



ANDREW HARNIK/EXAMINER

"I always say my style is 'American.' But it's really Old World techniques mixed with modern sensibilities," says chef Bryan Moscatello.

Italian chef goes All-American

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

New Jersey native Bryan Moscatello, executive chef of Stir Food Group — which includes Zola, Zola Wine & Kitchen, and Potenza, where he had manned the cookpots for 2 1/2 years until his recent move back to Zola — has had a busy life the past few years.

When he moved to Washington about four years ago, it was to take over the kitchen of Indigo Landing restaurant located near Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. There he faced the challenges of learning the intricacies of Low Country cooking, a style far removed from his Italian upbringing.

For someone whose entire life seems to have centered on food and its preparation, Moscatello easily met the challenges. As he discusses his lifelong love affair with the kitchen, he recalls helping his grandmother prepare the family dinner every Sunday. In fact, he learned how to make pasta when he was still a youngster. No wonder Moscatello has shone so brightly during his career, being named as one of Food & Wine magazine's "Best New Chefs in America" in 2003.

Now he's back at Zola, where he focuses on meals founded on locally acquired seasonal ingredients. Moscatello now has the chance to play around with some of the more advanced kitchen techniques, noting that he prepares meats by the sous-vide method (ingredients vacuum-sealed in plastic, then cooked in a water bath) and is curing and preserving other meats for charcuterie.

He can also express his own

What's your comfort food?

These days, a great cheese-burger ... or homemade pastrami done in-house with Valentine Brothers brisket, brined and smoked.

How do you get your inspiration?

Just by looking at food, playing with it and tasting it; what should it look and taste like? Looking at art for presentation.

Where is your favorite restaurant?

The best meals in town are from Citronelle, CityZen and Komi.

What is your signature dish?

I don't believe in them because then you can't change them.

What's in your fridge?

Absolutely nothing except eggs, yogurt, sambal, chili paste and several kinds of cheese. Peirier.

IF YOU GO Zola Restaurant

- » **Where:** 800 F St. NW
- » **Info:** 202-654-0999
- » **Hours:** Lunch 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mon. to Fri.; Dinner, 5 to 10 p.m., Mon. to Thurs.; 5 to 11 p.m., Fri. and Sat.; 5 to 9 p.m., Sun.

style of cooking, not constrained by Low Country seasonings or Italian dishes. "I always say my style is 'American,'" he says. "But it's really Old World techniques mixed with modern sensibilities and with a layering of ingredients," he says, explaining how he masters a mushroom dish by selecting various textures and flavors, using mushroom stock, and finishing them with porcini butter.

What may excite him most about his return to Zola is locally sourcing seasonal ingredients. "I am working with both hydroponic and local farmers," he says. "When you start eating these products, they

taste so much better."

For example, he used to buy the restaurant's duck from larger producers, but then he started purchasing his fowl from Dr. Joe's in Pennsylvania. "These are so good," he says, though admitting that sometimes local isn't best if the farmer doesn't get it right. "We want growers who work as we would if we were doing it," he explains. "We started FIR, or Farmers in Residence, at Zola Kitchen."

As part of his new regime in Zola, Moscatello promises greater interaction with guests, letting them know the source of the ingredients on the menu. He's also tweaking the menu by adding such treats as popovers and little tastes between courses. And he is establishing two different dining experiences — the bar and a chef's tasting room. "This will have a three-course, prix fixe menu with optional add-ons and with a different service protocol, very interactive," he says. And he promises such luxuries as hot chocolate with chocolate consommé and a gin and tonic dish with juniper berries.

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg

All-star wines for the NHL All-Star Game

In the world of sports, North Carolina is probably better known for NASCAR than it is for professional ice hockey, but last April the National Hockey League announced that the Carolina Hurricanes and the city of Raleigh would host the 58th annual NHL All-Star Game, which takes place this Sunday.

If North Carolina can switch gears from cars to skates, then I suppose I can switch from beer stein to stemware. Since this game features the best of the best in the NHL, I should extend a decent effort to find the perfect, or at least appropriately named, wines to kick back and cheer on my two favorite Washington Capitals, Alex Ovechkin and Mike Green, who will be participating in the festivities.

If you're hosting a party, or simply want to enjoy the game in peace, then consider opening a few of these aptly named wines. Retail prices are approximate.

If you're still celebrating the Capitals victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins in the 2011 Winter Classic earlier this month, then think about hunting down a bottle of the **2008 "Decoy" Merlot (\$25)** that was commissioned by the NHL and repackaged with a special label to commemorate the game. Produced by famed merlot wizard Dan Duckhorn, the Napa Valley fruit used in this bottling results in a wine that shines with scents of blackberry, cassis and violets. The jammy mouthfeel offers up blackberry, black cherry and dark plum flavors on a medium-bodied frame. Ripe tannins combine with a touch of cinnamon on the back of the tongue to provide a lush, balanced finish.

I am a big fan of No. 8, Alex Ovechkin, and there is no better way to complement his aggressive playing style than with the aptly named **2007 Cellar No. 8 Zinfandel** from the North Coast of California (\$10). Like the Great Eight, this wine is forward and powerful, with scents of ripe red fruit and peppery spices on the nose and full-throated flavors of blueberry liqueur, red cherry and bright raspberry in the mouth. And just like Alex, this wine finishes strong, taking peppery-soaked notes of red berries all the way to the back of the net, um, I mean tongue.

I know that organically grown and naturally produced wines, or so-called "green" wines, are all the rage. But to pay homage to defenseman Mike Green, I decided to go a different route, namely the Portuguese route, by selecting the

2009 Alianca Vinho Verde (\$10) (literally "green wine") from the Minho region in the far northern part of the country. My friend and uber-taster Wilfred Wong declares that this wine is "Fresh and citrusy ... and exemplifies the best in a crisp, light wine. Excellent with a bowl of freshly steamed mussels." And since Mike is the muscle on the blue line, this wine is a perfect match.

I don't think you can find a more appropriate red wine to enjoy during a hockey game than **Number 99 Estate Winery's 2007 Wayne Gretzky Merlot** from the Niagara Peninsula in Canada (\$21). The winery is actually owned by Wayne Gretzky and named for the Great One's jersey number. Merlot ripens early up in Canada, so this style features aromas of raspberry, violet and nutmeg on the nose and notes of ripe red cherry, blackberry and mocha chocolate flavors on the graceful frame. A portion of the price of each bottle goes toward Wayne's charitable causes.

Ice hockey is played on, well, ice, so the idea of opening a bottle of ice wine is an appropriate theme to enjoy during the third period. Unfortunately, given the amount of work that is involved with producing these sweet wines, they tend to be a tad pricey. A relative bargain in the Eiswein world is the **2002 Bissersheimer Held** by Erich Bender from Germany (\$30). Its sweet apricot nose carries through all the way to the finish. Flavors of ripe peach and dried mango join in with abundant acidity on the palate to keep the fruit in balance.



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