



ANDREW HARNIK/EXAMINER

Chris Ford is the pastry chef at Trummer's on Main in Clifton, Va., where his youth energizes the desserts he creates.

All paths lead to sweet success

Pastry chef's love of baking started early

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to the Washington Examiner

Googling the name Chris Ford turns up some interesting options, from basketball player to television personality, and even funky musician.

But this Chris Ford, a Florida native now living and working in Virginia, is the young, engaging pastry chef at Trummer's on Main restaurant in Clifton, Va. And he said he's happy about his new Virginia home, with its changing seasons and selection of alluring area restaurants.

A further Google search turns up how often since his arrival this 24-year-old has appeared at charity events with his array of pastries. Youth has its dividends, otherwise baking bread, plating desserts and whipping up ice creams for the restaurant would not leave such energy for his prolific kitchen and baking life. But, he noted, "I am determined, and I work hard."

Even since childhood, Ford has been determined: After all, he started baking bread with his grandmother when he was only 6 years old, and ended up making family dinners to help out his busy mother. But his first passion has always been baking and dessert making.

"Baking is the first thing I've done," he said. "I feel I can be more creative with it than with regular savory cooking."

After high school, Ford enrolled in the Le Cordon Bleu Program at the Orlando Culinary Academy, earning his culinary degree in 2005. While in school, he externed with famous

Which is your favorite cuisine?

French bistro, because it is so classic and simple. It is always so good and hits the spot.

What is your favorite dessert?

A chocolate chip cookie. As simple as that.

Which is your favorite restaurant?

Proof. I've been three times.

They have great cheese.

What's in your fridge?

Homemade chili, sparkling red wine, tons of seltzer water and stuff to make tacos. Leftovers I should throw out.

What's your comfort food?

Cheeseburger, fries and ranch dressing

Florida chef Norman Van Aken at the Ritz-Carlton, where, coincidentally, he worked under Clayton Miller, Trummer's present executive chef. After another two years working with Miller, Ford headed to New York City to live and work in Manhattan.

"I wanted to live in New York as an adult," he said, "and to work there as a pastry chef. ChikaLicious Dessert Bar hired me as a pastry sous chef, where I worked for two years. That fulfilled my dreams."

Back to Google: An avant-garde dessert destination, ChikaLicious must have proved an interesting training ground for Ford, who says his personal dessert style trends toward the traditional.

"The dessert menu here is my baby," he said, "and it shows how I am as a chef. My food goes for nostalgic but also refined. I want what I create to look and feel different, but I want people to think, 'Mom's apple pie.'"

For Valentine's Day, for example, Ford assembled orange sherbet flavored with lavender and grapefruit and garnished with Fruit Loops. And when strawberry season arrives, Ford will offer patrons his version of strawberry shortcake: a

IF YOU GO

Trummer's on Main

» Where: 7134 Main St., Clifton

» Info: 703-266-1623

» Hours: 5 to 10 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday; Sunday brunch 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Read Ford's blog, all about pastry dreams and all good things from the kitchen and life itself, at butterloveandhardwork.typepad.com/butterlovehardwork

terrine of strawberries in a gelatin tube with sherbet and pound cake streusel.

"I let the food speak to me," he said. "I won't cover up [natural] flavors with unnecessary sugar or other ingredients. With sugar, a little can be too much, way too much."

Now that Ford is a full-fledged pastry chef, what do his mother and grandmother think of his career choice?

"They are my biggest fans," he said. "My mom and grandmother have been here several times. They are very proud to see that I am still doing what I love."

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg Share and share wine alike

Several weeks ago, I was the recipient of a remarkable experience. My dear friend, and wine collector extraordinaire, Gene, invited me to dinner to meet a friend of his — a prolific author who was in town to promote his latest book. Little did I know that it would turn out to be an inspirational evening.

