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On the cover: Illustration of Hilton Dinner by Patrick Kerby, workwithrye.ca.

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dalla tavola

The beloved Zenari's in Manulife closed last March. But that was not the end of the Zenari story. Elisa Zenari, along with her brother Giancarlo and husband Ran Huget have opened Dalla Tavola Zenari (10166 100A Street, 780-540-8920, dalla.ca). Enjoy Zenari's classic breakfast bagel, spinach risotto and the crostoni as well as new items on the extensive menu of salads, panini, pasta, risotto and mains. They also have an complete catering menu and offer take-out. Check it out! And, check out Elisa's recipe for an Italian-inspired shakshuka on page eight.



why not is no more due to fire

"My parents saw it on the news," says Levi Biddlecombe, owner of the second-floor eatery Why Not, about how he learned his resto was gutted by a fire. "Apparently it started in the attic." While his sister has started a Go Fund Me (gf.me/u/zbtbnq), he's confident he'll be back. "I have no plan to stop owning restaurants. It will take more than a fire to stop me cooking in Edmonton. We'll continue with @backstairsburger for now. It's just a matter of time."

new chef at madison's

Chef Chris Hryniuk has joined the kitchen team at Madison's in the Union Bank Inn (10053 Jasper Avenue, 780-401-2222, unionbankinn.com). People may remember his cooking and wry sense of humour from Sorrentino's, or Buco, or even The Butler Did It. We look forward to tasting Chris' classic French/modern Canadian take on the menu at Madison's.



no freezing father this year

For the past four Januarys, Peter Burgess has spent a few weeks camping out at the Rainbow Valley campground. He is the Freezing Father who has raised \$148,881.11 for the Stollery Children's Hospital in memory of his daughter Elan. He committed to Freezing Father for five years. "I intend to keep that promise," he says. "But there are Covid complications. My mantra is no one leaves without a hug. I can't do that right now," says Peter.

bar bricco has reopened

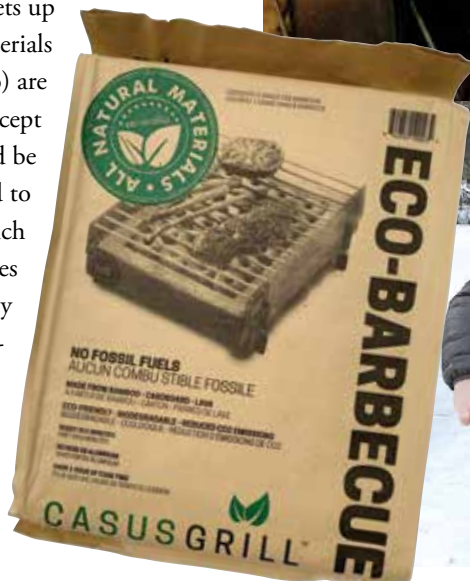
The supremely cosy Bar Bricco (10437 Jasper Avenue, 780-424-5588, corso32group.com) has reopened with a new socially distant layout and a no walk-in policy. Reservations are a must. What hasn't changed? The charcuterie and cheese boards, the toothsome focaccia, the egg in ravioli; not to mention the best Negroni in town, the vast selection of amari and the killer wine list—oh, how we have missed you.



"Too much about this year is desperate. It's harsh, people are battling for their lives, for their physical, mental, financial health. The restaurant community especially, they are just getting crushed. They'll support the Stollery in a second, but I could not ask them to help this year. It's a different world."

just the thing for winter picnics

The Casus Grill Eco-barbecue was created by a Danish couple searching for a better alternative for cooking on the move. It's portable, sets up easily, is flameless, and all the materials used (cardboard and bamboo) are sustainable and biodegradable, except for the lava stones, which could be turned into the garden and used to improve the soil. Each kit, which weighs about a kilo, has 60 minutes burn time. Find at The Butchery (12229 107 Avenue, 780-443-0000, thebutcheryyeg.ca, closed Sunday, Monday), \$20 for a solo unit, four pack, \$75.



Many, many chefs made their way down to campsite #29 to feed Peter and his guests: Serge Belair (Edmonton Convention Centre); Steve Buzak (Royal Glenora Club); Shane Chartrand and JP Dublado (River Cree Resort); Clayton Folkers, Rylan Krause with NAIT Culinary student teams; Ryan Hotchkiss (Bündok); Gregg Kenney (Vivo Ristorante); Cindy Lazarenko (Culina); chef Lindsay Porter; Doreen Prei, along with her kids Adelaide and Leopold (Zinc); Charlie Rothman (Gryfes Bagels); Todd Rutter, also a Stollery dad, (A Cappella); Paul Schufelt (Workshop Eatery). Next time you order curbside pick-up from their restaurants, say you are doing it for the Freezing Father. 🍷

From top: Dalla Tavola interior; what's left of Why Not; chef Chris Hryniuk's bouillabaisse blanc; a socially-distant, but still cosy, Bar Bricco; the ingenious eco-barbecue from Casus; Todd Rutter (A Cappella Catering) Mary Bailey (The Tomato) and Peter Burgess cook breakfast (2019).

