

# Beverly Bates bakes

By Alexandra Greeley  
Special to *The Washington Examiner*

Running one pastry kitchen would overwhelm most of us. Running three must take grit, savvy and creativity, and that about sums up Beverly Bates, baker par excellence and pastry mastermind for chef Jeffrey Buben's Bistro Bis, Vidalia and — the newest — Woodward Table. And now recognized for her professional talents, Bates was recently nominated by the Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington as the city's best pastry chef.

A native of New York and a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Bates started cooking at the age of 13, learning to cook on a wood-burning stove. Back then, she says, she would not have dreamed of making a living as a chef, much less as a baker. But the art of pastry appealed to her, and she knew she had a knack for it. "Baking gives me instant gratification," she says. "It gives me a sense of self-esteem, like discovery of a gift. Baking is the greatest reward."

Faced suddenly with being a single mom, Bates decided to make a profession out of baking, enrolling in a community college for its culinary courses and working in a local pastry shop. There she worked for chef Floyd Misek, who became her first culinary mentor. After graduating from the Culinary Institute and working for famed chef Gordon Ramsay in London and for chef Joseph Poupon at his Patisserie Poupon in Baltimore, Bates moved to Washington. "When I first started here," she says, "women were not really working in the kitchen yet," adding that today, most of the local pastry chefs are women.

Although she has worked at several other D.C. restaurants, including Michel Richard Citronelle and Ici Urban Bistro, her main employer has been chef Buben. Starting out (how many years ago?) at his Bistro



GRAEME JENNINGS/EXAMINER

## If you go Woodward Table

» **Where:** 1426 H St. NW  
» **Info:** 202-347-5353;  
woodwardtable.com  
» **Hours:** Lunch, 11:30 a.m. to  
2:30 p.m. Monday to Friday;  
dinner, 5:30 to 10:30 p.m.  
nightly; brunch, 11:30 a.m. to  
2:30 p.m. Sunday

Bis, Bates was eventually retained to oversee the pastry kitchen of the revamped Vidalia.

That was two and a half years ago, and now chef Buben has recently launched the immense Woodward Table restaurant, located where Potenza once operated. That means Bates' days usually start early and end hours later, because she plans pastry menus for three restaurants, and, of course, does a fair amount of baking herself.

"I plan the week for the new restaurant," she says, "so that I know a week ahead what I will be baking." Besides that, she arranges the other two menus, changing desserts according to the seasons. But she also keeps customers' favorites available: At Bistro Bis, look for her apple tart or creme brulee; at Vidalia, the pecan pie; and at the new restaurant, the banana cream pie.

And what sweet dreams does Bates imagine for her future? Possibly, she muses, her own bakery in some distant city. But for the present, she is up to her elbows in restaurant flour and sugar.

## The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg

# The Judgment of Annapolis: California v. France

There are few seminal events in the history of the modern wine world that are as significant as the events that unfolded in Paris on May 24, 1976. It was nearly 200 years following the founding of the United States that another shot was fired that was heard around the world ... the wine world, and was the beginning of another revolution. It was called the Judgment of Paris.

Steven Spurrier, a British wine merchant, decided to stage a competition between California and French wines. He arranged for a blind tasting of chardonnay wines in one flight and red wines (California cabernets sauvignons versus French Bordeaux blends) in another flight. The panel of 10 distinguished judges, almost exclusively from France, and Spurrier himself, were shocked when the results were tabulated. California scored higher than its French counterparts in both categories.

The story, not expected to draw much attention to begin with, would have quietly died if it had not been for George Taber, a reporter for Time magazine, who published the results and shook up the wine world forever.

Thirty-seven years later, local wine merchant Patrick Bouculat, of Wine Cellars of Annapolis, decided to recreate a modern-day version of the same historic event. And so on a sunny afternoon, I found myself in the hot seat as a member of a three-judge panel in the Judgment of Annapolis, a fun tasting that Bouculat put together to show friends and clients the similarities and differences between the two countries.

Note: When picking wines to compare in any competition, it is important to remember that it

always comes down to wine selection. While there are many ways to go about developing specific criteria for picking wines, in the end, it is always subjective. In this case, it was deliciously subjective. Retail prices are approximate.

## The white wine (chardonnay) flight

As fellow judge and Master of Wine Jay Youmans pointed out, chardonnay is one of the toughest grape varieties to determine the country of origin. It is the tofu of grapes, picking up nuances that the winemaker throws at it, such as barrel fermentation or malolactic fermentation, to name a few. Therefore, I guessed the correct country of origin for only 85 percent of the wines in this flight. All of the wines were delicious, and I had a difficult time ranking them, but here they are, in order of my personal preference.

- » 2010 Francois Mikulski Meursault Premier Cru Poruzots, Burgundy, France (\$88) QPR 8
- » 2010 Maldonado Chardonnay Los Olivos Vineyard, Napa Valley, Calif. (\$40) QPR 9.5
- » 2010 Jean-Claude Bachelet Chassagne-Montrachet Les Encegnieres, Burgundy, France (\$45) QPR 9.5
- » 2010 Maldonado Chardonnay Parr Vineyard, Napa Valley, Calif. (\$30) QPR 9
- » 2010 Jean-Claude Bachelet Puligny-Montrachet, Burgundy, France (\$55) QPR 8.5
- » 2010 Ojai Chardonnay Solomon Hills, Santa Maria Valley, Calif. (\$35) QPR 9
- » 2010 Jean-Marc Brocard Chablis Premier Cru Vau de Vey, Burgundy, France (\$27) QPR 10
- » 2010 Hollywood & Vine Cellars "2480" Chardonnay, Napa Valley, Calif. (\$39) QPR 8

## The red wine (Bordeaux blend and cabernet sauvignon) flight

The red flight was much easier to determine from which country each wine came. All three judges successfully guessed each wine's pedigree by just smelling the wines. I personally believe that there is a very distinctive "earthy" characteristic that Bordeaux wines exude on the nose. In addition, California wines tend to exhibit riper, fuller fruit on the palate. Bordeaux wines feel drier and leaner in the mouth. Of course, these are generalizations, but the wines in this particular tasting were fairly true to casting. Once again, here are the wines in order of my personal preference.

- » 2009 Joseph Phelps Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, Calif. (\$45) QPR 10
- » 2009 Chateau Gruaud Larose, St. Julien, Bordeaux, France (\$90) QPR 9
- » 2009 Chateau Cantemerle, Haut Medoc, Bordeaux, France (\$35) QPR 9.5
- » 2009 Dominus Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, Calif. (\$150) QPR 7
- » 2009 Chateau Cap de Fauerges, Cotes de Castillon, Bordeaux, France (\$25) QPR 9
- » 2008 Stag's Leap Wine Cellars SLV Vineyard, Napa Valley, Calif. (\$85) QPR 8
- » 2009 Chateau Malescot St. Exuperie, Margaux, Bordeaux, France (\$115) QPR 7
- » 2009 Robert Mondavi Cabernet Private Reserve, Napa Valley, Calif. (\$130) QPR 7

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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