

## A taste of New Orleans — take two

By Alexandra Greeley  
Special to *The Washington Examiner*

By combining their mutual talents and passions for cooking, the unlikely pair of Cam McNair and Justin Snyder launched one of D.C.'s hottest new eateries: New Orleans Po Boy Shop. It's nothing fancy, mind you, and you might not even find a seat — but its food is a magnet for those who yearn for something extraordinary.

A native of Virginia, Snyder talks about his many years cooking all over the area for the past 14 years, launching his career when he was a student at the University of Virginia. "I was basically working in restaurants to pay the rent," he said. "But I realized what career path I wanted to take and how much enjoyment it gave me." That from a student who was enrolled in a computer engineering course, who finally concluded that two hours a day with programming was just torture. Now fully trained in classical French techniques, he admits having his own restaurant has been his dream for a long time.

Then there's his outgoing buddy, McNair, who spent most of his life eating and cooking in New Orleans. No wonder he completely understands and can replicate his native cuisine. You have never tasted a beignet until you have bitten into the hot, sugary treats produced here. In fact, this Louisiana fellow cooks all the gumbos too, a skill he picked up early in his youth.

"I grew up in New Orleans cooking," said McNair. "My mom told me that I needed a job, so at 14 I started working in a pancake house in New Orleans." After attending a community college and enrolling in its culinary program, McNair graduated with classical training under his belt.

His first job after graduation was at New Orleans' Restaurant



COURTESY PHOTO

Cam McNair and Justin Snyder have been cooking together since they met at the Downtown Grill in Charlottesville.

Jonathan, whose executive chef, Tom Cowman, McNair credits with teaching him all he really knows and understands about cooking. McNair also had the good fortune to work with some of the city's legendary chefs, including Jamie Shannon at the legendary Commander's Palace, Gerard Maras at Mr. B's, Roland Hewitt at Christian's, and Emeril Lagasse.

But McNair's and Snyder's for-

### If you go New Orleans Po Boy Shop

» **Where:** 1205 19th St. NW  
» **Info:** 202-621-8118;  
dcpoboyshop.com  
» **Hours:** 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
Monday to Friday

tunes merged when the two met in 1999 while working at the Downtown Grille in Charlottesville. "We became each other's right hand," said McNair, "and we have been friends ever since. We trust each other."

That led eventually to this current project, located in D.C. because the city is such a booming food mecca.

Determined to showcase proper New Orleans cooking, the friends make everything from scratch, except the classic po' boy rolls. "We order the French bread from New Orleans," said McNair. "It must be something about the water there." And though a variety of po' boys are the menu mainstay, the pair offers other New Orleans' classics, from a rich gumbo to jambalaya and étouffée. And, of course, the divine beignets.

#### What is your comfort food?

McNair: Gumbo.  
Snyder: Barbecue.

#### What is your cooking philosophy?

McNair and Snyder: Find something fun [to prepare] and make it taste good.

#### How do you get your inspiration?

McNair: From other restaurants — things that I'm eating — magazines and cook books. I look at it and see how I can change it, or make it better or add different ingredients that

suit me.

Snyder: Inspiration is based on my mood.

#### Which is your favorite restaurant?

McNair: Hong Kong Pearl in Seven Corners or Fortune Garden for Dim Sum.  
Snyder: Umi in Fredericksburg. It has the best sushi.

#### What's in your fridge right now?

McNair: Smoked chicken and duck gumbo.  
Snyder: Gatorade and Yoo-hoo, the chocolate drink.

## The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg

### Scary-good wines for Halloween

Even though my own children are now almost too old to go trick-or-treating, our house remains a popular stop among neighborhood parents. While Halloween may not fall on a Friday or Saturday night this year, that does not seem to stop the adult "trick-or-treaters" from knocking on our door looking for a goody of the red or white variety.

A couple of years ago, I thought it would be easier to just leave an ice bucket of wine on my porch alongside a bowl of candy with a sign that says, "Take Only One," but liquor laws and teenagers quickly squelched that less-than-well-thought-out plan, so once again, I will sit at home and man the door and corkscrew.

Here are a few ghoulishly good wines that are a treat to serve this Halloween. Retail prices are approximate.

What is scary about the **2010 Leyda Sauvignon Blanc (\$10)** from Leyda Valley, Chile, is how good this wine is for the money. From the cool climate of a coastal valley, this sauvignon blanc features beautiful aromas of lime, grapefruit and orange blossom on the fragrant nose and flavors of gooseberry, passion fruit and bright citrus in the mouth. There is just a hint of grassy notes that combine with fresh acidity and subtle minerality on the refreshing finish. **QPR 9**

Wine producers Michael and David Phillips, who are also brothers, originally thought the white grapes they bought were roussanne, but they were pleasantly surprised when DNA testing revealed that the main ingredient in their **2010 Michael David Winery Incognito White Wine (\$18)** is actually viognier masquerading as its French cousin. Blended with chardonnay, muscat, sauvignon blanc and roussanne, the wine sports beautiful flavors

of peach, apricot, pineapple and orange rind that float over the entire palate. A highlight of candied nectarine provides remarkable depth on the luscious finish. **QPR 9**

The sunny hills of Southern France are where the grenache, cabernet sauvignon, syrah and pinot noir grapes are grown that go into the debut of the **2010 HobNob Wicked Red (\$12)**, a fun, easy-drinking wine that features aromas of black cherry, black currant and violets on the bouquet and juicy flavors of blackberry, black plum and baking spices on the fruit-flesh palate. A touch of earthy tobacco on the smooth finish lends a touch of refinement. **QPR 7.5**

Hollywood may have its cult film classics like "Sleepy Hollow," but Walla Walla, Wash., has its cult wine classic. From Ash Hollow Estate Vineyards and Winery comes the nonvintage **Headless Red (\$19)**, a wickedly enchanting blend of merlot, cabernet sauvignon, syrah and malbec. The wine carries aromatics of dark raspberry and crimson cherries with whispering hints of earth, heady spices and a subtle oak finish. According to the website, production is "scarce," so ask your local wine shop to hunt this down for you in time for Halloween. **QPR 8**

It has been a few years since I have reviewed this cultlike cabernet from California, but the **2009 EMH Vineyards Black Cat Cabernet Sauvignon (\$75)** from Napa Valley continues to haunt my palate. This massive, brooding wine exudes scents of black cherry, blackberry, dark chocolate and toasty oak on the explosive bouquet. Commanding flavors of dark plum, jammy blackberry, cassis and mocha are kept in check by sweet tannins and followed up with notes of chocolate and toasty oak on the impressive finish. This wine can be hard to find, but it is worth the hunt. **QPR 9.5**

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