



GRAEME JENNINGS/EXAMINER

"I spend most of day in kitchen, prepping food shoulder by shoulder with the staff," says Alfredo Rosas, chef-manager of Dupont Circle's ShopHouse Southeast Asian Kitchen. The restaurant takes the Chipotle Mexican Grill model and applies it to Asian cuisine.

Alfredo Rosas' rosy restaurant career

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

Brimming with enthusiasm and passion for his job, Alfredo Rosas, chef-manager of Dupont Circle's ShopHouse Southeast Asian Kitchen, looks forward to work each day. "What I do, it affects my life. I am really happy," he says. "And a lot of people can't say that. Every morning I come in and it is an adventure every day."

A Peruvian native who arrived in this country nine years ago, Rosas thinks back to his early days in D.C., a time when he not only did not speak the language, but also could not find work. Of course, he was not trained to cook, having earned a degree in economics and worked as an accountant in Peru.

Searching for work in the D.C. area, Rosas turned to the restaurant trade, and as luck would have it, he discovered ShopHouse's sister company, Chipotle Mexican Grill. Much to his delight — and relief — he was offered a job there. "I didn't speak much English at the time," he says. "But they gave me the opportunity to start growing, and to learn English. I wasn't happy as an auditor, never satisfied."

But today, as he rolls into work, he faces a series of surprises, starting with what he may find going on in the kitchen. "I get to the kitchen, see the food and greet people," he says. "I spend most of day in kitchen, prepping food shoulder by shoulder with the staff." He has now

What is your comfort food?

It will be like ice cream. That is pretty much my comfort food.

What's in your fridge?

Soy milk ... I started discovering healthful eating when I started at Chipotle, so the refrigerator is filled with lots of lettuce, cheese, chicken and orange juice. What I have most is what I get fresh at market, just enough for the meal.

What do you do in your leisure time?

I pretty much go out with my

daughter. I spend the most time I can with her. We go to the park, ride bikes, buy food together. She decides what we are going to do.

Which is your favorite restaurant?

I want to be honest. This is my favorite restaurant.

Which is your must-have ingredient?

Cumin, because that has a lot of flavor and you can cook a lot of things with it. Then pepper, salt.

If you go ShopHouse Southeast Asian Kitchen

- » Where: 1516 Connecticut Ave. NW
- » Info: 202-232-4141; shophousekitchen.com
- » Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily

discovered a passion for all aspects of cooking.

For someone raised on Latin foods, Rosas has found the ShopHouse menu a bit exotic at times. For the metro area's uninitiated, this relatively new restaurant opened about a year ago, based on the Southeast Asian establishments

that stage a restaurant on a ground floor with living quarters above.

Thanks to Chipotle's CEO and founder, Steve Ells, ShopHouse has come about as a way to translate the Chipotle model into a showcase for other cuisines — in this case, Southeast Asian with an emphasis on Thai cooking.

The concept really works, and the mealtime crowds are living proof. "I like the Asian flavors a lot," Rosas says. "The food is so flavorful, so exotic ... it is incredible." But for him, the real joy of this job is offering others the same kind of career opportunities that he had. "I love to tell people what I do, and I can tell others that they can change their life," he says. "It is amazing to help others, it is like love. I am not just doing something to make money. It is work, but it doesn't have a price. So when they say thank you, it is 'wow.'"

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg

Wines for allergy sufferers

I was at a dinner party recently when I noticed that a longtime red wine-drinking friend of mine was nursing a soft drink. Not being one to pry (yeah, right), I asked him if he had a cold. "No," he replied. "Red wine gives me a headache." Now I know that there are far greater tragedies in this world, but if you're a wine writer, this ranks right up there with total destruction of the universe.

It turns out that my friend's affliction began about a year ago. He noticed that each time he enjoyed a glass of red wine, he got a headache. They started off mild at first, but after six months or so, they quickly escalated. Headaches associated with minimum ingestion of red wine are nothing new, of course. Red wine headache (RWH) is a well-documented condition that results in headaches, and sometimes nausea, after drinking small amounts of red wine. The specific cause associated with RWH is unclear, but my friend swears he knows the answer — oak.

While many people assume that RWH has something to do with sulfites, it is more likely that other elements are responsible, since less than 1 percent of the population is sensitive to sulfites. Tannins are another popular hypothesis. They are found in the skins, stems and seeds of grapes, and because red wine gets its red color from prolonged contact with the grape skins, red wines have a higher concentration of tannin extract. But the oak used for barrels and casks also imparts a fair amount of tannin into wines, along with other chemical compounds. And therein lies the rub.

My friend is convinced that his RWH stems from an allergic reaction to oak. The problem is, almost every red wine made is in oak, so you would be hard-pressed to find a decent red wine that is produced "naked" — until now. Retail prices are approximate.

In the **2011 Alfredo Roca Pinot Noir (\$12)** from Mendoza, Argentina, the delicate pinot noir grape is actually aged for eight months in "neutral" oak barrels so the bright fruit shines through. Floral aromas of cherry and strawberry on the nose lead into flavors of red berries and plums on the soft frame. Highlights of graphite and earth appear on the smooth, supple finish. **QPR 8.5**

The **2011 Cigar Box Reserve Malbec (\$12)** from Mendoza, Argentina, is carefully fermented in temperature-controlled stainless steel tanks. The interesting thing about this wine is the vanilla highlights on the nose, which are typically associated with oak aging. The big mouthfeel features flavors of blackberry jam, dark plum and hints of pepper. The finish is rich and intense with penetrating

notes of dark chocolate. **QPR 9**

Grenache usually needs a bit of oak to tame its intense flavors. But the **2009 Quo Old Vine Grenache (\$15)** from Campo de Borja, Spain, works well without it. Intense aromas of red cherries and plums mingle with notes of green olive and spice on the nose. Medium-bodied and well-structured, the focused flavors of black cherry and wild berries play out on a smooth, pleasing finish. **QPR 8**

From the largest wine-producing area in the southern end of France comes the **2009 Cabirau Malgre les Fonctionnaires Grenache (\$15)** from the Languedoc-Roussillon region. A soft, mellow red with scents of berries, raspberries and cherries on the fragrant bouquet. It is well-balanced, displaying flavors of plum, cherry and warm earthiness, with lively acidity and a smooth, round finish. **QPR 8**

The barbera grape is known for producing wines with low tannins and high levels of acidity. The **2009 Cascina Adelaide Barbera d'Alba Le Mie Donne (\$20)** from Piedmont, Italy, is dry, well-balanced and delightful, with concentrated aromas of fresh red berries and violets on the nose and flavors of ripe cherry, red plum and a hint of licorice on the mellow finish. High acidity keeps the palate bright and fresh. **QPR 7.5**

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.



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