



ANDREW HARNIK/EXAMINER

Chef Nate Garyantes, of Ardeo + Bardeo in the District, discovered his passion for cooking while interning as a line cook.

Food memories inspire creative dishes

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

It's easy to admire a young chef who is at the top of his game, and who controls the kitchens of the newly redefined and redesigned Ardeo and its next-door neighbor, Bardeo. Abuzz with chatter, Ardeo + Bardeo is a go-to place, and not solely because of the expanded wine list or funky cocktails.

One could guess that the bold, if somewhat eccentric, cooking style of executive chef Nate Garyantes is a major magnet for D.C.'s sophisticates looking for memorable times. Consider a menu that offers such remarkable temptations as suckling pork belly with pineapple and ham, or smoked duck breast with green garlic spaetzle, or even spring lamb ravioli with peas, mint and smoked yogurt.

What influences have shaped this creative cook? He says because his father was in the restaurant industry, and he grew up in that, and the last thing he ever wanted was to work in the restaurant industry.

Yet some inner Zen must have been at work, for after spending one year at the University of Delaware, he enlisted in the Army for three years and was stationed in Hawaii. Later, while Garyantes attended university there, he found work as a server at the Outrigger Reef Hotel and interned briefly as a line cook. But that short stint did the trick: "I got sucked into it, and fell in love with it," he says. "I worked in the front of the house but was drawn to the back."

After two years, Garyantes

What is your comfort food?

I like fried chicken, and Korean barbecue. While working at the minibar, I would go out late and be hungry. I would go to the restaurant Honey Pig [in Annandale]. It's open 24 hours a day, and we'd go there at 2 or 3 a.m.

What has been the greatest influence on your cooking?

It's very collective, and influenced by all the people I've worked with, including dish washers and prep cooks. My grandmother was really responsible for my pursuing a culinary career. ... I am trying to improve daily, so I learn from anyone.

What is your favorite ingredient?

That's tough. I guess I would have to say the pig. We are getting in whole pigs at restaurant and using every bit of it. I am curing our own bacon, making our own pancetta and making head cheese. I really enjoy that style of cooking the whole animal.

Which is your favorite restaurant? Cuisine?

I rarely get to go out, but I love ethnic cooking and authentic Mexican, and I find myself at Oyamel all the time.

What's in your fridge?

Lot of what the kids eat, such as mac 'n' cheese, a whole chicken, Trader Joe's things, beer and wine.

IF YOU GO Ardeo + Bardeo

- » **Where:** 3311 Connecticut Ave. NW
- » **Info:** 202-244-6750
- » **Hours:** 5 to 10:30 p.m. Monday to Thursday, 5 to 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 5 to 10 p.m. Sunday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekend brunch

moved back to Delaware, moving onward and upward in his career, even owning his own place, Restaurant 821 in Wilmington, which he ran until it closed three years later.

Just at that point in his cooking career, Garyantes came to Washington, where he landed a job working with Jose Andres at Cafe Atlantico.

Whether his food is avant-garde or uncomplicated basic fare, Garyantes says that he structures each dish based on taste and memory association. "Most of my cooking is indicative of my food memories or others' food memories," he says, recounting how he developed the scalloped schnitzel appetizer.

"It emulates my thought process," he says. "It reminded me of my grandmother and her German heritage. My grandma had a black walnut tree in her backyard, and I spent much time with her when I was growing up." But the real food connection is this — Garyantes' grandmother was a late-1970s foodie, who watched Julia Child cooking on her tiny black-and-white kitchen television. "She probably had as much to do with my life then as anyone," he says.

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg The many flavors of wine

I recently received an email from Rebecca, a reader in Washington, who wanted to know the answer to a seemingly simple question: "Who put the cherry in my wine?"

What Rebecca was really asking was, why doesn't wine taste like grape juice? She went on to describe the wine she had at a dinner party a few nights before and it smelled and tasted like cherries, red berries and strawberries, "but not grapes." And then came the inevitable follow-up question: "Do [the winemakers] really put all those different fruits in the wine?"

Well, the simple answer is no, winemakers do not add any other fruit to the wine. If you were to taste wine before it is fermented, it would taste like grape juice. So where do all these fruit, spice and other flavors come from?

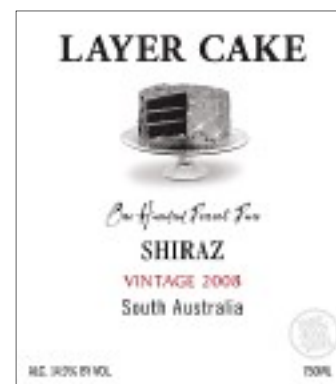
According to Sue Ebeler, professor of enology at the University of California-Davis, different flavors in wine comes from the grapes going through primary and secondary fermentation. "Fermentation," says Ebeler, "forms a lot of new compounds, including esters [aromas] and ethanol [alcohol]. Combinations of volatile compounds produce aromas that we perceive as a particular aroma, such as strawberry, and then we associate it as taste on the tongue."

Put simply, the chemical reaction of fermentation releases the aromas that are locked up in the grape. The flavor imparted to the juice is a combination of aroma and our ability to detect sweet, sour, salty, bitter and umami (savory). So essentially, we taste what we smell. Other flavors, such as vanilla and oak, come from vanillin, a chemical compound that can leach out of wood barrels during the fermentation and aging process.

Here are some classic examples of wines that exhibit particular flavor characteristics. Try serving them at your next wine dinner and see if your guests can answer the question "Who put the cherry in my wine?" Retail prices are approximate.

Sauvignon blanc wines can tend to be either grassy or citrusy. The **2010 Casillero del Diablo Sauvignon Blanc** (\$10) from Casablanca Valley, Chile, definitely tends toward the latter, with prominent notes of crisp grapefruit up front followed by orange blossom and green melon characteristics on the zippy finish.

A lot of wine snobs overlook the **2007 Kendall Jackson Grand Reserve Merlot** (\$22) from Sonoma, Calif. — which



COURTESY PHOTO

2008 Layer Cake Shiraz has notes of blackberry, black pepper and mint.

is good because there will be more for the rest of us. This is a well-made wine, aged for 19 months in French oak. It offers up the expected hint of dark plum, but it is the expansive flavors of cherry cola and black raspberry that really grab the palate's attention. Notes of vanilla on the long, elegant finish and low price tag go a long way to catch my wallet's attention.

Pinot noirs are famous for sporty flavors of strawberry and cherry. The **2008 Argyle Pinot Noir** (\$24) from the Willamette Valley of Oregon definitely tilts toward the cherry end of the spectrum where other notes, such as raspberry and cinnamon, jump in to keep it company. Touches of wild strawberry glide in on the medium-bodied finish.

2008 was a challenging year for a lot of winemakers in Australia, but not for Jayson Woodbridge and his team, who make the **2008 Layer Cake Shiraz** (\$18) from South Australia. This value-oriented offering from the famous Hundred Acre wine group is a big, rich juicy wine with plenty of dark blackberry and black plum fruit that coats the palate.

But it is the prominent notes of black pepper and mint on the medium-bodied finish that have earned it a spot on the "How did that get in the wine?" list.

Another stunning example from the land down under comes from a producer who is known more for its high-end wines. The **2008 Torbreck Juveniles from the Barossa Valley** (\$25) is a blend of 60 percent grenache, 20 percent shiraz and 20 percent mataro. Fermented and aged in stainless steel tanks, this big red favors more of a black cherry component on a nice, medium-bodied frame. The charming finish brings in complementary notes of cherry jam and baking spices.