Brunch worth doing.

We asked several chefs for their favourite brunch dishes, the kind you make when you have time and there's no pressure, to enjoy by yourself or with your people.



Workshop's Chicken & Waffles

Curtis Comeau Photography

Chocolate Nut Butter Stuffed French Toast with Cherry and Black Tea Jam

*Doreen Prei, executive chef Zinc,
Art Gallery of Alberta, CBC Food Columnist*

Brioche (for the French toast)

Make a pre-dough:

50 g sugar
100 g flour
42 g fresh yeast
90 g warm milk

Combine the yeast with the warm milk.

Combine the sugar and the flour. Add everything together and whisk well. Cover with a kitchen towel and let it rest for 15 minutes in a warm place.

Add to the pre-dough:

125 g egg (about 3 medium)
15 g salt
15 ml rum, gin or vodka
125 g melted butter (about 1 stick)
80 g milk

In a stand mixer add all the ingredients and mix with a dough hook.

Once mixed, add:

450 g sifted flour

Mix on medium-high for about 10 minutes. Cover with a kitchen towel and rest for 2 hours in a warm place.

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Shape the brioche dough into a loaf and place in a buttered loaf pan. Cover with a kitchen towel and rest for 2 hours in a warm place until just doubled in size.

To finish the loaf:

2 egg yolks
60 ml whipping cream

Combine and brush on the loaf just before baking. Bake until golden-brown, 30-35 minutes.

Cherry and Black Tea Jam

200 g frozen cherries
pinch salt
sugar to taste
dash vanilla
150 ml dry red wine or port
1 whole star anise
3 bags black tea or Earl Grey

Combine all ingredients but the tea and place in a pot. Simmer over low heat for about 30 minutes, stir once in a while. Add more sugar at the end for your

liking. Steep with the tea bags for about 5 minutes then discard. Puree slightly with a hand blender or leave chunky. The jam should come nicely together.

Chocolate Nut Butter

100 g dark chocolate
100 ml whipping cream
2 T nut butter (peanut, cashew, almond or a combination)
pinch salt

In a bowl add the chocolate, cream and a pinch of salt. Place the bowl over a simmering, not boiling, water bath to melt the chocolate.

Once melted, remove from the heat and add the nut butter. Combine well. (For the drizzle afterwards, warm the chocolate and nut butter back up so it becomes fluid.)

French Toast

4 slices	brioche
4 T	chocolate nut butter
1	egg
splash	milk
2 T	butter for frying
	icing sugar for dusting

Beat the egg with a splash of milk.

Spread the chocolate nut butter on one slice of the brioche and cover with another slice. Push it down with a little bit of pressure and dip both sides of the brioche into the egg mixture. Repeat.

Heat up a non-stick frying pan to medium heat and add the butter. Once the butter is melted add the brioche and fry golden brown on both sides.

Cut in half and serve with the cherry and black tea jam. Dust with icing sugar, drizzle a little bit of the warmed-up chocolate nut butter on top and serve hot. You can also add some crushed nuts, such as walnuts or hazelnuts and sprinkle over top.

Serves 2.

Crepes with Sweet Ricotta Filling

This is a traditional Polish recipe. In Poland it is served for brunch, main or dessert. It can also be adjusted to a savoury crepe by removing the sugar and vanilla, adding some herbs and shredded Gouda to the cheese mixture, and served with a savory sauce. I have used both versions over the years in different restaurants. It will be served at the Glasshouse for brunch in the spring. —Julia Kundera, the Glasshouse Kitchen & Bar

Sweet Ricotta Filling

1 kg	pressed ricotta cheese (Polish <i>twarog</i> cheese or farmer's cheese, usually available at Italian Centre). If you cannot find use cream cheese
4	egg yolks
¾ c	granulated sugar
2 t	vanilla paste or vanilla extract

Mix the cheese in a food processor until smooth. Add egg yolks, sugar, and vanilla and mix until well blended.

Crepes

4 lg	eggs
500 ml	full fat milk
320 ml	sparkling water
90 g	butter, melted
½ t	salt

1 T	sugar
300 g	flour
1 T	grapeseed oil for frying

Whisk the eggs, milk, sparkling water, sugar, butter and salt until combined. Slowly start adding flour whisking until combined and smooth. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Apply grapeseed oil to a paper towel, brush your frying pan and then preheat the pan on medium-low heat. Fry the crepes until the surface is semi-set and flip to the other side. Reserve.

Fill the crepes with sweet ricotta cheese filling and wrap (*rouleau* or triangular-shaped). Fry for a few minutes on low heat or bake in the oven with brown butter until heated through.

