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IndeBleu chef Vikram Garg

— Jay Westcott/Examiner

# A taste of India, with a kick

By Alexandra Greeley  
Special to The Examiner

Brimming with creative energy and an unusual culinary vision, Vikram Garg has found his niche as the mastermind behind the wildly wonderful and extremely offbeat French-Indian — or is it Indian-French? — food at DC's IndeBleu restaurant.

"The Indian part is in my blood," explains Garg at the obvious "why these cuisines?" query. And, he adds, when he started hotel work in India, his bosses were European chefs. "I worked with them and mastered the art of Western cooking," he says. "But I also thought about Indian food at the same time."

While purists may shrug, Garg has an ardent following that celebrate his arrival in Washington from India about 1 1/2 years ago. But his relocation almost didn't happen. "I wanted to stay in India for a few years," he says, assuring his expectant wife they would stay

put for a few years. But the persistent owner of IndeBleu, who had already interviewed numerous chefs, invited Garg to produce a seven-course tasting menu. "Immediately he said, 'When can you move?'" says Garg.

With India very much on his mind, Garg shuns the "fusion" tag to explain his cooking.

"Fusion is confusion," he says. "I call it a blending of techniques and two different cuisines. I start with the basis, the five mother sauces [French], and I add Indian spices and herbs." Beurre blanc with fenugreek?

It works, you'll decide, after sampling such dishes as the napoleon of tuna tartare with crispy papadom, sunburst mustard and beet-cucumber pickle or the butter-poached Maine lobster with spinach-potato tikki, fenugreek beurre blanc and chili oil.

For a man whose life is all about cooking, Garg sums up his philosophy simply. "Food is life. I live to eat. I don't eat to live. Food is not a fuel for me."

'old-fashion' way.

**Q: What's the most important cooking pot/pan in your kitchen?**

A: My Staub cast-iron frying pan — sturdy, maintains temp, can pan fry anything in it.

**Q: Tell us about one ingredient you think cooks should know more about, or use more?**

A: Argan oil from Morocco — it is a new nut oil that has a sweet-dessert-like flavor to it — beautiful for salads and dressings.

**Q: What person is best in your life to eat with?**

A: My wife, Abahilasha, is my soul mate, and my best mate. (And, if we were eating at Ben's Chili Bowl I guess you could say she is my Soul Food Mate, too!)

**Q: Tell us one cooking tip**

## VIKRAM GARG'S CARROT, ORANGE, AND GINGER SOUP

Makes 4 cups

Carrot	8 oz
Onion	2 oz
Celery	1.5 oz
Celery root	1.5 oz
Ginger root	1 oz
Leek	1.5 oz
Garlic	1 clove
Thyme	1 sprig
Bay leaf	1 leaf
orange juice	1 cup
Butter	2 oz
Milk	1 cup
Vegetable stock	4 cups
Salt and pepper	to taste

Chop all the vegetables. Heat a 4-quart saucepan, and melt the butter. Add all the vegetables and a little salt. Cook over low heat until the vegetables are soft. Add the stock and the orange juice, increase the heat to medium-low and cook for 15 minutes. Add the milk, process in a food processor, and season to taste. Serve hot.

**that you think would help many other cooks?**

A: I love making everything from scratch ... takes a bit more time ... costs a bit more ... but, the detail of taste in the result is worth it to me.

**Q: What is your favorite cook book?**

A: "White Heat," by Marco Pierre White

**Q: What's the best summer meal you know of?**

A: Something that is very light on the belly. It's an Indian risotto called Khichadi. It is made with rice and lentils.

**Q: What's a top food/wine pairing for a summer barbecue or a pool party?**

A: Barbecue ribs over an open pit with Rose wine — fantastic. OTT is my favorite Rose.

## VINE GUY

# French invasion: The wines of DeLoach Vineyards

A couple of weeks ago, I wrote about an estimable French family — The Drouhins — who have been making wines in Burgundy for four generations. This week, I'd like to introduce you to another renowned winemaking family from France who are making their mark in this country.

Jean-Claude and Claudine Boisset founded the Boisset Co. more than 45 years ago in Burgundy, France. Today, their son, Jean-Charles, runs a family business that sells wines and spirits in more than 80 countries around the world, making Boisset one of the leading exporters in France. But the charming and suave Jean-Charles makes it crystal clear that wine is his first love, and, luckily for lovers of Pinot Noir, California is his second.

