



Jonathan McArthur, executive chef at Ted's Bulletin in Capitol Hill, focuses on bringing comfort food to the masses.

Chef brings comfort to Capitol Hill

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

If you've looked for seating during popular mealtimes at Capitol Hill's buzzy, busy Ted's Bulletin, like many of us you've probably waited for a while. After all, explains executive chef Jonathan McArthur, the restaurant serves about 200 people at lunch, and maybe 250 people for dinner.

"On the weekends, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., it's really busy," he said. "It's brunch and this is a neighborhood restaurant."

Probably the key to Ted's obvious success is how young McArthur has keyed into the perennial national yearning for comfort food. And Ted's has it all, from grilled cheese sandwiches with tomato soup and meatloaf with ketchup to country fried chicken and a chicken noodle soup much like Granny made. And the burgers: the "black and blue" choice is awesome; who knows about the "peanut butter bacon" burger.

A native of Columbia, Md., McArthur said cooking has come naturally to him.

"My first job at 16 was at a Bob Evans restaurant," he said. At 18, he was off to culinary school at Baltimore International College.

"I was working at Piccolo's while in school," he says. "I went to class at 7:30 a.m., then went to the cooking lab from 12:30 to 5:30 p.m. Then I went to work until midnight."

It was a rigorous schedule, but it gave McArthur the needed on-the-job training. It also gave McArthur the exposure to an influential chef instructor, who turned out to be one of the key influences in his culinary career.

What is your comfort food?

Pasta. I love pasta served in a variety of ways: simple extra virgin olive oil, with garlic, tomatoes, and Parmesan cheese, or I am fond of a carbonara in winter with heavy cream and bacon.

What's your advice to cooks?

Sweat the details.

How do you get your inspiration?

From reading a lot and staying current on trends. Also, reading food magazines and cookbooks, and I go out to eat.

"I had this really funny English chef in culinary school who kept telling me, 'God is in the details. That's what's important,'" he said.

Thereafter, he moved along to work in the kitchens of several local favorites, including Copeland's of New Orleans, where he served as sous chef. Perhaps cooking many of the family meals during his teens prepared him for this career. Clearly his biggest leap forward came with joining the Matchbox team, owners of the Matchbox pizza restaurants in D.C., as well as Ted's.

"I moved to D.C. because of the job at Matchbox," he says, adding that he's been with the company for five years. "Working at Matchbox has been a real influence. Ty Neal, a partner, is also detail-oriented, and he has helped me focus on the food aspect of the job."

The main focus for Ted's, of course, has been to create all those comfort foods we grew up with. Naturally, the most popular turns out being the grilled cheese and tomato soup.

Which is your favorite restaurant?

I am a big fan of Central; I like the comfort food but he takes it to another level with quality ingredients. The best meal: at CityZen. He [Eric Ziebold] cooks simply yet uses masterful techniques. That's what I aspire to.

What's in your fridge?

It's pretty much bare. I have a Brita filter, gallon of orange juice, eggs, condiments. I eat out a lot; I don't like cooking for myself.

IF YOU GO

Ted's Bulletin

Where: 505 Eighth St. SE
Info: 202-544-8337
Hours: 7 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. daily

"I put a lot of thought into that dish," he said. "I made four different versions of the soup, from creamy to tomatoey and in between. It was my job to make something we would all be happy with."

A dream job, most people would agree: McArthur had numerous staff-led tastings while devising the menu, and the best ideas won.

Now splitting his time between Ted's and working with the help of chef Jacob Hunter on a new Matchbox concept opening in Rockville, McArthur must relish going to work each day. After all, who wouldn't want to indulge in Jon's omelet for breakfast, Brooklyn chili for lunch and ribs for dinner?

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg

Fall into fall with pinot noir

With the recent onset of the autumnal equinox — on the same day as the harvest moon this year, I may add — it's official; fall has arrived. It seems like it was just last week we were suffering through the dog days of August, but according to the U.S. Naval Observatory, fall's formal onset occurred at 11:09 p.m. Sept. 22. And, if additional proof is required, just consult the leaves on all of the trees in my yard — they have already started their annual migration onto my lawn.

It also marks the occasion for my taste buds to migrate as well. With the weather heading toward the chillier side of the year, it's time to start thinking about trading in white wines for something just a tad darker — but not too dark. After all, there needs to be a gentle transition from white to red that won't shock the palate, a bit like slowly wading into a swimming pool, giving the body a chance to acclimate to the new environment. And pinot noir is just the grape for the job.

Not as dark and brooding as syrah or zinfandel and not as chewy or tannic as cabernet sauvignon, pinot noir is delicate, yet versatile. It pairs well with salmon, duck and most game. Traditionally, pinot noir made its home and won its fame in the Burgundy region of France, where it became so coveted, that a French proverb proclaimed, "Burgundy is for kings, champagne for duchesses, and claret (Bordeaux) for Gentlemen." But perhaps my favorite quote regarding pinot noir was penned by famed wine writer Harry Waugh, who declared, "The first duty of wine is to be red ... the second is to be a silky finish."

Heading way down south, New Zealand is where to find a good value in cool-climate pinot noir. The 2006 Staete Landt Pinot Noir (\$18) hails from the heart of Marlborough's "Golden Mile" appellation in Rapaura. The

wine displays floral aromas of lavender and ripe cherry with a touch of forest undergrowth. In the mouth the wine is rich and round with flavors of dark strawberry, ripe raspberry and black cherry. An interesting balance between notes of berry fruit and tobacco lends complexity on the long, balanced finish.

Of course, no article on pinot noir would be complete without including a classic example of French Burgundy. The 2005 Louis Latour Volnay 1er Cru En Chevret (\$43) is the beneficiary of an excellent vintage and features a fragrant nose of rose petals and strawberry. The soft, supple flavors of fresh dark berries, ripe raspberry and earthy notes coat the palate in waves. The well-balanced finish is polished and expansive, thanks to abundant acidity, with hints of baking spices sliding in at the end.

