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GRAEME JENNINGS/EXAMINER

Chris Clime goes fishing

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

One of the most exuberant young chefs in the D.C. area, executive chef Chris Clime of PassionFish restaurant in Reston takes to the job like, well, a fisherman. He loves seafood, he says, and his passion for fish somewhat mirrors the restaurant's name.

More importantly, Clime loves cooking, an art and passion he acquired while his family lived in Puerto Rico. "My dad was in the Navy as a fighter pilot," he said, "and we were stationed in Puerto Rico. My parents did a lot of entertaining, and my brother and I helped out. He helped with the bar. I helped with making Caesar salad when I was 6 years old." He pauses to explain the best Caesar-making techniques — coddled versus raw eggs, croutons, anchovies, whisking versus blending the dressing. By the age of 9, it seems, he had become a master at assembling this salad classic.

After graduating from high school, Clime headed straight to culinary school at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, R.I. Two years later, he moved to D.C. for a brief period, working in various kitchens and waiting tables. Then Clime headed to Charleston, S.C., initially to take courses on restaurant management. But as fate worked out, he ended up working for executive chef Ken Vedrineski, owner of Trattoria Lucca, as well as working as a chef-of-all-trades at the very exclusive five-diamond Woodlands Inn.

When family matters drew Clime back to the metro area, he hooked up with Jeff Tunks, one of the owners of the Passion Food Group of restaurants: Acadiana; the now-closed Ten Penh; DC Coast; Ceiba; and, of course, PassionFish. In fact, Clime has worked in all of Tunks' restaurants, gaining valued training and skills.

It's easy to say he has found a true fit, where he can scour the global

What is your comfort food? Crispy Buffalo chicken wings, blue cheese and celery sticks, but I do not eat them very often. A meal that I eat at least five times a week is yellowfin tuna and hamachi nigiri. I eat that all the time; it is comfort food for me.

Do you have a favorite cookbook? I have a library of cookbooks, and it is very hard to say. One of the many great things about working with Jeff Tunks, [and partners] Gus [Di Mollo] and David [Wizenberg], is that they reimburse all their chefs for a cookbook once a month, and I have been working with them for 144 months ... and I had several before I started with them. But if I was to pick one it would be my mom and dad's Julia Child book on classical French cuisine. ... I still remember my dad trying to meticulously go through the recipes, and my mom just trying to wing it.

If you go PassionFish

- » **Where:** Reston Town Center, 11960 Democracy Drive, Reston
- » **Info:** 703-230-3474
- » **Hours:** Lunch, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday to Friday; dinner, 5:30 to 10 p.m. Monday to Thursday, 5:30 to 11 p.m. Friday, 5 to 11 p.m. Saturday, 5 to 9 p.m. Sunday

markets for the freshest seafood; use his Southern and New England seafood skills; and create knockout recipes that highlight the classics and showcase the exotic, from Dover sole to red Thai curry lobster. Clime has also plunged his hands into learning how to make sushi, an art, says one

What is your favorite ingredient? Salt in its many forms ... Maldon Sea Salt, fleur de sel, fleur de sel gris, Hawaiian pink salt, La Baleine Sel de Mer; I even have salt blocks that you can use to cure fish like crudos or tiraditos. I really like those.

Which is your favorite restaurant? Cuisine? Marcel's in Washington, D.C. My favorite cuisine is contemporary American, which means basically everything!

What's in your fridge at home? Sriracha, Colman's English Mustard, Cholula hot sauce, strawberries, blueberries, Romaine lettuce, Parmigiano-Reggiano, aged Irish cheddar, prosciutto, Oscar Meyer rotisserie-roasted chicken, deli meat and turkey, sliced cheddar cheese, Horizon Organic Milk 2 percent, and whole Horizon organic milk, Luzianne Iced Tea.

Japanese authority, that traditional Japanese chefs spend much time learning. "I didn't want to do the same seafood dishes that restaurants elsewhere do," Clime said. "I also learned sushi [a major component of the restaurant's menu], and now I am trained in it."

