

Chef David Guas brings a taste of New Orleans to Arlington at Bayou Bakery Coffee Bar & Eatery.

ANDREW HARNIK/EXAMINER

Chef's work is a taste of New Orleans

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

With his undeniable charm and the smoldering good looks of a Hollywood A-lister, pastry chef extraordinaire David Guas can celebrate a new triumph in his career: the opening of his very own bakery cafe called Bayou Bakery in Arlington. And in case you are wondering, the “bayou” harkens back to his New Orleans roots. Speaking of roots, not only does Guas hail from New Orleans and its French Quarter — where good food holds a firm place in locals’ hearts — but he also claims Cuban ancestry, and for someone who loves to cook, that combination is magical. Cubans, he explains, believe that food is central to life, and in his family’s home, that meant gatherings and celebrations focused on the joys of the table.

“I had a Cuban father and grandparents,” he said, “and at my grandfather’s home, it was a blend of Cuban and Louisianan food.”

Guas tells of his grandfather’s roasted fish, usually a giant red snapper, that he cooked with a blend of peppers and onions.

“It was a braise, like a stew,” he said. “He had a sweet tooth, too. So we’d always eat flans, bread puddings and pastelitos. There were only a few stores that made them properly. And he made classic Cuban sandwiches.”

These, Guas explains, often turned up in his school lunchbox.

And Guas’ dad also had a knack for good cooking, specializing in wood-smoking foods.

“He didn’t document his recipes,” Guas said, “so it was hit and miss. I do document my recipes.”

Indeed, Guas’ recently published book, “DamGoodSweet: Desserts to Satisfy Your Sweet Tooth, New Orleans Style” (the Taunton Press, 2009) speaks volumes for Guas about his intention to satisfy everyone’s sweet tooth. (Note: The book was nominated for both a James Beard award

What’s your comfort food?

Man, that’s hard. Every Sunday we make biscuits at home and we come to the table. It’s a ritual. Now my 8-year-old makes them. ... I love grits or anything with rice. It’s a staple.

Where’s your favorite place?

New Orleans, of course, because I was growing up in that culture. I fell back in love with the city after writing a book. It forces you to reflect on

what you take for granted as a kid. I love the city dearly.

What is your signature dish?

Mmmmm, you know ... beignets and red velvet cake in cupcake form.

What’s in your fridge?

Red pepper jelly, Crystal Hot Sauce, a block of cream cheese, green onions, regular onions, bell peppers, a gallon of milk, orange juice, cold beer, and leftovers of whatever.

IF YOU GO Bayou Bakery Coffee Bar & Eatery

- » **Where:** 1515 N. Courthouse Road, Arlington
- » **Info:** 703-243-2410, facebook.com/BayouBakery
- » **Hours:** 7 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 7 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Friday, 8 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Saturday; Sunday hours to be announced

and an award from the International Association of Culinary Professionals.)

That’s good, because Guas promises the menu of his new bakery will contain everything from the book, starting with breakfast beignets and fried hand pies. Then he hustles in some not-so-sweet goodies, including his own take on the French Quarter favorite, muffa-lotta, coated with house-made olive salad then layered with salami, mortadella, smoked ham and provolone on a toasted sesame-crust loaf.

With his father’s and grandfather’s emphasis on savory foods, one wonders why Guas turned to the pastry kitchen.

“I have always been a sucker for

bread,” he said.

And although his family expected that Guas would become a doctor, the lure of the kitchen won out. After leaving college midway through, he returned to New Orleans, attended a small, local cooking school, and then applied to work in the kitchens of the five-star Windsor Court Hotel in New Orleans. With luck and the persuasion of an uncle, Guas got the job, and it’s safe to say that changed his life.

“A German chef hired me,” he said. “And the first day we had a huge banquet for 400 people. I didn’t even know how to pipe meringue. He showed me how to do some, and saw that I grasped it quickly.”

As a result, he quickly moved up from third to first cook. Among his colleagues there was D.C.’s mega restaurateur Jeff Tunks, who not only befriended the young Guas, but eventually convinced him to come along to Washington; Tunks hired Guas to be the pastry chef for his four establishments — DC Coast, Ceiba, TenPenh and Acadiana and had Guas consult for the PassionFish restaurant in Reston.

“He asked hypothetically if I would leave New Orleans,” he said. “I said ‘sure’ though it was hard to leave New Orleans and its seductive charm. But I wanted to see what’s out there.”

And, of course, the rest is a bit of pastry-sweet history.

