

Pierce found that cooking comfort food made her loneliness more tenable. So she started poking around local shops and markets for ingredients more readily at hand. She found that Moroccan peppers and Thai chiles could mimic the flavor and fire of jalapeños; she saw that dried black beans and pintos were easy to find.



So were limes and cilantro, sold in bunches for 1€ or less. She started making her own salsa, pico de gallo, ranchero sauce, and guacamole, then moved on to cheese enchiladas with ancho chile sauce and black bean cakes with Margarita shrimp.

When she couldn’t find what she wanted, she improvised—turns out you can make great fajitas, tortillas, and quesadillas in a crêpe pan—and often found that the new version beat the old. (She proclaims her refried beans made with duck fat are “the best in the world.”)

“France is a country with 400-plus cheeses,” she reports, “but there’s not a Pepper Jack to be found.” (A blend of buffalo mozzarella, chiles, and English cheddar does the trick.) And she found other goodies in surprising places, like Corona beer at the little grocery down the street.

Word spread faster than a brush fire in West Texas, and soon Pierce was being asked to do small catering jobs. *Et voilà*—Cowgirl Tacos was born. Today she brings home-style Tex-Mex dishes to homes and offices all over town—for lunch, dinner and after-work cocktails. And it’s not just homesick Yankees, she says, who are gobbling up her tortilla soups and slow-cooked beef brisket tacos: Parisians can’t seem to get enough of the stuff (although they prefer to eat their fajita-stuffed tortillas with a knife and fork). Also on her catering menus are dishes Pierce fell for while traveling, such as a Belizean cilantro/lime bisque and empanadas inspired by a Cuban takeaway in Miami. She started a Web site to promote her catering and a blog to show how it’s done.

Once she sorted out the differences between French and American flour (the French is much fluffier), Pierce started baking classic American desserts such as coconut cream pie, sour cream apple pie, dark chocolate brownies, and “sheath cake.” Her clients

grooms a replacement in Peru. • New to San Francisco’s **Cafe Majestic** is **Louis Maldonado**, recently of **The French Laundry**. Maldonado replaces **Ian Begg**. • **Scott Howard** left the exec chef post at **Left Bank** (Larkspur) and has been replaced by **Sean Canavan**, formerly of **Kokkari Estiatorio** and **Jeanty at Jack’s**. In related news, **Edward Levine**, founder of **Left Bank**, stepped down in October. **Richard Miyashiro**, formerly of the **Pat Kuleto** empire, is the new CEO and president.

SEATTLE—**Ethan Stowell** (chef/owner of **Union**), his wife **Angela Stowell**, and **Patric Gabre-Kidan** (business partner at **Tavolàta** and **How to Cook a Wolf**) unveiled their pasta and seafood joint, **Anchovies and Olives** (1530 15th Ave.), in December. • In December restaura-

teur **Linda Derschang** and **Erica Burke** (also chef/owner of **Volunteer Park Cafe**) teamed up to launch **Oddfellows Cafe & Bar** in Capitol Hill’s revamped historic Oddfellows Building (1525 10th Ave.). • Also new to Seattle’s Capitol Hill is **Barrio** (1420 12th Ave), where the game is newfangled Mexican food at the hands of **Kristen Mills**, who honed her skills at **Cutters Bayhouse** and **The Pink Door**. Owners are **Larry** and **Tabitha Kurofsky** and their **Heavy Restaurant Group**, which operates three **Purple Café and Wine Bar** outposts in the area. • **Canlis Restaurant** (Seattle) lured **Jason Franey** from NYC’s **Eleven Madison Park** (where he has been exec sous chef since 2006) to be exec chef. Franey replaces **Aaron Wright**.

COLORADO—In May **The Broadmoor** (Colorado Springs) will expand to include **The Broadmoor Cottages**, a five building facility that include everything from single room suites to eight bedroom cottages. • Under new management by Broomfield-based **RockResorts** and boasting a \$7 million face-lift, **The Inn at Beaver Creek** reopened in December as **The Osprey at Beaver Creek, A RockResort**. Exec chef **Michael Wilganowski** strapped on his knives and trekked from Beaver Creek’s private mountain retreat, **Trapper’s Cabin**. • New to Denver in November is **Twelve Restaurant** (2233 Larimer St.), the brainchild of **Jeff Osaka** (previously chef/owner of the shuttered **Chloe** in L.A.), who changes his seasonal menu monthly, hence the name.

loved them, so onto the menu they went.

Late this summer, she launched Tex-Mex cooking classes and they too have become wildly popular; Pierce teaches in clients' homes or her own. In November, she started a "short and sassy" Tex-Mex Thank-God-It's-Monday Cook & Eat Series. "You grab three or four friends," she explains, "and come over to *mi casa* for lunch. I demonstrate and regale you with stories of Texas and Tequila; you make your very own Tex-Mex lunch, all for the crazy price of just 45€ (roughly \$57)."