Serve with your favorite topping—fresh fruit, fruit compote, chocolate, caramel, whipped cream.

Serves 4-6.

Buckwheat Pancakes

This is a go-to recipe for when we have guests for brunch at home. This recipe makes regular pancakes for four people (3 or 4 pancakes per person), or enough small ones (blini) to serve as an appetizer with smoked salmon. Serve with back bacon, caramelized onion, grated gruyere and in-season asparagus, or wilted spinach. Especially nice with chorizo (instead of bacon) and a fresh tomato sauce. Top your pancake stacks with a fried egg to really impress. If you wish to make them gluten free don't include the all-purpose flour—100 per cent buckwheat pancakes will be slightly more dense and dry. —Chris Hryniuk, Madison's Grill

1 c	buckwheat flour
¼ c	flour
1 t	sugar
1 t	baking powder
¼ t	baking soda
pinch	salt
1½ c	buttermilk

Mix all dry ingredients in a bowl. Beat eggs, buttermilk in another bowl.

Add egg mixture to the dry and mix until it comes together into a thick batter. Allow to rest for 10 minutes. Batter will hold overnight in the fridge.

Melt some butter on a griddle or in a well-seasoned cast iron frying pan over medium heat.

Using a large spoon drop batter into the pan and cook until bubbles form on top. Flip and cook until browned, 2-3 minutes. Repeat with remaining batter.

Serves 4.

Please see "Brunch" on next page



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Bunch

Continued from previous page.

Scandinavian Rice Porridge

This is such a comforting and soul satisfying dish. It's incredibly simple to make, inexpensive, and can be dressed up so many different ways. If you haven't had rice porridge, please, give it a shot on the next cold day! It can also keep in the fridge for a few days. If you don't have time to heat it up every morning, it works as a cold dish too. Just add a bit of extra milk, stir it around, top with berries, honey, chia seeds, preserves, whatever you want. —Kelsey Johnson exec chef Typ Top Bakery and NAIT culinary instructor

180 g	short grain rice (arborio works well)
¼ t	salt
400 mL	water
800 mL	milk

Bring water to a boil in a medium-sized pot over high heat and steam in the rice and salt. Whisk often while cooking to avoid sticking to the bottom of the pot. Once most of the water is absorbed, add the milk and continue to cook over medium heat, whisking often, until everything is absorbed. It should look like a nice shiny porridge and have a balance of salt and natural sweet.

Now that the base is made, the fun part of building your bowl comes in. At Café Linnea we used Bourbon-soaked peaches that were preserved in the height of peach season, crunchy almond butter and lavender infused honey. Other great combos are the traditional cinnamon, butter, dried berries; caramelized pineapple, coconut, ginger, lime; pistachio, blackberry, maple syrup; banana, chia seeds, peanut butter.

Serves 4.

Spaghetti Squash Brunch Cakes with Maple Buttered Squash

These cakes can be enjoyed solo, or they pair well with friends and family. Recommended: listening to an amazing playlist while making. —Liana Robberecht, Calgary chef and culinary artist

1 c	cooked spaghetti squash
½ sm	white onion sliced thin, rinsed in cold water, pat dry
1	egg
2	green onion, fine chopped
1 T	garlic powder
1 T	dried tarragon

2 T	chopped parsley
¼ t	baking powder
¾ c	flour
dash	salt

Mix squash, all seasonings and the egg together. Add the flour and baking powder. Divide mixture into ten soft balls.

Heat sauté pan with small amount of oil, drop each ball into the pan, leaving space to flatten them. Cook for approximately 2-3 minutes. Turn over cook for another 2-3 minutes. Remove and season.

Makes 10 cakes.

Maple Buttered Squash

1 c	cooked diced roasted butternut squash
½ c	butter
½ c	maple syrup
pinch	salt
½ t	lemon zest

In a heated sauté pan, add butter and squash. When the butter has melted, add maple syrup. Heat until simmering, add lemon zest and a pinch of salt, pour over squash cakes as desired.

Typ Top Cinnamon Bun Bread Pudding

This is a great way to use up any cinnamon buns that have started to go a little crunchy on the edges, if you've managed to keep them in the house that long. —chef Kelsey Johnson

4	cinnamon buns
¾ c	heavy cream
2	eggs
½ c	sugar
1 t	vanilla
¼ c	any add-ins you want, think nuts, banana slices, chocolate chips, etc.

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Slice the cinnamon buns into roughly 6 to 8 pieces and scoop them into a large bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk together cream, eggs, sugar, and vanilla. Pour the mixture over the sliced-up buns. Toss well to combine and let it soak in. Mix in any additional add-ins you want at this point.

