

# FOOD&WINE



Nathan Anda is the executive chef and butcher at the Red Apron Butchery in Arlington.

ANDREW HARNIK/EXAMINER

## Chef is a cut above the rest

*Butcher-chef Nathan Anda is perfecting the art of dressing animals*

By Alexandra Greeley  
Special to The Examiner

If you have read the engaging book by Bill Buford titled "Heat, An Amateur's Adventures as Kitchen Slave, Line Cook, Pasta-Maker, and Apprentice to a Dante-Quoting Butcher in Tuscany," you will find in its later pages a description of butchering, a fine art that many believe should be learned by all chefs in training.

So coming across Nathan Anda, the butcher and executive chef at the Red Apron Butchery affiliated with Arlington's edgy Tallula restaurant, you find a young man who has already passed the chef test, and is now perfecting the art of dressing animals for Vermilion, Rustico, Columbia Firehouse, Tallula and EatBar, all restaurants that are part of the Neighborhood Restaurant Group. (Note that the animals he selects are not just any animals, but ones that Anda purchases from the various local farms that practice sustainable and humane rearing.)

That Anda takes so well to this phase of his career is not so surprising. New Hampshire natives, Anda and his family moved to the Midwest, where he grew up on a ranch. There, he says, "I was always outside near farming and livestock."

As a teen, he cooked with his mom, whom he credits as his biggest influence.

"Mom had a big stash of cookbooks," he says. "Sometimes she would let me help out. I made biscuits that were horrible, and that messed with my head."

But his mother's encouragement was not enough to inspire Anda's eventual career choice. Eating "bad"

### What is your comfort food?

Mexican food. Any type does it for me. Or pizza.

### Where is your favorite place in the world?

Bed. Or Tuscany. I was there and ever since, I've wanted to go back. Been looking for an excuse to do a stage there.

### What is your luckiest moment?

When I met my wife. My brother dragged me to a party that I didn't want to go to. Fortunately, I met

her there.

### What do you do in your leisure time?

I am usually here. But I like to travel, and I am trying to learn to play the acoustic guitar.

### Which chef do you admire most in the world?

I guess I would say Thomas Keller for his attention to detail and his use of ingredients. His books — I open a page and get inspired.

food in college, however, was. "That's when I decided I wanted to cook," he says. "I bought cookbooks and went to the New England Culinary Institute."

Anda began his culinary career working in restaurants in Charlottesville, later moving to Washington, where he worked for Todd Gray at Equinox and with Gray's affiliate, Market Salamander in Middleburg. By 2004, Anda found himself tapped to open and cook for Tallula, where his trendy and offbeat style earned him plenty of kudos, and the chance to open its next-door sibling, the gastropub EatBar. If for nothing else, Anda won immense local praise for EatBar's truffled hamburgers, which, he acknowledges, are really top-notch.

As for his butchering, Anda thanks his lucky stars that he worked in restaurants that required him to learn. "At Tallula and EatBar," he says, "I started with a 300-pound pig and gave parts to each restaurant. Then it was lamb, and then to cows. I read a lot, and once you learn the basics, you can figure out the big pieces of meat."

Anda has also spent time at the Five Dot Ranch in California and at a charcuterie, where, coincidentally, his boss had trained with the very same Italian butcher that Bill Buford extols

### IF YOU GO Planet Wine

» **Where:** 2004 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria  
 » **Info:** 703-549-3444  
 » **Hours:** 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday; noon to 5 p.m. Sunday

in "Heat."

Of course, an obvious question for Anda is this: Does he miss the kitchen and his cooking?

"When the shop opens [to the public]," he says, "I can do both. I miss aspects of cooking, the creating and the doing. I go out to eat and get ideas. But I have no place to play with them. So I go home and cook."

(Note: *Anda's meats and charcuterie products are on NRG's menus. His cured meats are sold at Planet Wine in Alexandria and at some area farmers markets, including the Penn Quarter FreshFarm Market; the Ballston market at Welburn Square, North Ninth and North Stuart streets; the Crystal City market at Crystal Drive between 18th and 20th streets; and in Glover Park at Wisconsin Avenue at 34th Street NW.)*

**Scott Greenberg** » The Vine Guy

## The special delivery wines of Henry's Drive

What's in a name? Evidently, if you're Kim and Mark Longbottom, a remarkable line of wines whose names all are derived from a long honored pastime: mail delivery.