As he looks back over his career, Clime says he can pick out three major influences on his cooking life: Donald Barickman (the former chef and owner of Magnolias, Cypress and Blossom restaurants in Charleston); Vedrineski; and his present boss, Tunks. "Jeff Tunks has had the most influence," he said. "He leads by example and has a tremendous work ethic, and he is very creative and a master of concept development," adding that at whichever of his restaurants Tunks happens to end up, he gets right into the kitchen to pull together marvelous meals.

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg Cookbooks, wine gadget gift guide

Last week, I recommended several wine books that would make great presents for the wine enthusiast on your gift list. But not everyone may be a thrilled with receiving a book on wine — or at least not as much as they would enjoy drinking the wine itself.

Because food and wine go together like bacon and eggs, here are a few cookbook recommendations for those on your list who may want to prepare their own food and wine pairings, as well as a couple other wine-oriented gifts. Retail prices are approximate.

I grew up on comfort food, so the "Gooseberry Patch Big Book of Home Cooking" (\$30) feels like an old friend. This compilation of comfort food recipes allows you to retreat to your childhood memories and dive into your favorite recipes with your kids on a cold weekend day. Easy-to-follow recipes using standard pantry items are conducive to spontaneous creativity.

"Everyday Exotic: The Cookbook" (\$30) by Roger Mooking and Allan Magee is a great gift for the budding male gourmand who is looking to stick his toe into the world of cooking. The ingredient lists are short, the directions are concise, and the pictures are inviting. The approachable recipes are man-friendly traditional meals but with an "exotic" twist. For example, try the Malaysian-Inspired Chicken Wings (Page 45), which employ an "exotic" homemade peanut sauce and are served with Rice Noodle Salad.

If healthy eating habits are part of your New Year's resolution this year, then pick up a copy of "The New Sonoma Cookbook" (\$23) by Connie Guttersen. It features healthy, appetizing recipes (zucchini and tomato tort; Thai roast beef lettuce rolls) with easy-to-follow instructions and a user-friendly page layout. Many recipes offer suggestions for variations of ingredients and, of course, wine suggestions. Helpful hints are highlighted in shaded boxes.

We love Italian cuisine in our

house, so the cookbook "Ciao Italia Family Classics" (\$40) by Mary Ann Esposito is at my fingertips. Use it to create everyday meals (spaghetti with tuna, capers and lemon) and Sunday family memories (lasagne verdi alla bolognese). It includes soups, salads, pastas, meats, fish and desserts.

If you are wondering what to do with all those wine corks lying around the house, here are a few clever ideas from the Wine Enthusiast catalog (wineenthusiast.com). The **Oval Wine Cork Trivet Kit** (\$30) is a unique way to safely serve hot dishes and plates while enjoying memories of bottles past. And if you need a handy place to pin up messages and reminders, the **Large Wine Cork Board** (\$35) is a perfect gift. The 22-by-22 inch mahogany frame just needs your corks and a little imagination to fill it in and then hang in the kitchen, office or wine cellar.

Looking for a unique way to keep your white wine cold? Try a **Woozie** (\$8 to \$13) (woozie.com), a reusable, washable, wetsuitlike insulator for your wine glass that doubles as a wine charm for glass identification in a crowd. They are available in a variety of colors and themes and can be customized with your own design to celebrate a special milestone (i.e., 40th birthday). Available in party packs for multiple glasses, they also come in larger sizes that can accommodate wine bottles.

Do you need a gift for a friend who is going green in all aspects of his life? We found melted wine bottles at an art show and fell in love with them. Bottles are melted at very high heat and are then transformed into cheese trays, bread plates, spoon rests and even wind chimes. There are a number of websites — dlrproductions.com is one of our favorites — that produce these products, and some will even honor custom orders for a particular label (you can send in your own special bottle — empty, of course). Some websites offer other melted bottle art items such as night lights, tumblers, tree ornaments, herb pots and candles (\$15 and up).