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg

‘He said–she said’ wine review

Thanksgiving is by far and away our favorite holiday since we get an opportunity to spend the day together cooking great food and then sharing it with family and friends. But it is the same wonderful food that can also cause a little heartburn when it comes to selecting the right wine to enjoy with dinner. The traditional Thanksgiving meal includes so many different types of dishes that end up competing for space on your plate and on your palate.

From tart cranberries to sweet potatoes, there is a plethora of complex flavors that makes picking the right wine a genuine challenge on turkey day. It is almost impossible to find one single wine that will match up with each course or appeal to all of the guests at the table. It’s even tough for us — arguably seasoned veterans — to agree on the right wine to serve. So several years ago, we began our own tradition of employing a “tasting menu” approach, where we open several different types of wine throughout the evening to enjoy with each course or particular dish.

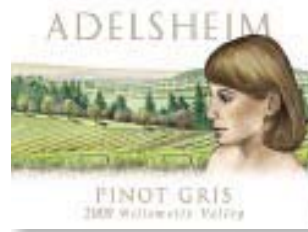
In order to assist in this year’s wine pairing challenge, we have gathered an assortment of wines that we each like to enjoy with Thanksgiving. Retail prices are approximate.

She said

I always like to start festive occasions with bubbles, and the non-vintage **Domaine Chandon Brut Classic Sparkling Wine (\$20)** from Napa Valley, Calif. (\$20) is a great way to kick off the evening. The tight, medium-sized bubbles carry bright flavors of apples, pears and nectarines over the entire palate. Toasted brioche notes on the crisp, dry finish adds a layer of richness and gives the wine nice depth.

Once the turkey hits the table, I want to find a white wine that can carry the weight of the poultry and hold up to some of the more flavorful side dishes. The **2008 Covey Run Gewürztraminer (\$10)** from the Columbia Valley of Washington State (\$10) fits the bill beautifully. The aromatic nose exudes scents of lemon zest and nectarines on the bouquet while flavors of white peach, ripe nectarine and tropical fruit attack the front of the palate while notes of lychee nuts linger on the off-dry finish. The oh-so slightly sweet ending pulls together a wide range of flavors.

If a white wine with a drier, fuller body is more your style, serve the **2008 Luna Pinot Grigio (\$15)** from Napa County, Calif. (\$15). This is a lot of wine for the money. The fragrant bouquet features aromas of nectarine, grapefruit and peach while the palate emphasizes bright



flavors of tropical fruit (think mango and papaya) and citrus notes. Hints of apricot appear on the finish, where the abundant acidity keeps the wine crisp and refreshing. A good palate-cleanser for the next course.

Turkey can be tough to pair with red wine, but the **2009 Georges Duboeuf Julienas Flower Label Beaujolais (\$12)** from Burgundy, France (\$12) is definitely a good match. The refreshing gamay wine is soft enough yet flavorful enough to work well with fowl, offering a straightforward, well balanced mouthfeel featuring red berry fruit and plum. The earthy finish has a nice note of pepper at the end.

He said

I agree, bubbles are the way to go for welcoming guests or cleansing the palate at the beginning of the meal. I like Italian sparklers since I think they offer a lot of bang for the buck, such as the non-vintage **La Tordera Brut (\$17)** from Veneto, Italy (\$17). Prosecco is both a place and a grape and makes the region’s most popular sparkling wine. This version is blended with a small amount of chardonnay, which adds nice structure and a touch of green apple on the front of the palate. The creamy mouthfeel also features notes of nectarine and peach on the mid-palate with bright citrus on the crisp, elegant finish.

One of my favorite wines to pair with turkey and trimmings is pinot gris. I like a slightly off-dry version that helps balance the variety of food on the plate. The **2009 Adelsheim Pinot Gris (\$15)** from the Willamette Valley of Oregon (\$15) is a great all-American, all-around choice for the celebratory table. Scents of tropical fruit and citrus fill the bouquet while flavors of green apples, pear and guava blend together with the creamy mouthfeel. The long, lush finish has just enough acidity to keep the wine bright and focused.

If you’re looking for a versatile red wine to set the table with, pinot noir is the way to go. The **2008 Maison Louis Jadot Côte de Nuits-Villages Pinot Noir (\$22)** from Burgundy, France (\$22) is delicious, with a bouquet of bright, ripe cherries on the nose and flavors of strawberry and red plum in the mouth. The bountiful acidity keeps the wine light and bright.