Jean-Charles knew for a very long time that he wanted to make exceptional Pinot Noir and Chardonnay wine in California. Having received his master's in economics from the University of San Francisco, he was well acquainted with the Russian River Valley, an area in Sonoma County, Calif. known for its ability to cater to Burgundian varieties. A chance meeting with a friend led him to the doorstep of DeLoach Vineyards and in late 2003, Boisset purchased the winery.

Of course, Jean-Charles knew he needed a special team of individuals to compliment the unique land. As he emphasizes, "everything we do at Boisset, everything we stand for, radiates from our core belief that distinctive products come only from distinctive places [terroir], where a community of passionate people pour their individual talents and skills into producing wines ... that capture the essence of that particular locale." And Boisset found passionate people, indeed, to take advantage of his location.

There are few winemakers in California that have more extensive experience with Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes than Greg La Follette. Greg earned his reputation from the wonderful wines he crafted at Flowers Vineyard, one of the most well-respected producers of Pinot Noir in the state. With the assistance of viticulturalist, Ginny Lambrix, whose enthusiasm for biodynamic farming has brought the winery to the forefront of sustainable agriculture, DeLoach is poised to fulfill Jean-Charles' vision of producing world-class Burgundian wines in America.

I recently joined Jean-Charles and Greg for dinner where I tasted through several of their recent vintages. My favorites are listed below. Retail prices are approximate.

We started off the evening with the **2004 DeLoach OFS Sauvignon Blanc, Russian River Valley, Calif. (\$20)**. While Sauvignon Blanc is not a typical Burgundian varietal, I am glad they make this wine. A combination of French oak barrels and stainless steel produces a very fruit-focused wine with scents of kiwi, lemon and grapefruit on the nose. Flavors of melon and pineapple play upfront while pro-



nounced notes of grapefruit make an appearance on the refreshing finish. A great wine to have this summer with shellfish.

» **2004 DeLoach Chardonnay Russian River Valley Calif. (\$18)** is a lesson in new-age California Chardonnay with a nose of creamy pears, orange blossoms and roasted nuts that lead to lovely flavors of green apples, tropical fruits and a hint of peach on the delightful finish. This is a wine in search of grilled sea bass.

» **2004 DeLoach Pinot Noir Russian River Valley, Calif. (\$18)** has intriguing scents of cherry cola and cherry liqueur followed by ripe fruit (black cherry and black raspberry) flavors that play out nicely on the smooth, supple finish. A delicate wine that would compliment poached salmon.

» **2003 DeLoach OFS Pinot Noir Russian River Valley, Calif. (\$35)** is as close to Burgundy-in-a-glass as you can get without a passport. Aromas of sweet strawberry perfume on the nose continue on the palate where it is joined by lush, ripe berries and undercurrents of red currants, tobacco and vanilla, all built on a graceful framework with a fine balance between tannins and acidity. Pass the roast chicken, please.

» **2004 DeLoach 30th Anniversary Cuvee Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Calif. (\$45)** Using the traditional "whole berry cluster" fermentation process, the grapes are crushed by foot! Scents of dark cherry and violets rule the nose. The wine is crafted in a very forward style. Big flavors of black cherry and boysenberry cover the tongue while hints of orange peel settle in on the powerful finish. This is a Pinot that could stand up to heartier fare, such as wild fowl.

» **2004 DeLoach Pinot Noir, Mabo-roshi Vineyard, Sonoma Coast, Calif. (\$40)** My personal favorite of the night, the flavors of sweet cassis, raspberries and cranberries danced so lightly on the palate, it was like drinking velvet. The notes of violets, licorice and raspberries on the uber-elegant finish enticed me to take another sip after sip. I'd love to enjoy this wine on its own or with a piece of cherry cobbler.

Boisset has built an impressive portfolio that brings together traditional French varietals, American terroir and a gifted team of dedicated individuals. Truly, a fine example of détente by the glass.

Email me your favorite détente wine at [scott@vineguy.com](mailto:scott@vineguy.com)

## MEET THE CHEF

**Q: What's in your fridge right now?**

A: Grapes, campari tomatoes, strawberries, carrots, lettuce, brie cheese, homemade yogurt, mango juice and champagne.

**Q: What music do you listen to when you cook?**

A: I like to listen to classical musical.

**Q: What is your favorite drink with meals? (If it's wine, let's hear about favorite vintages, favorite winemakers.)**

A: Sparkling water.

**Q: What's the most important utensil in your kitchen?**

A: I love the mortar and pestle. Nothing releases the true essence of spices like grinding them the