



GRAEME JENNINGS/EXAMINER

"Behind the chef you need a great kitchen staff, and a great neighborhood," says chef Will Artley of Pizzeria Orso.

The art of Pizzeria Orso's Will Artley

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

Will Artley brings to his job a valuable work ethic: He treats everyone — staff and patrons — like family. That's the road to restaurant success, he believes, and one he has followed for his entire career, first as executive chef at the Neighborhood Restaurant Group's Evening Star Cafe and, now, in his new executive chef position at Falls Church's Pizzeria Orso. "I have always been a strong believer that it is not just the chef," he says. "Behind the chef you need a great kitchen staff, and a great neighborhood. Then there is no reason you can't be a great restaurant."

Another characteristic defines this New Mexico native: his passion for fresh ingredients. So great is this passion that Artley now turns his spare time to gardening in his 3,000-square-foot plot. "Right now, I am preparing for summer," he says. "This year I am a little behind. ... Last year, I grew 250 tomato plants, so I didn't buy any tomatoes. I also grew rosemary, two different types of thyme, chives, 15 basil plants, English peas, beets and greens. My cooks got to work in the garden and to appreciate how much work it was."

Covered with a picturesque array of tattoos, Artley grew up in a household where solid home cooking was daily fare. "My mom cooked every day," he says, and he became her devoted student. By the time he was 10, he could make from-scratch mole, a basic seasoning paste for various Mexican dishes. He also benefitted from being part of a traveling military family, affording him the chance to sample foods from many different countries.

Whether it was his mother's example or his budding appreciation for international flavors, or a combination of many different factors, Artley chose to make a career of

What is your comfort food?

My mom's cooking. It is like everything she cooks puts me in a whole new world. It is unbelievable, it is so well put together. It's good hearty Mexican food, which makes me think of my ancestors, my grandmother. It is all done from scratch — you use your hands.

What is your cooking philosophy?

I have a number of philosophies. For one, OHIO, which means "only handle it once." Then throughout the years, I have had chef/teachers who have said, "Don't manipulate the ingredients too much." If you source the asparagus, use it then and there, with a little salt and olive oil. Let the food stand for itself. Also, think less about yourself and more about the food. When it comes down to it, it is all about the food and great ingredients.

If you go Pizzeria Orso

- » **Where:** 400 S. Maple Ave., Falls Church
- » **Info:** 703-226-3460
- » **Hours:** Lunch, 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday to Sunday; dinner, 4 to 9:30 p.m. Tuesday to Friday, 3 to 9:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

cooking — actually, he says cooking chose him. As a teen he worked in various local restaurants, learning the business from the sink up. And even before enrolling in the Culinary Institute of America, Artley had staged in some of Manhattan's most prestigious restaurants, including the Danube and Jean Georges.

And, yes, the tattoos, unmistak-

How do you get your inspiration?

I get a lot from the reading and from the seasons. I am super-excited when ramps are available, for example. I think, "How do I make them better than last year?" Also cooks inspire me. We go out to dinner a lot, so ideas are flowing through my head when I taste their food. That motivates me to push the edge.

What's in your fridge right now?

I have a lot of healthy food, such as broccoli, carrots, celery, Naked juices, wine, oranges and apples, my own house-cured meat and a variety of cheeses. I also have tortillas and dog treats.

Which is your favorite cookbook?

It has to be Harold McGee's "On Food and Cooking." ... It breaks down the scientific aspect of cooking.

able, colorful and filled with several personal messages: an Aztec god, a Polynesian symbol from Hawaii, a bear claw and some Chinese characters. "I have a full left arm," he says. "I have two small spots on my right arm that are not covered nor is the back of my neck. I have one big tattoo on the back of my left leg of my father's family crest. It gives me stability. And on my left arm, a tribute to my mom, who taught me how to cook."

Artley is now facing a new challenge: taking a basic pizza restaurant menu and shaping it into a bistro one, starring small plates of Italian-American favorites — but with a twist. "We are making our own sausages," he says, "and offering bowls of mussels and clams, all dishes seasoned to work with the pizzas. There will be no salmon entree for \$24."