Line a loaf tin with parchment paper and tip the bread mixture in. Bake in the oven for 20-25 minutes or until set in the center and slightly golden brown. Unmold and allow to cool before slicing. Eat as-is or toast in a pan with brown butter. Top with maple syrup and enjoy!

Serves 4.

Roasted Tomato Gratin with Poached Eggs

Okay. I'm bringing out an oldie but goodie. It really is a great one for late summer when tomatoes are plentiful, but we get great tomatoes now year-round and this is good for a cold day. —Brad and Leanne Smoliak, Kitchen by Brad

4 T	extra virgin olive oil
2 c	good quality crusty baguette, hand-torn or cut into ¾-in. pieces
1 clove	garlic, smashed
3½ c	cherry tomatoes, whole
½ t	sugar
½ t	salt
	pepper, few good grinds
¼ c	white wine
1 oz	grated Parmesan
8	eggs
2 T	chiffonade/chopped basil

In a large sauté pan on low to medium heat add 3 T of the olive oil and heat, add the bread and toss to coat. Stirring regularly, toast until browned, about 5 minutes. Transfer to bowl. In the same sauté pan on medium-high heat add the rest of the olive oil and the tomatoes, garlic, sugar, salt and pepper. The idea is to blister the cherry tomatoes. This means the skin starts to break and the juices start to come out. When that is done add white wine and bring to a simmer over high heat for 1 full minute until flavours blend.

Add toasted baguette and transfer to gratin dish or shallow casserole dish. Sprinkle with Parmesan and put into a preheated 350°F oven for 10 minutes.

To poach eggs, have a large pot of water ready on simmer (at least 4" deep water). Add 1 T white vinegar to the water. Crack each egg in a ramekin first and then pour that egg into the water. Only cook 4 eggs at a time. ALWAYS use a timer. For a firm white and runny yolk you want to poach 3-4 minutes. (the Smo's like a 3- minute egg.). Once the timer goes off, use a slotted spoon to remove the poached egg and gently dab with paper towel. Put each egg on a slightly buttered piece of parchment. Each egg must have its own piece.

Once all the eggs are done, take the gratin out of the oven and slide the eggs off of the parchment on to the gratin. If the eggs got a little cool, the gratin will heat them quickly. Sprinkle with basil and serve immediately. This goes well with ham, sausage or good old-fashioned bacon, Irving's of course.

Serves 4.

Shakshuka all'Italiana

This dish reminds me of travelling in Morocco with an Italian twist. It will be on the Della Tavola menu once we launch brunch. —Elisa Zenari, Dalla Tavola Zenari

2 T	extra-virgin olive oil
2 cloves	garlic, thinly sliced
1 sprig	rosemary, chopped
1 c	cannellini beans, rinsed
1 c	tomato sauce (homemade or store bought)
½ c	heavy cream (or leftover cream sauce)
	kosher salt, freshly ground
	pepper to taste
2-4	large eggs
4 slices	prosciutto, or chopped sliced prosciutto
	flaky sea salt to finish

Heat oil in a medium skillet over medium heat. Cook the garlic and rosemary, tossing until garlic is golden brown and rosemary crisps up slightly but isn't browned, about 30 seconds for rosemary and 2 minutes for garlic.

Add the beans and tomato sauce to skillet and cook, stirring often, until coated, about 1 minute. Mix in cream, season with kosher salt and lots of pepper and bring to a simmer. Toss in prosciutto slices then crack eggs into bean mixture and season them with kosher salt. Cover (a baking sheet works great if you don't have a matching lid) and cook until the white parts of eggs are set but yolks are still runny, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat. Finish with sea salt if desired. Serve with bread.

Serves 2-4.

Noble Premium Bison Hash Cakes

This recipe will razzle dazzle your friends and family and become your new brunch favourite. To save time, braise the bison, bake the potato and roast the pepper on the day before, then it's rock and roll the day of. Recommended with eggs of your choice, or a delicious side salad. —Chef Liana Robberecht

Braised Bison

1 c	bison steak cubes
	canola oil for browning
1	carrot, rough chop
½	onion, rough chop
1	celery stalk, rough chop
1	garlic clove, smashed

Please see "Brunch" on page 10.

Brunch cocktails.

Mixologist James Grant shares some favourites.

Caesar

I like my Caesar smoky, rich and spicy. I think mezcal works best, but feel free to substitute gin, vodka, or even a peated whiskey.

- 1.5 oz mezcal
- 0.5 oz Ancho Reyes Verde chili liqueur
- 4 oz Walter Craft Caesar Mix or clamato
- 0.5 oz lemon juice
- 2 dashes Worcestershire
- 4 dashes Tapatio hot sauce

Rim a collins glass with caesar spice mix (recipe below), add ingredients, add ice and stir to combine and chill. Don't over-stir, as you don't want to overdilute the drink. Garnish with a stalk of celery.