The winery's identity, Henry's Drive, takes its name from the 19th century mail coach delivery service that once ran through the Longbottoms' property. Kim, who evidently loves a good play on words, branded the different wines in their portfolio based on the postal theme, including Dead Letter Office, Pillar Box (a nod to the free-standing letter boxes found throughout Great Britain) and the newest line, Morse Code.

The Longbottoms carried the postal theme onto their labels as well, using sepia tones for the Henry's Drive Shiraz and Reserve Shiraz label to depict a stagecoach traveling the Henry's Drive Trail. The labels for the Pillar Box wines feature the front of a modern Pillar Box — complete with bright red enamel color and mail slot. And the new Morse Code value-priced varietal wines sport a label with dots and dashes on the front — a tribute to the forerunner of today's digital communication age.

Located in the long-ago sea-coastered Padthaway region in the southeast end of South Australia, Henry's Drive takes full advantage of the abundant underground water system as well as the Limestone Coast's rich, red, loamy soil and sandy ridges that run parallel to the actual seacoast, some 50 miles to the west. The dependable winter rains and mild, sunny summers also contribute to the ideal grape-growing conditions. In 1992, the Longbottoms began planting syrah (called shiraz in Australia), cabernet sauvignon, merlot, chardonnay, sauvignon blanc and verdelho grape vines. Four years later, they released their first wine. Today, Mark and Kim have more than 500 acres of vineyards planted throughout Padthaway as well as a 30-acre shiraz parcel — purchased in 2004 — in the McLaren Vale region.

Henry's Drive is a family-owned business that has been operated predominantly by women since its inception, so it was only natural when the former winemaker, Kim Jackson, became pregnant and was preparing to depart the winery to begin a family, that Kim Longbottom selected another woman to take over the position. Since January 2008, Renae Hirsch has been heading up the winemaking operations for the entire collection, from the high-end eponymous Henry's Drive shiraz to the widely successful value-oriented Pillar Box and Morse Code series. And though the names on the outside of the bottles are cute, the wines inside the bottles are serious-yet-fun

to drink. Retail prices are approximate.

» **2009 Henry's Drive Morse Code Chardonnay, Padthaway, Australia (\$9)**

A judicious use of French oak and malo-lactic fermentation (a secondary fermentation that imparts a creamy texture) produces a great chardonnay for the money. Fresh flavors of Myer lemon, nectarine and green melon zip across the palate. Hints of toasted oak and roasted nuts combine on the crisp, clean, long finish.

» **2008 Henry's Drive Morse Code Shiraz, Padthaway, Australia (\$9)**

This shiraz is mostly unoaked, which allows the bright fruit characteristics of dark cherries, blueberries and dark strawberries to shine through on the palate. While not overly complicated, the wine is well balanced and made more interesting with the subtle notes of black licorice, pepper and mint on the medium finish.

» **2008 Henry's Drive Pillar Box Red, Padthaway, Australia (\$12)**

A blend of shiraz, cabernet sauvignon and merlot produces a wine with lovely scents of dark plum, black cherry and toasty cedar on the nose. The palate is sumptuous, with notes of blackberry, blueberry compote and cocoa. The supple finish lingers with hints of clove, dark chocolate and a touch of vanilla.

» **2006 Henry's Drive Dead Letter Office Shiraz, Padthaway/McLaren Vale, Australia (\$27)**

Fruit from dual regions produces a wine laden with layers of mouth-filling fruit, including dark plum, dark cherries and raspberry jam. The well-structured finish is bolstered by sweet tannins that keep the flavors of warm chocolate, roasted coffee and mint poised on the palate for a long, long time.

» **2007 Henry's Drive Shiraz, Padthaway, Australia (\$35)**

Crafted from 13-year-old vines and aged in a combination of new and used oak for 16 months, this wine is bursting with scents of blackberry, plums, dark chocolate and licorice on the bouquet. An earthy core supports flavors of jammy blackberry, plum, cocoa and licorice over the entire palate. Notes of toasty oak and black pepper dominate the full, lush finish.

» **2005 Henry's Drive Reserve Shiraz, Padthaway, Australia (\$50)**

The best fruit from the estate is used to produce a wine that is at once elegant and powerful, with a bouquet presenting classic Padthaway scents of blackberry fruit, eucalyptus, mint and pepper. The iron-fist-in-a-velvet-glove structure boasts deep, round flavors of blackberry jam, blueberry liqueur, cinnamon and vanilla. Notes of mocha and cigar box slide in on the back of the palate, where they are joined by hints of black pepper on the long, rich finish.