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg Red wines for summer grilling

Megan Murphy of Terlato Wine Group is excited about summer because it signals the beginning of the grilling season — and she is on a mission to spread the word that there is a red wine out there to pair with every grilling option and every budget. She recently sent me several tasty samples to prove her point and made a true believer out of me. From burgers to filet mignon and everything in between, she has red wines in her portfolio to suit every palate and paycheck.

Here are six summer sippers to serve up with your favorite grilled foods. Retail prices are approximate.

Burgers: Take a trip in a glass to the sunny Greek isles with the **2009 Elios Mediterranean Red (\$13)** that hails from the Peloponnesian region. Cabernet sauvignon (30 percent for structure) and syrah (30 percent for richness) are blended with the Mediterranean varietal agiorgitiko (40 percent for softness), and each sip conjures images of the sun-soaked beaches, deliciously fresh foods and relaxed culture of the Mediterranean. Its bright, fruit-forward flavor profile of blackberry, plum and chocolate is rounded out with soft tannins and a bit of spiciness on the finish. **QPR 8**

Roasted vegetables: Best known for crafting white and red blends from California grapes, Seven Daughters was founded in 2008 by a group of winemakers who wanted to make a series of wines that "paired well with laughter." Their recently released their nonvintage **Seven Daughters Merlot (\$15)**, sourced from premier vineyards in Northern California. This medium-bodied wine entices the palate with a round mouthfeel, featuring red plums and juicy dark cherries up front and a touch of cocoa on the persistent finish. **QPR 8**

Mahi mahi or salmon: Located in the heart of Burgundy, Domaine Chanson Pere et Fils produces an approachable and affordable pinot noir that is great for both the recliner and the dinner table. The **2009 Domaine Chanson Bourgogne Pinot Noir (\$21)** is made from grapes that are exclusively sourced from vineyards in the Cote de Nuits and Cote de Beaune. It displays aromas of red currant and spices and elegant flavors of straw-

berry, cherry and red plum that float on the tongue with finesse and charm. **QPR 8**

Barbecue shrimp: "Top Chef," an award-winning food show on Bravo, has selected the Terlato Wine Group to develop hand-crafted, well-balanced wines that pair perfectly with a wide range of food. The **2009 Quickfire Cabernet Sauvignon (\$22)** from Napa Valley has an attractive nose in which scents of blackberry and chocolate dominate the bouquet. Layers of blackberry, dark cassis, black cherry and blueberry attack the front of the palate and then fall to a hint of vanilla on the back of the tongue. Silky-sweet tannins play up the notes of dark chocolate on the long, luscious finish. **QPR 9**

Dry aged strip steak: Even though Bruce Markham has been making wines in Napa Valley, the 2010 vintage is the inaugural release of the **2010 Markham Vineyards' Cellular 1879 Red Blend (\$25)**. This wine is a tribute to Markham Vineyards founder Jean Laurent, who built the historic stone cellar still used on the property today. Each year, the blend will change, depending on the quality of the fruit. In 2010, merlot provides a velvety texture with distinct chocolate notes while cabernet sauvignon provides the deep, smoky notes that weave throughout. The petite syrah adds blackberry jam and floral spice, and the petit verdot provides backbone and structure. The velvety finish features lovely notes of toasty oak and vanilla. **QPR 9**

Filet mignon: Australian winemaker Michael Twelftree is more fun than any 10 guys I know, and his wines reflect his infectious personality. The **2009 Two Hands Wines Gnarly Dudes (\$40)**, from Barossa Valley, is made for grilling. The richly textured shiraz is named for the gnarly old vines that year in and year out produce mature fruit. The wine sports perfumed aromas of blackberry, dark chocolate and spicy pepper. The palate is clubbed with a blast of ripe black

fruit, dark plums and dark licorice up front and seduced with subtle notes of pepper and dark chocolate on the powerful finish. **QPR 9.5**
Note: QPR is a rating system that compares the quality a wine delivers relative to the price. A QPR of 10 is considered an excellent value.