Caesar Spice Mix

Combine the following in a non-reactive container:

- ½ c celery salt
- ¼ c white sugar
- 1 T cayenne pepper
- 1 T ancho chili powder

Seal container and shake to combine.

Irish Coffee

An all-time favourite of mine. Easy to prep and perfect for the holidays.

- 1.5 oz Irish whiskey (something rich and assertive like Power's or Jameson Crested)
- 0.5 oz rich brown sugar syrup (2 parts brown sugar and 1 part water, heated)
- 4 oz freshly brewed hot coffee

Combine all ingredients in a coffee mug or Irish coffee glass and stir briefly to combine. Top with freshly whipped heavy cream and freshly grated nutmeg.

Garibaldi

A perfect brunch cocktail that feels a little more exciting than the typical mimosa.

- 1.5 oz Campari
- 4.5 oz fresh-squeezed orange juice

Combine both ingredients in a blender and blend on high speed until aerated and fluffy. Pour into a collins glass and garnish with a wedge of orange. It's that easy. 🍹

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How to cook a sausage.

We asked Mike Popowich at Popowich Meats the best way to cook a sausage.

There are a few good ways to cook a sausage. I'll start with how not to—high heat. The biggest mistake people make is they crank up their barbecue or frypan and toss in the sausage. It will tighten up and make the casing chewy.

Instead, cook on low to medium heat on the barbecue or in a fry pan. Don't puncture them and turn them often. It will take a bit of time, however, you'll be rewarded with a nicely cooked casing and a moist sausage inside.

Or, fill a fry pan with water and bring it to a simmer (about half-way up the thickness of the sausage). Cook the sausage by turning it over in the water until it's about 2/3 of the way done, then empty the water and finish the sausage at medium heat with some oil.

Or, bake them in an oven at 350-375°F for about 20-30 minutes depending on the thickness of the sausage. You're shooting for an internal temp of 160°F. Let them rest for about 5 minutes before diving in.

Elyse Chatterton says the best way to eat a sausage is in a full English breakfast (black pudding or a Cumberland sausage, baked beans, grilled tomato, and fried egg). Irving's makes a great blood pudding that Elyse helped them develop. Cumberland is our best-selling sausage, but I like our fresh chorizo sausage in this dish. It has lots of flavour and medium heat to provide a bit of spice.

Chorizo with Peppers, Mushrooms, Onions and Eggs

Cook the sausage 2/3 of the way, then cut it up. Reserve.

Pan-fry some peppers, onions and mushrooms. Add the sausage and some eggs you scramble along with all the other goodies.

Finish with a splash of Meuwly's Fermented Chili sauce. 🌶️

Bunch

Continued from page 8.

¼ t	thyme	1 t	oyster sauce
2 whole	star anise	1 t	sugar
2	bay leaf	3 t	corn starch
1 c	red wine	½ t	grated ginger
	water to cover	1 T	whole egg

Brown bison in a medium sized pot, then add the rest of the ingredients. Add enough water to cover the steak cubes. Cover with a lid then simmer until the cubes are fork tender approximately 3-4 hours (or longer). When tender and cool enough, pull apart with two forks into strands. Dispose of the braising liquid.

Bison Hash Cakes

	braised bison, shredded		
1	russet potato, baked, peeled, cooled and grated		
8	green onion stalks, chopped finely (green part only)		
½ sm	white onion, sliced thinly		
2 T	garlic powder		
2 T	onion powder		
2 T	chipotle Tabasco		
1 T	Highwood Crossing canola oil		
1	red pepper, roasted, seeded and diced		
1	egg		
1 T	apple sauce		
dash	salt and pepper		
	canola oil for frying		

Preheat oven 350°F.

Mix all ingredients including the pulled bison together in a bowl. Divide into four and make four oval patties. Heat sauté pan and add canola oil. Place the bison hash cakes in the pan and cook for 2-3 minutes. Flip and repeat. Gently remove cakes, put on a sheet pan and cook in the preheated oven for 15 minutes. Remove from the pan, sprinkle with salt and serve.

Makes 4 cakes.

Malaysian Beef Satay on Toast with Fried Egg

The beef satay can be made ahead and frozen. Heat up before use. —chef Andrew Fung, XIX

Beef Satay

1 lb	sliced beef tenderloin
1 T	soy sauce

1 t	oyster sauce
1 t	sugar
3 t	corn starch
½ t	grated ginger
1 T	whole egg
1 t	red wine
1 t	dark soy sauce
1 t	corn starch
2 t	oil

Marinate the beef in the first six ingredients for 1-2 hours. Mix in the red wine, dark soy sauce, corn starch and oil.

