

Italian chef, all-American kitchen

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

It's hard to imagine a more natural fit for the kitchen: Salvatore Ferro, executive chef at Clyde's of Georgetown. A native of Grosse Pointe, Mich., Ferro grew up in an intensely food-oriented Sicilian family. Indeed, Ferro still hangs on to the stool he stood on as a youngster in his family's kitchen.

"Cooking was always part of the family life," he said. "When I was a kid, my grandmother was in a wheelchair, and she rolled up to the kitchen table [to prepare meals]. We were always in the kitchen cooking with my mother. I get my hard-work ethic from her."

He recalls fondly the big family meals and enjoying such dishes as spedini, which are thin slices of beef-stuffed cheese, breaded, and grilled or baked. "Braciolo, that memory has always stuck with me," he said. "That was a special food my family ate on holidays."

If his family cooking agenda were not enough to propel him toward a culinary career, Ferro tells of a second big influence: an after-school job at a gourmet meat market. "One day, the owner taught me how to clean a lamb rack and tenderloins."

When he turned 19, Ferro went to work in a local Italian restaurant for a year and later enrolled in Le Cordon

What is your comfort food?

Hamburgers. I love the cheese-burgers at this restaurant. At home, I love spaghetti with olive oil, garlic, parsley, anchovies and grated Parmesan cheese. Then, anything with pork, from braised shoulder to pork chops. And meat and potatoes.

Which is your favorite cookbook?

I can't say that I have a favorite cookbook. I have so many I can't read them all. Right now I am reading "Ethan Stowell's New Italian Kitchen."

Which are your favorite ingredients?

Tomatoes, olive oil, veal stock and butter

What's in your fridge?

One veal chop, cooked baby food, milk, a packet of corn tortillas, chicken soup. Usually dinner from the day before. I go home and cook, even at midnight.

Which is your favorite restaurant?

Obelisk. And Pho 75. I go there every Sunday.

Bleu culinary school in Las Vegas.

Acknowledging that he has accomplished much in his 27 years, he attributes it to hard work, and quite clearly, to some special advantages. He worked with chef Guy Savoy at his restaurant in Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. "He taught me not to go too overboard," said Ferro. "He stressed seasonality, technique and plating. I finally started to get it. This is what cooking is about."

Among other influences, he lists his high school teacher Leo Lombardo. "He stayed on top of me and kept me on the straight and narrow so I didn't go with the wrong crowd,"

he said. "He is very proud of me and so is my family. My brother came to Clyde's with all his colleagues, and were raving about it. They said that it is the best place to eat." Ferro noted that other family members have dined in, and had really good times there.

And finally, Ferro gives a nod to his colleague and mentor, executive

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IF YOU GO Clyde's of Georgetown

» **Where:** 3236 M St. NW
» **Info:** 202-333-9180
» **Hours:** Lunch, 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday; Dinner, 4:30 to 10:30 p.m. Monday to Thursday, 4:30 to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 4 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Sunday; Brunch, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday



ANDREW HARNIK/EXAMINER

chef Daniel Giusti at 1789 (Clyde's upscale restaurant in Georgetown). "He worked with me at Guy Savoy," he says. "And the influence is that I truly try to stick to the seasons, especially the seasons in Maryland, Virginia and D.C. ... It's all about clean flavors, making flavors jump out from the center of the plate."

"It's all about clean flavors, making flavors jump out from the center of the plate," says Salvatore Ferro, executive chef at Clyde's of Georgetown,

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg

Red, white and sparkling — wines for the Fourth of July

When I was growing up in central California, the Fourth of July meant ice-cold watermelon, cookouts, a parade down Main Street, and fireworks at the community college stadium. And beer. Lots and lots of beer. I don't remember anyone drinking wine with their burgers and ribs, even in California. But that was then.

Today, wine is a familiar site at backyard barbecues across the country, and celebrating the birth of our nation in the nation's capital with an assortment of red, white and sparkling wines is a great way to declare your own independence. Whether you plan on heading up to the lawn of the Capitol to listen to the National Symphony Orchestra and check out the amazing fireworks display on the Mall or kick back and enjoy the more intimate festivities of a local venue, it's only fitting that wine come along for the patriotic ride. As Benjamin Franklin, one of our Founding Fathers, put it, "Wine makes daily living easier, less hurried, with fewer tensions and more tolerance." I'll drink to that.