Michael Gelb has made a nice living writing about things we didn't know we missed until he pointed a few of them out to us. For example, in his book "How to Think Like Leonardo Da Vinci," Gelb introduces seven principles for thinking like history's greatest genius, including Da Vinci's insatiable curiosity as well as his enthusiastic approach to life's mysteries. These principles seem to smack of common sense yet offer incredible insight at the same time.

But the book that brought all of us there that evening was Gelb's latest (12th) publication, "Wine Drinking for Inspired Thinking: Uncork Your Creative Juices." In a book that is part wine education, part poetic odes, and part history lesson, Gelb takes the reader on a fun and informative journey that includes wonderful wine anecdotes and fabulous pairings (including a section devoted to the seven wine pairings you must try before you die). I was so taken with Gelb's passion for wine and the contributions that the fermented juice has made throughout humanity, I decided to throw him a curve.

I told Michael that I had received a number of e-mails lately from readers who wanted "value"-oriented wines — generally under \$15 a bottle. Because I could understand most wine consumers are just looking for a decent glass of wine to enjoy at the end of the day or with dinner, I thought that the requests were reasonable. But then Gelb encouraged me to think of these requests from a different perspective.

He asked, "What are we doing right now?"

"Why, drinking wine and trying to solve my problem," I responded somewhat confused.

Gelb smiled, lifting his glass, "No," he chided gently, "we are sharing a bottle of wine. We are having a mutually collective experience. That is what you should suggest to your readers. Ask them to pool their resources together and share a bottle of wine."

Wow. Truly inspired thinking while drinking wine. Wine is, after all, is always best when shared with others. So, this week's column is devoted to Gelb's idea and will feature wines for two, three and four people to share, where each "share" is \$15 or less. Retail prices are approximate.

TWO PEOPLE SHARE
2007 Tablas Creek Espirit de Beaucastel, Paso Robles, Calif. (\$30)

This vineyard operation is co-owned by Francois Perrin, one of the owners of the famed Beaucastel wine from the Chateauneuf de Pape region of France and Robert Haas, the importer. This white wine is a blend of roussanne, grenache blanc and picpoul blanc and offers a gorgeous bouquet of pear, orange zest and honeysuckle. In the mouth, the flavors of stone fruits, Meyer lemon and pear are expansive and rich, with great acidity and minerality to keep the finish bright and focused.

2006 Cloudy Bay Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$30)

New Zealand is coming on strong in the pinot noir marketplace. This cool, soft version offers a pretty bouquet of red cherries, plum and a hint of strawberries. The medium-bodied frame supports florallike flavors of strawberry, raspberry and bright cherry. The abundant acidity provides wonderful balance through the entire finish.

THREE PEOPLE SHARE
2005 Weinzorn Pinot Gris Sommerberg, Alsace, France (\$45)

I think pinot gris is one of the unsung heroes of white wines, and this is one of the reasons why. The nose features scents of honeysuckle, peach and apricot. The palate is beautifully textured with layered flavors of dried apricot, peach, white raisin and pear. There is just a touch of spicy nutmeg on the generous finish.

2005 Lan Limited Edition, Rioja, Spain (\$45)

A big wine for the price, featuring a perfumed nose of boysenberry and cedar. Notes of pomegranate, dried cherry and dark blueberry dominate the palate while subtle notes of mocha and earth glide in on the powerful-yet-elegant finish.

FOUR PEOPLE SHARE
2005 Domaine Etienne Sauzet Chassagne-Montrachet Burgundy, France (\$60)

Many consider the white wines of Burgundy the benchmark of chardonnay wines. Splurge on this lovely example and you'll see why. The aromatic bouquet is full of creamy citrus and stone fruit aromas. Bright flavors of green apple and nectarine are accented by lemon/lime notes on the finish. Great acidity makes this wine sing on the long finish.

2006 Chateau Gruaud-Larose (St. Julien) Bordeaux, France (\$60)

This is a wonderful example of Bordeaux wine, with an earthy nose featuring scents of blackberry and cassis. Flavors of black cherry and dark plum fill the front of the palate while hints of dried sage and tobacco fill in on the finish. The firm tannins hold the wine in focus and provide great structure.