Satay Sauce

2 T	minced shallot
1 t	minced garlic
¼ c	finely slice green onion
1 T	Lee Kum Kee brand Sa Cha sauce
1 T	Lee Kum Kee brand Curry sauce
150 ml	water
½ t	salt
1 t	soy sauce
1 T	oyster sauce
½ t	dark soy sauce
3 t	sugar
1 T	slurry (corn starch and cold water)

Heat 3 tablespoons vegetable oil in a pan and sear beef tenderloin until golden brown. Reserve. Sweat the shallot, garlic and onion until soft. Add the Lee Kum Kee sauces and blend. Add the water, oyster sauce, the soy and dark soy and sugar. Add the slurry until you have nice sauce consistency. Add the beef back into the sauce and season to taste. Set beef satay aside.

Toast

2 slices	sourdough bread
2	eggs

Pan fry the bread with olive oil until golden brown. Fry eggs sunny side up until egg whites are crispy. Set aside.

To serve:

Lay toast on the plate. Spoon beef satay on the top. Lay crispy egg on top of the beef satay. Garnish with fresh herbs (cilantro, basil, Italian parsley) tossed with extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper to taste.

Serves 2.

Workshop's Chicken & Waffles

This has to be one of my favourite indulgent dishes on any of our menus. This isn't exactly something I would eat every day, but it is definitely something worth consuming a week's worth of calories in one sitting. It's become so popular that when we opened for brunch at The Greenhouse at Victoria we just had to bring it there too! While the dish at the restaurant features a couple of poached eggs, rich hollandaise, and house-made hot sauce, I'm only going to focus on the two key recipes here, the fried chicken and the waffles. I'm assuming if you're ambitious enough to prepare this dish, you're likely skilled enough to poach an egg or whip up some hollandaise. This is a good combination dish, that both items could be prepared separately.

Let's start with the chicken. I like to use Morinville Colony chickens for this. We usually use the breast for entrees and save the leg for fried chicken. Use your preferred chicken, and your favourite cuts. I like the drum and the thigh, because they are juicy and tend to cook a little more quickly. I elect to brine the chicken. Listen, if you don't want to have to prepare this a day ahead, then don't sweat it, but, if you want amazingly moist and delicious chicken, then do the right thing. —Paul Shufelt, exec chef Workshop Eatery, Woodshed, the Greenhouse at Victoria.

Brined chicken

1	chicken, cut up into 9 pieces
1	lemon, halved
2	bay leaf
4	sprigs fresh parsley
4	sprigs fresh thyme
2 T	honey
2 cloves	garlic, peeled, smashed
5 T	kosher salt
1.6 lt.	water

Make the brine: in a pot combine all of the ingredients, except the chicken. Bring to a simmer and let the salt and honey dissolve. Let cool completely, then pour over the chicken and ensure it is all submerged. Let the chicken brine for at least 2 hours and up to 12, but no longer than that. Once brined, remove and refrigerate the chicken until ready to cook, and discard brine.

Waffle Batter

2 $\frac{1}{3}$ c	pastry flour
$\frac{1}{4}$ c	malt powder
1 T	sugar
2 t	dry active yeast
1 t	salt
1 t	baking soda
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ c	milk
1 T	butter
1	egg

Place all of the dry ingredients in a bowl and whisk to combine.

In a pot, slowly heat the milk and butter, just enough to melt the butter. Let cool slightly (this is the key, do not let the milk be over 100°F when adding to the dry ingredients or you'll kill the yeast). When cool enough, add the milk and the egg into the dry ingredients, whisking well, until smooth. Let stand at room temperature about 20-30 minutes.

Chicken Dredge

2 c	flour
2 T	garlic powder
2 T	onion powder
1 t	cayenne
1 t	paprika
2 t	salt
1 t	pepper

Place all of the dry ingredients in a bowl and whisk to combine well.

To finish the dish:

2 c	buttermilk
	oil for deep fryer (preferably in a proper deep fryer)
	oil for waffle maker

Preheat the deep fryer to 350°F.

Preheat the waffle maker to medium-high (about a 7 or 8 out of 10).

Place the buttermilk in another small bowl, next to the dredge.

Starting with the larger pieces, take the brined chicken and place in the chicken dredge, coat all sides, then tap off excess flour and set aside. Repeat this process until all pieces are dredged.

Quickly take a piece of chicken, place it in the buttermilk and coat all sides, then quickly back into the flour, coating all sides again, and then gently place piece into the fryer.

Fry the chicken in batches, so as not to overcrowd your fryer. Large pieces will take 12-14 minutes, smaller pieces 8-10 minutes, but I highly recommend using a probe thermometer for safety. 180°F internal temperature is a nice safe number.