Today, my sparklers are made

up of bubbles instead of burns. The **Non-Vintage Mumm Demi-Sec Sparkling Wine** from Napa Valley, Calif., (\$28) is a versatile and delicious bubbly. Just slightly sweet and sporting flavors of melon, creme brulee and bright citrus, it can stand alone as an aperitif or pairs beautifully with apple pie.

What better way to celebrate our independence than with a white wine that is all about liberty, like the **2009 Liberty School Chardonnay** from Central Coast, Calif., (\$12). The wine is made with a touch of new oak, and the green apple and nectarine flavors stay bright and focused on the front of the palate. Notes of lemon/lime citrus lend a refreshing tanginess to the crisp finish.

Zinfandel is a great grape. With dark fruit and black pepper notes, it pairs well with grilled meats like steaks and ribs. Having just recently participated as a judge in the National Capital Barbecue Battle Rippin' Ribs contest, I know I'll be looking for the **2009 Gnarly Head Old Vine Zinfandel** from Lodi, Calif., (\$12) the next time I cook up a batch of baby backs. Produced from tiny berries harvested from old "head trained" vines ranging in age from

35 to 80 years old, the wine features scents of blueberry jam and spicy pepper on the nose and flavors of black plum, dark cherry and vanilla in the mouth.

If you're looking for a fun wine to enjoy with friends and fireworks, try the **2008 Bodegas Exopto Wine Cellars Big Bang** from Rioja, Spain, (\$18). This red wine is a blend of garnacha, tempranillo and graciano and offers up a nose of blackberry, dark cherry and cigar humidor. The explosion of flavor in the mouth features juicy notes of blackberry, cassis, tobacco and earthy highlights. The bright acidity keeps the wine lively and fresh from start to medium-bodied finish.

The aptly named **2010 Ken Wright Cellars Freedom Hill Vineyard Pinot Noir** from Willamette Valley, Ore., (\$40) is another great choice. The fragrant bouquet of red berries and violets on the nose is just a teaser for what's in store for the mouth. This wine is deeply layered with intense-yet-velvety flavors of cherries, plums and baking spices throughout its wonderfully long finish. The medium-bodied frame offers just a touch of dark raspberry on the softly textured finish.

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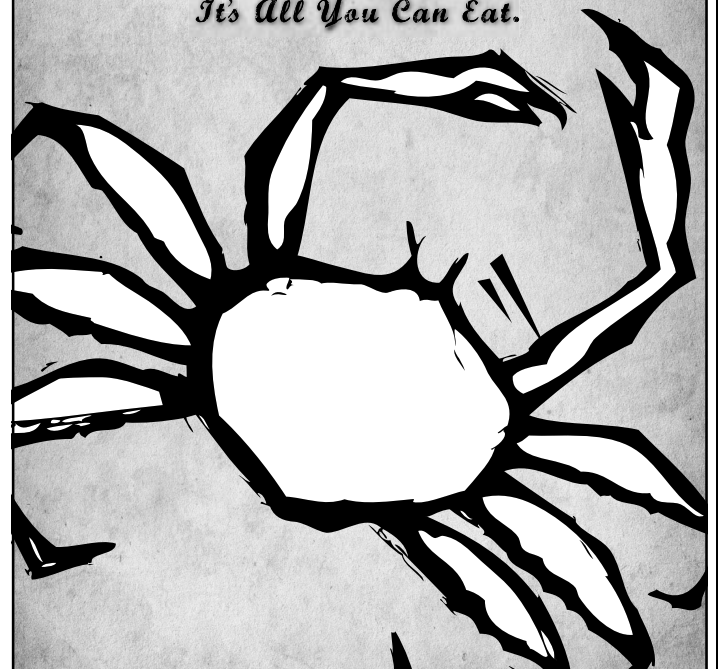
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