

Anthony Piscioneri: Hot-dogging it

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

It takes a talented chef with great humility to tackle the challenge of creating haute hot dogs — that is, serving hot dogs decked out with more than drizzles of mustard and relish. Just such a guy is Anthony Piscioneri, executive chef of DC-3 (a hot dog eatery on Capitol Hill) and a sometime chef for other Matchbox Food Group restaurants, such as nearby Ted's Bulletin.

Perhaps his California background — specifically San Francisco — has helped to spark his creative genes, letting him come up with such unusual dogs as the bacon-wrapped Tuscan Sonoran and the falafel-garnished California Left-Winger. He agrees: "A lot of my culture comes from San Francisco," he says. "I fished off Fisherman's Wharf. So my culinary leanings are California-influenced." That fishing might also explain his adult passion for cooking with seafood.

Although Piscioneri is self-taught, he had very positive and direct influences on his culinary education: Both his father and his grandfather were chefs. "My granddad was from Sicily," he says. "He taught us that culture as I was growing up. Cooking runs in the men's side of the family," he says, adding that his dad did the cooking at home when he was growing up. "It was all Italian," he says.

But, says Piscioneri, although he did not attend culinary school, he certainly has paid his dues in the industry. Moving from California to Washington 20 years ago, he has worked for numerous local restaurants. "I have worked in many restaurants and with many chefs," he says. "They all broadened my culinary horizons, but Chef Tunks (of Acadiana, District Commons, Ceiba and others) was the greatest influence."



GRAEME JENNINGS/EXAMINER

If you go DC-3

- » **Where:** 423 Eighth St. SE
- » **Info:** 202-546-1935; eatdc3.com
- » **Hours:** 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday to Thursday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

With such great training, it is no wonder Piscioneri is tackling the dog business with such fervor. Gathering inspiration for his doggy creations, he says he turns to current events for ideas. For example, for the National Cherry Blossom Festival, he plans on making duck sausages with cherry gastrique. For Thanksgiving, he made in-house what he called a Thankfurter, a turkey sausage with stuffing and a cranberry sauce. "It was one of my favorites and a No. 1 seller," he says. But perhaps the most popular of his wild creations has been the andouille sausage served with traditional red beans and rice on a fresh loaf slathered with chowchow. "I have learned that the hot dog is a blank slate," he says. "I try to have fun."

It is no surprise, then, to hear him say that his heart really belongs to cooking. "Just put food and a knife in front of me," he says, "and I'll make it happen."

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg

Wines for Easter celebrations

Easter Sunday is a significant celebration that traditionally includes family, friends and, of course, food. And regardless of whether your Easter involves hunting for eggs, gathering for a big brunch, preparing a festive meal or all three, chances are wine will play an important role, providing a grace note to both the meal and the festive nature of the holiday.

The wine you pour for your particular celebration should be as joyous as the occasion itself. But searching for the right wine to serve with Easter brunch or dinner can make you as crazy as forgetting where you hid the last Easter egg. The problem is that many tables will be laden with a wide variety of dishes, ranging from ham and turkey to 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 meal.

Here are a few useful suggestions that will pair well with an assortment of Easter dishes. Retail prices are approximate.

If Easter brunch is your thing, then a sparkling wine should definitely be on your table. I really like the nonvintage **Santa Margherita Brut Rose (\$24)** from Veneto, Italy. This simple-structured bubbly possesses floral notes of rose petal, apple blossom and strawberry on the nose. The wonderfully crisp mouthfeel supports flavors of strawberry, red plum and raspberry up front with accents of cherry and rhubarb on the lively finish. The bright acidity provides balance and makes a wonderful accompaniment to creamy cheeses, seafood and fresh fruit.

QPR 8

Another sparkling wine that I

think is cause for celebration is the **2008 Domaine Carneros Brut (\$25)** from the Carneros appellation, which straddles Napa and Sonoma valleys. The famous Champagne house Taittinger founded this California outpost in 1987 to take advantage of the unique vineyards of the Carneros region. The Brut is made using the classic methode champenoise from chardonnay and pinot noir grapes. The bouquet is filled with scents of toasted bread, ripe pear and roasted nuts. Medium-size bubbles carry flavors of lemon meringue, crisp apple and a touch of strawberry over a creamy frame. Hints of vanilla and brioche combine on the crisp, fresh finish.

QPR 8.5

If turkey is in the lineup for dinner, then pick up a bottle of **2012 Seifried Pinot Gris (\$17)** from the Nelson region of New Zealand. This beauty is from the northern end of the South Island of New Zealand, where the maritime influ-

ences produce cool nights and warm days, fostering wonderful balance between fruit and acidity in the grapes. This is evident in the fragrant nose of honeysuckle, peach and nectarine that leads to a fruit-centric palate featuring apricot, ripe pear, candied ginger and peach. The abundant acidity keeps the finish fresh and crisp.

QPR 9

Ham is a traditional centerpiece on many Easter dinner tables, and pinot noir is a wonderfully versatile wine, capable of holding up to the richness of the meat. A delicious choice is the **2009 WillaKenzie Pierre Leon Pinot Noir (\$45)** from the Willamette Valley of Oregon. The dark color of this pinot belies its delicate nature. The perfumed 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, dark plum and black raspberry. Accent notes of black pepper and clove pop in on the back end and make a perfect pairing with ham or pork tenderloin.

One of my friends loves to serve spring lamb for Easter dinner, so this year I am bringing the **2007 Autard Chateaneuf du Pape (\$42)** from the southern Rhone Valley of France to pair with the main course. Made from a blend of 70 percent grenache, and the balance of equal parts syrah and counoise, this full-bodied wine reveals aromatics of blackberry, tobacco and dried herbs. Complex flavors of spicy fruit, including black cherries, red plums and dark cherries, mingle with notes of lead pencil and tobacco across the entire palate. Prominent notes of black pepper add power and depth on the long, structured finish.

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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