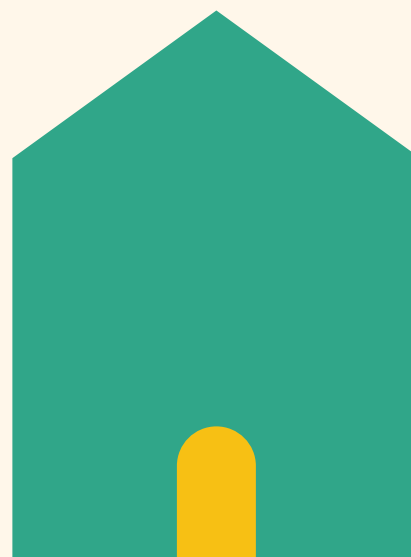
While the chicken is frying, lightly grease your waffle maker and then place a generous ladle of batter in, covering all of the maker. Close the lid and let cook until crispy on both sides, about 3-4 minutes, depending on your maker.

Serve the fried chicken and waffles with some hot sauce and real maple syrup and you'll be in heaven!

Serves 4-6. 🍷

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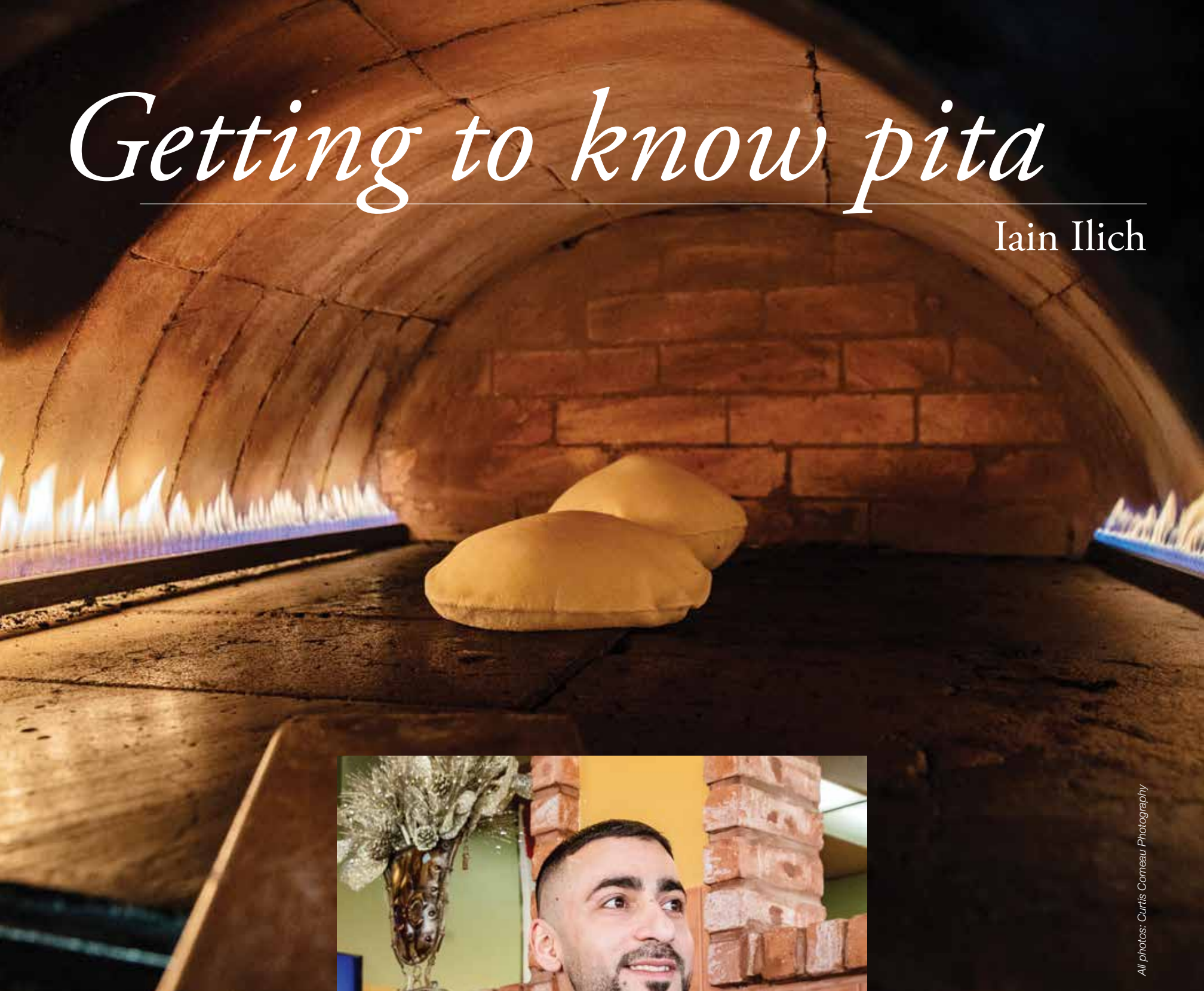
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10940 120th St, Edmonton

Getting to know pita

Iain Ilich



Writing about pita is a surprisingly difficult task for one simple reason: there is no one type of pita bread and everyone has an opinion.

