



GRAEME JENNINGS/EXAMINER

Chris Ferrier, executive chef at 2100, uses ultra fresh farm goods from local markets in his dishes.

Chris Ferrier: Prime dining

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to *The Washington Examiner*

For a country guy, Chris Ferrier, a Kentucky native, has certainly climbed the culinary ladder of success. As the executive chef of the newly opened 2100 Prime restaurant in the Fairfax at Embassy Row (the former elite Jockey Club), he achieved a certain star status amongst his cooking peers.

But as Ferrier points out, despite the upscale decor, he is steeped in the farm knowledge he acquired as a youth. “In the summertime,” he said, “we were all there doing small farm chores. We even had Grandma grab a chicken from the pen and getting it ready for dinner.” Noting that she was a fabulous cook, Ferrier reports that everything she grew ended up canned for her pantry stock, including the tomatoes that she had turned into tomato juice.

Like his siblings, Ferrier learned how to cook for himself, and was able to adapt a meal from anything he found in the refrigerator. And as a teen, Ferrier became interested in a culinary career when he took his first job at a local restaurant as a dishwasher. “If I cleaned up everything,” he said, “the cooks offered to prepare food for me. I asked them, ‘Why don’t you show me what your are making, so then I can cook it myself?’”

As fate would have it, the restaurant owner suggested that Ferrier get behind the line, and started him off doing prep work. “I worked two to three years there,” he said. “I would then cook for friends and family. They all said that I should

What is your comfort food?

My grilled cheese sandwich. I use Comte cheese, real butter and whole-wheat grain bread or brioche. I cook it in a cast-iron skillet. My daughter loves it.

What is your must-have ingredient?

Hot sauce, such as Cholula. It is a good blend of peppers, vinegar, tomatoes. Then butter and bacon.

What’s in your fridge?

Limes, hot sauce (three different kinds), mushroom soy sauce and a case of beer.

Which is your favorite restaurant?

The Old Glory because it is always a fun place. You can sit at the bar and eat great bacon on a sandwich. Then the restaurant RIS.

What would do with a year off?

Besides eat, I would definitely go to Europe: Italy, Portugal for half a year. The other half, I would stay in the United States, and go on a lobster boat in Maine, and go back to the Shenandoah.

If you go 2100 Prime

- » **Where:** 2100 Massachusetts Ave. NW
- » **Info:** 202-835-2100; 2100prime.com
- » **Hours:** Breakfast, 7 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Monday to Friday; dinner, 5:30 to 10 p.m. Tuesday to Thursday, 5:30 to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

go to culinary school.”

After working at Houlihan’s locations in New Jersey and D.C., Ferrier saved enough money to enroll at the Culinary Institute of America. After graduation, he found a job at the Grand Hyatt and sister restaurants in Washington where he has cooked almost nonstop since then, starting as sous chef garde and finally as executive chef. While at the Hyatt on Capitol Hill, Ferrier

recalls, he served then-President Clinton a dish of Virginia spring lamb encrusted with pistachios.

For a change of pace, he took some time away from the D.C. scene to work at the Boar’s Head in Charlottesville for several years, then moved around the country working in various venues, including a Hyatt in Texas. This preceded a return with the Hyatt corporation to the D.C. area and eventually to his current chef’s position.

Now at 2100 Prime, Ferrier lets himself play around with ultra-fresh farm goods, visiting the nearby Freshfarm Sunday market at Dupont Circle, a mere block away. After all, he says recounting a recent trip, he returned to the restaurant loaded with fresh greens for his own house-made chimichurri, baby potatoes, peaches for peach chutney or poached peaches, and even fresh scallops and cuts of lamb. This is the right fit for a former farm boy.

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg

Wines of San Luis Obispo County

My son is now on the college tour circuit, looking at schools across the country for admission next fall. One of the schools that has caught his attention is Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, located on the Central Coast of California. Now, normally, having my son 3,000 miles away would give me a bit of heartburn, but when I checked out the school’s curriculum online, I discovered something marvelous; the university offers a degree in wine and viticulture. Could it be that one of my offspring is finally showing some interest in wine?

It turns out that my excitement was premature. While the San Luis Obispo campus does offer courses in vineyard management and other agricultural programs, my son is strictly interested in the school of engineering (sigh). But there is a silver lining, San Luis Obispo is quickly becoming one of the hottest spots in California for premium wine production, so potential visits just got a little more interesting — in addition to seeing my son, of course.

The city of San Luis Obispo is located on the coast, approximately 100 miles north of Santa

Barbara and, according to the Wine Institute, it is part of the Central Coast American Viticultural Area, which stretches roughly 250 miles along the coastline of California, from the San Francisco Bay Area in the north to Santa

Barbara County in the south. It is one of the largest AVAs, encompassing approximately 4 million acres, which includes about 100,000 acres planted to wine grapes.

San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties make up the southernmost region of the Central Coast AVA. There are about 110 wineries in San Luis Obispo County, where cabernet sauvignon is king. There are about 8,600 acres dedicated to the aforementioned varietal. Merlot is second, with approximately 4,200 acres.

The most notable characteristic of this region is the significant swing in diurnal temperature. The days are sunny and hot while at night the temperature drops significantly, thanks to the cool marine breeze that blows in after sunset. These large swings in temperature allow the grapes to ripen evenly throughout the growing season while developing substantial acidity for structure and balance.

It is unclear at this time whether my son will actually attend the school, but I hope that after he reads this column, he just might want to visit the campus — and take me along with him. Retail prices are approximate.

One of the most well-known producers in Paso Robles — located in the Central Coast AVA — is Tablas Creek Vineyard. Their **2010 Cotes de Tablas Blanc (\$25)** is one of my wife’s favorite white wines. A blend of traditional Rhone Valley white grapes, it features a nose filled with nectarine, peach and honeysuckle scents. The flavors of white peach, ripe apple and creamy pear just park on the tongue, where subtle acidity supports the rich mouthfeel. **QPR 8.5**

Another iconic vineyard in Paso is Justin Vineyards & Winery. While the winery is known mostly for its red bordeaux blends, it is the **2010 Justin Vineyards Chardonnay (\$18)** that I find most rewarding. Scents of vanilla and baking spice fill the nose while flavors of tropical fruit, green apple and nectarine lay on a bed of crisp minerality. Hints of vanilla and toasty oak notes add to the pleasant, lengthy finish. **QPR 8**

Located just a few miles inland from the Pacific Ocean, Edna Valley Vineyard in San Luis Obispo is one of California’s few east-to-west oriented valleys, which allows the maritime fog to cool the valley each evening. The long, even ripening of the grapes is reflected in the **2008 Edna Valley Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (\$18)**, which sports a beautiful nose of black cherries, dried herbs and dustiness. A medium structure supports mouth-coating flavors of blackberries, cassis and sage with hints of black cherry fruit on the pleasant finish. **QPR 8**



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