Pierce's future plans include cooking one night a week in a local restaurant, her own taqueria, and, of course, a book. But for the time being she's blissfully busy, and things in Paris are sunnier indeed. "With Willie Nelson and Lyle Lovett on the iPod, I can transport myself to Texas in an instant by making food that tastes like home," she says. "And I've come to realize that Texans and the French aren't so different after all. They both talk funny and both love to eat great food."

For info: www.cowgirltacos.com.

—JULIE MAUTNER

Y'all mail those menus New Orleans—Chronicling everything from fried dill pickle chips at **Huggin' Molly's** in Abbeville, Alabama, to crab and crayfish gumbo at the **Old Orleans** restaurant in Oxford, England, the menu collection at the Southern Food and Beverage Museum is an unprecedented catalog of Southern restaurants in the South itself, together with restaurants worldwide that call themselves Southern. The museum opened last June in Riverwalk Marketplace in New Orleans, yards from the Mississippi.

Though she already has amassed over a thousand menus, SoFAB museum president Liz Williams is not content to stop there. She is inviting Southern restaurants everywhere to send

more. Her twin goals are for the menus and the museum to preserve the culinary traditions of the South and boost New Orleans tourism. "It's another way to help the city recover, to uplift people's spirits again," she says. Her efforts are backed up by a board headed by **Dickie Brennan** of the New Orleans restaurant family dynasty (see ACCOLADES, page 48) and such well-known Southern chefs as **Louis Osteen**, **Jeff Tunks**, and **Linton Hopkins**.

Visitors to the museum begin their journey in the Louisiana

Room, where the state's history-altering sugar, rice, and seafood industries and such local gastronomic icons as jambalaya, po-boy sandwiches, beignets, and sno-ball machines are profiled in colorful exhibits. ("What could be more sublime than to taste the delights of heaven while beholding the terrors of hell?" John Ringling of circus fame is quoted on New Orleans' flaming alcoholic coffee concoction called *café brûlot*.) Another caption explains that *filé* is powdered sassafras, the only native North American spice, and that John Oswald Colson of Natchitoches, Louisiana, still makes it.

They then might proceed to the Museum of the American Cocktail, which has now found a permanent home within SoFAB, and leisurely peruse an eclectic collection of antique liquor bottles, rare bartending books, vintage shakers and swizzle

sticks, and miscellaneous memorabilia.

Continuing on, they encounter further galleries devoted to rotating exhibits such as oyster plates, eating in the White House, a history of canning, foodstuffs such as bananas or rice, professor/cookbook author Jessica Harris' collection of postcards depicting people of African origin working with food, and selections from the menu collection, the bulk of which is housed at the University of New Orleans.

For those who prefer listening to looking, oral histories collect-



NEW YORK CITY—After months of rumors, it's finally official: **Tony Esnault** is out at **Adour Alain Ducasse at The St. Regis New York**. **Joel Dennis**, Adour exec sous chef (previously chef de cuisine at Chicago's **Tru**) made the ascent to exec chef in November. • Also new on the Ducasse front, this month **Pierre Schaedelin** leaves a gig as personal chef to **Martha Stewart** (prior to that he was exec chef at **Le Cirque**) to step in as exec chef/partner at **Benoit**, which has taken repeated sniping from the press. Schaedelin is a well-seasoned Ducasse veteran, having worked with him in Europe. **Sébastien Rondier** remains at Benoit, now notched down from exec chef to chef de cuisine. And this twist to the story: Esnault is now Martha's main man in the kitchen. • Speaking of **Le Cirque**, **Craig**

Hopson, who helmed **One If by land, Two If by Sea**, replaced **Christophe Bellanca** as exec chef. • In an amicable parting of ways, chef **Gray Kunz** split with owners of **Grayz**, to be reborn as **Atria** this month. **Martin Brock**, exec chef since Grayz's inception, is staying on. As for Kunz, he hopes to open a restaurant in Asia and another in NYC. • After the shuttering of **Barfly**, **Josh DeChellis** fell off the radar for a while. Fans breathe easy: DeChellis is the exec chef at **Patina Restaurant Group's** recreation of **La Fonda del Sol** (the early '60s theme restaurant created by the late Joe Baum) opening in the MetLife Building in January. This time the versatile DeChellis is taking a shot at modern Spanish small plates. • Tapas queen **Alexandra Raji** and husband **Eder Montero**, who made names

for themselves at **Tia Pol** and **El Quinto Pino**, are doing Basque food at their 34 seat joint venture, **Txikito** (240 Ninth Ave.), opened in November. • Also in November, **Yann de Rochefort** and **Seamus Mullen** cloned their popular **Boqueria** with the launch of **Boqueria SoHo** (171 Spring St.). • The latest take on colonialism's food legacy is **Macao Trading Co.**, opened in November at 311 Church St. Heading up the kitchen are **David Waltuck** (chef/owner of **Chanterelle**), **Keith Harry** (Chanterelle sous), and **Lisa Leonard-Lee** (a former Chanterelle sous). Their menu explores Macanese specialties (think the spicy culinary crossroads of Portugal, China, Africa, and India). Owners are the peeps behind hipster mecca **Employees Only**. • **Emmanuel Verstraeten** opened a U.S. offshoot of