

Jemil Gadea's gorgeous goodies

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

When elegant desserts meet Italian cuisine, the result is meals at Bibiana Osteria-Enoteca, one of the city's busiest Italian eateries. And for the sweet conclusions, you can thank the restaurant's new pastry chef, Jemil Gadea.

Young and enthusiastic, this Miami native grew up in Michigan, where he started his eventual culinary career by working in a local restaurant, first as a dishwasher, then a line cook, and finally on the pastry side of the kitchen. Still somewhat undecided about his future, Gadea enrolled in a local community college for its culinary arts program. "I worked during culinary school," said Gadea. "It was in a local bakery. I liked the work, but did not really love it."

Gadea went on to extern one summer in the kitchens of Disney World and in its management program. While there, he worked in the kitchens of the Contemporary Resort. "It was very fast-paced," he explained, adding that he started on the savory side of the kitchen, but eventually went over to the bakery. "As a beginner there," he said, "I baked cookies, like Rice Krispies treats. I did thousands of trays of them." Later, he worked as a pastry chef for Wolfgang Puck in his Epcot Center restaurant.

After working in Florida for a year, Gadea had irrevocably decided to become a pastry chef, and had intended to return to Michigan for work. Instead, he moved to Las Vegas, where he worked for the next 14 years at places such as Spago and at Napa Restaurant in the Rio Hotel and Casino. "[Jean-Louis] Palladin needed a pastry chef," he said, "and it blew my mind away. ... He opened my world to flavors I never knew existed, such as kumquats, huckleberries, kalamansi."

Gadea's next Las Vegas job took him to the pastry kitchens of Picasso at the Bellagio Resort Hotel. During



GRAEME JENNINGS/EXAMINER

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What is your comfort food?

Mac and cheese, spinach pie (spanakopita — my mom made this when I was a kid), and good Mexican food.

What is your favorite cuisine?

I love these, and if I could eat these everyday, it would be Greek, Indian, Mexican and Italian. For fine dining, French. Casual dining, it would be Asia. I love ramen noodles.

What's in your fridge?

I am never home, so only beer

his time, the restaurant received an extraordinary total of 11 Five Diamond Awards.

Now baking at Bibiana, Gadea finds this new job in an Italian restaurant very different. "All other chefs I worked for had had French training," he said. While the pace surely differs, maybe Gadea is tapping into his inner child, remembering how he once cooked for his family. "My mom worked," he said, "so at dinnertime I got to cook ... and once I was mak-

If you go
Bibiana Osteria-Enoteca

» **Where:** 1100 New York Ave. NW
» **Info:** 202-216-9550; bibianadc.com
» **Hours:** Lunch, 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday to Friday; all-day menu, 2:30 to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday; dinner, 5:30 to 10:30 p.m. Monday to Wednesday, 5:30 to 11 p.m. Thursday to Saturday; late-night menu, 11 p.m. to midnight Friday to Saturday; closed Sunday

and orange juice.

What is your basic, essential ingredient?

Chocolate, flat out. I love chocolate. Then vanilla, teas, coffees, herbs and wine. Also hibiscus is one of my favorites.

What is your favorite cookbook?

Alain Ducasse's "Grand Livre de Cuisine"; Michel Bras' "Essential Cuisine"; Michel Roux's "Desserts," because he is a great chef, and the book helps for brushing up on classic techniques.

ing something, I liked seeing [my family's] reaction. It makes you feel really good to see someone happy."

Indeed, one of his primo desserts is reminiscent of a dessert he used to make when a youngster: a carrot cake. "Now I make a beet gelato, which is sweet like a carrot cake," he explained. "Then I make a carrot tuile with a ricotta custard topped with a pineapple sauce, because pineapples are always in a carrot cake." Ah, the memories of childhood.

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg Passover and Easter wines

The Jewish tradition of Passover and the Christian celebration of Easter always fall within close proximity of each other, but this year, the first night of Passover begins Friday and Easter Sunday is just a couple days behind it. And while both of these holidays have significant meaning in their respective religious histories, I have noticed that the celebrations themselves have one thing in common: copious amounts of food.

Like at any important gathering that involves family, friends and food, wine plays an important role, providing a grace note to both the meal and the festive nature of the evening, so the wine you pour for your particular celebration should be as joyous as the occasion itself. Here are a few recommendations to help get your evening off to a great start. Retail prices are approximate.

Passover wines

For proper observance, the four cups of wine that are served during a traditional Seder meal should be kosher. The wines have to be harvested, vinified and bottled according to very specific rules and carry a mark (heckscher) that certifies that a rabbi has supervised the preparation of the wine. Heckschers include either the letter U or the letter K inside a circle on the wine label.

I like beginning festive affairs with sparkling wine. The nonvintage **Adar Cava Brut (\$19)** from Spain is a bubbly that displays pretty aromas of strawberry and red cherry on the nose. In the mouth, flavors of wild strawberry, red raspberry and cherry are lifted across the tongue by tight, tiny bubbles. The medium-bodied finish is brightened by a highlight of lemon/lime and refreshing acidity. A good match for matzo

and charoset. **QPR 75**

Who knew that the famous Bordeaux region produced a kosher wine? Well, the **2009 Bonfils Sauvignon Blanc (\$13)** from Bordeaux, France, offers a refreshing white wine that features flavors of green melon and tropical fruits. The bright acidity and palpable note of lime at the end provide a crisp finish. Perfect with gefilte fish. **QPR 75**

Easter wines

Every family has their own main course tradition, including ham, turkey, rib roast and spring lamb. In addition, a plethora of diverse side dishes can end up competing for space on the plate and the palate. Picking a versatile wine that pairs well with the main attraction is the key to success for any Easter dinner.

Just as above, I think sparkling wines, like the nonvintage **Gruet Brut Rose (\$15)** from New Mexico is a fun choice. Made from chardonnay and pinot noir, the floral bouquet is filled with scents of strawberry and raspberry fruit. On the palate, medium-size bubbles carry flavors of ripe cherry, plum and strawberry. Hints of apple and vanilla climb in on the crisp, sprightly finish. **QPR 75**

Pinot noir is a wonderfully versatile wine, capable of swinging from salmon to duck without breaking a skin. One of the most versatile of the proverbial grape bunch is the **2010 St. Innocent Pinot Noir Villages Cuvee (\$35)** from the Willamette Valley of Oregon. The dark color of this pinot belies its delicate nature. The perfumy nose is full of strawberry, raspberry and red plum scents. The wine has a bigger feel in the mouth thanks to fruit-driven flavors of red cherry, plum and strawberry. Gentle notes of vanilla glide in on the back end and contribute to a lovely, silky finish. Perfect with either ham or turkey. **QPR 9**



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