



GRAEME JENNINGS/EXAMINER

Chef Nick Palermo of Old Angler's Inn turns to the sea, or Chesapeake Bay, for many of his dishes.

Nick Palermo: Angling in

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

Working in a bucolic country setting must be a dream job. Add to that the delight of assembling a classic French menu with American flourishes and that is how executive chef Nick Palermo of Old Angler's Inn spends his days. And the irony: Palermo found the job on Craigslist just about two years ago.

Like many of his colleagues, Palermo, who comes from an Italian family from Syracuse, N.Y., grew up appreciating food and its preparation. "We always cooked at home," he says, "and we rarely went out to eat. ... I had no concept growing up of what good restaurants are." As a teen, he took a job as a dishwasher, which he described as easy because one doesn't have to think about the task.

Working his way through college at Syracuse University, Palermo was hired as a line cook at a local restaurant. In his sophomore year, he enrolled in a food safety course, and he found it so interesting that he majored in hospitality and restaurant management. Even before he graduated, Palermo decided he wanted to be a chef, and he subsequently enrolled at the Culinary Institute of America.

During his time at the Culinary Institute, Palermo externed at the renowned five-star, five-diamond restaurant Kingsmill Resort in Williamsburg, Va. "My main goal was to work and not pick herbs all day," he says. "I was a proficient line cook,

- What is your comfort food?**
Fried chicken. Popeyes is awesome. I just wish it were spicier. I love the wings.
- What's in your fridge?**
Milk, eggs, water, maybe some leftovers.
- Which is your favorite restaurant?**
2941 and CityZen.

If you go
Old Angler's Inn

- » **Where:** 10801 MacArthur Blvd., Potomac
- » **Info:** 301-365-2425; oldanglersinn.com
- » **Hours:** Lunch, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Tuesday to Sunday; dinner, 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. Monday to Thursday, 5:30 to 10:45 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 5:30 to 9 p.m. Sunday; brunch, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Sunday

cooking basic dishes." After graduating from the Culinary Institute, Palermo moved to the Washington area, and after attending a career fair, was hired by Jonathan Krinn, then the chef of 2941 restaurant in Falls Church. There he sharpened his cooking skills and eventually became the restaurant's sous chef.

After three intense years at 2941,

- What is your luckiest moment?**
Maybe because so much of the skills and career-building came from what I learned at 2941. I was lucky to start there then. That has been responsible for most of my career.
- Which is your must-have ingredient?**
Veal stock because it can fix anything. Veal stock and butter.

Palermo began a series of cooking jobs, starting with a monthlong stint at one of the best restaurants in the world, Hotel de Ville in Crissier, Switzerland. When he returned to the United States, Palermo worked briefly in Virginia before moving to Nashville, Tenn., to relaunch a local hot spot called Merchants. Although the restaurant received great reviews, Palermo was eager to move on and even thought about abandoning his kitchen career altogether to teach in a culinary school.

But as fate would have it, upon his return to the D.C. area, Palermo was fortunate enough to be hired by Eric Ziebold of CityZen. "That re-energized me to stay in the profession," says Palermo. "I saw techniques done the way they should be. The food was cooked perfectly."

After six months of 70-hour workweeks at CityZen, where he worked as a line cook, Palermo was ready to accept a key position in a top-tier restaurant ... and his wish was granted.

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg

A higher education of Central Coast wines

Part one of a two-part series on California Central Coast wines.

Several years ago, in an article in Food & Wine magazine, wine critic Robert M. Parker Jr. stated, "Look for wines from California's Central Coast ... to take their place alongside the hallowed bottlings of Napa and Sonoma valleys. No viticultural region in America has demonstrated as much progress in quality and potential for greatness as the Central Coast."

Wow, high praise indeed coming from one of the most influential names in the wine industry. And now I may get my chance to experience firsthand the ever-evolving wine industry of the Central Coast of California. It appears that my college-bound son has narrowed his higher-education sights on a school that is located smack-dab in the middle of the Central Coast American Viticultural Area. I can predict, with some certainty, that a few winery tours during parents' weekend are in my future.

According to the Wine Institute, an advocacy and public policy association that promotes California wine, the Central Coast AVA stretches roughly 250 miles along the coastline of California, from San Francisco County in the north down to Santa Barbara County in the south, averaging about 25 miles in width. The appellation has about 90,300 acres planted to wine grapes, which accounts for almost 15 percent of California's wine grape production. There are more than 350 wineries located throughout the AVA, and more are popping up every year.

There are three distinct subregions within the Central Coast AVA. They are San Francisco Bay, Monterey and San Benito, and San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara. Since our son is considering colleges in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara, I will focus on wines from those areas this week and tackle the former two subregions next week. Retail prices are approximate.

According to their website, the original owners of Wild Horse made their first wine in a plastic tub, stirring it with a baseball bat, as a senior project at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. Today, the wines are made with much better equipment,

like the **2009 Wild Horse Central Coast Chardonnay (\$15)**, which has a touch of viognier blended in for depth. The wine is vibrant and lively, with scents of green apple, lemon/lime citrus, and a touch of buttered toast on the nose and repeated on the crisp palate. Part of the wine is produced in stainless steel and then aged sur lie in barrels, providing balance and a creamy, textured finish. **QPR 9.5**

The **2010 Opolo Summit Creek Zinfandel (\$20)** from Paso Robles is a full-bodied zin that is bright and lively in the nose with scents of raspberry and black cherry fruit. In the mouth, it exhibits rich flavors of red fruit framed by sweet tannins and balanced acidity. Creamy vanilla and peppercorn on the midpalate enhance the solid core of fruit, while additional notes of black pepper provide a deep and spicy finish. **QPR 9**

In 2005, entrepreneurs Tim Perr and Scott Knight pooled their resources to found a winery dedicated to producing small lots of artisan pinot noir that they loved to drink. They named their winery "Pali," after their hometown of Pacific Palisades. The Pali Wine Co.'s **2011 "Huntington" Pinot Noir (\$22)** from Santa Barbara County is full of pretty plum and spring strawberry aromas on the nose. The flavors of dark raspberry, bright cherry, wild strawberry and wet stone are well-balanced and nicely textured. The supple finish is simply delicious, with a touch of cinnamon for added charm. **QPR 9.5**

The Hope family began farming in Paso Robles more than 30 years ago, starting out with apples and grapes. Eventually, they discovered that the unique climate and soils of the region provided an ideal terroir for growing some of the best wine grapes in the Central Coast. The **2009 Treana Meritage Red (\$34)** displays aromas of plum, dark cherry, mocha and dried herbs. Flavors of rich cocoa and coffee join the dark cherry and blackberry notes echoed from the nose. Juicy and deep, this wine stays bright and lively thanks to smooth tannins on the well-balanced finish. **QPR 9**

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.