“Not even from country to country, but from town to town within country to country, it differs,” explains Wajih Araji, general manager at Al Salam, a popular southside Edmonton restaurant and pita bakery. They serve a wide range of clients who hail from a wide range of backgrounds—Lebanese, Palestinian, Egyptian—all with their own views on pita. For many, it’s not just an occasional treat, but a daily staple. If some cultures

fawn over perfect baguettes made with the perfect starter, others are just as devoted to the simple yet extraordinary pita.

The most common type features a hollow interior space that can be easily pulled apart and stuffed. Then there is the pocketless Greek style, which, as the name suggests, lacks the pocket. It is generally puffier and is perfect for folding around souvlaki or cutting up for dipping. And that’s not even counting the huge number of similar flatbreads that could easily be counted as a type of pita.

Top: pitas in the oven. Above: Al Salam general manager Wajih Araji

All photos: Curtis Comeau Photography

Strictly speaking, pita is a flatbread. Like many breads, it's generally made with yeast, water, flour, salt and sugar. What makes pita special is the technique. It's rolled out fairly thin, then cooked quickly at a relatively high temperature, either in a pan or in an oven. This burst of heat causes the water in the dough to turn to steam, making it puff up impressively as it cooks from both inside and out, resulting in the typical hollow inside pocket structure that can be used for filling. Depending on how they're made, they can be small and puffy or flat and easier to use for wraps.

"The most popular one would be the traditional Lebanese pita bread," says Araj of his own shop's offerings. "It comes in three different sizes: 10-inch, three-and-a-half and seven-and-a-half inch. It comes in white and whole wheat. Not only do we sell it retail to our customers, we also supply to donair shops and a lot of grocery markets. Anyone that uses pita in their dish, per se, they usually get a hold of us and we supply them here in Edmonton."

A little old world, a lot of new

When you walk through the doors at Al Salam, don't be fooled by the pita operation in the front, where they make and bake pita by hand. In the back, behind the scenes, there's a full commercial bakery facility to meet the sizeable demand for fresh pita in the Edmonton area.

"On an average day, when it's not too busy and not too slow, we'll probably make 2,000 pieces of pita," says Araj. "It's a lot of pita bread."

"The pita that you'll see on the shelf, that one is probably 70 to 80 per cent automated," he explains.

Their crew of about seven people comes in at 5:00am to make the dough by hand. After that, the process becomes more mechanical, and sounds just a little bit like Willy Wonka's factory. The machinery cuts the dough into portions, flattens each piece, places it on a conveyer and sends it off through a very hot oven that is filled with flames.

"We don't turn on the heater during winter. We just light up the bakery and that gets it burning in here," Araj laughs. "That oven is at 800 degrees, so it's piping hot. The pita goes through

for something like five or seven seconds. And after that, it's on another 40-foot conveyer that takes it all around the space that we make it in, just to cool it down."

From there, they manually count and pack the pitas while they're still warm. "If you come and buy pita fresh in the mornings, if you come before 9:30am you'll still see the steam in the bag," he says.

The freshest pita you'll ever have

For those who want a taste of pure pita heaven, right out of the oven, you can buy fresh pita on the spot at Al Salam, baked to order. The pieces of flattened, stretched dough go into a stone pizza oven that's hot enough to singe your eyebrows off (there are stories). About 40 seconds is all it takes to get the job done. As soon as they're done, they're yanked from the oven, placed briefly onto racks then into the bag, ready to be taken home.

While they make fresh pita at the front of the shop all day, it's still subject to availability.

"We operate a restaurant as well as the bakery, and that baked to order bread we use for the restaurant side," he explains. "Sometimes we'll get an order for 100 plates out of nowhere, which requires 100 pieces of bread. But 95 per cent of the time, it's available. But the five per cent of the time it isn't we get really scolded for it, so we always try to keep it available. People from the north side come into the south just to buy it. People from Leduc. People from Wetaskiwin come. People can drive all the way from Red Deer, sometimes without calling, just to pick it up, so we always try to keep it as available as possible."

During times like these, when money is tight and comfort food is helping us all get through, it's nice to know that the little luxuries don't have to break the bank.

"It's super affordable," says Araj. "\$3.50 for five pieces baked fresh in front of your eyes. For the other one, we sell it for \$2.25 for six pieces. Destroys grocery market prices. And we're local." 🍌

Iain has spent the past nine months slowly embracing life as a shut-in.



Great things to do with pita

Sometimes you buy a fresh bag of pita with one thing in mind, but you wind up with extra. Or maybe you love pita and just need a good excuse to pick some up and use it. Here are some easy ideas.

Wraps

Flour tortillas are great and tend to keep for longer than pita, but have you ever made a wrap with a pita still warm from the oven? Some shells can be pulled apart and filled, then wrapped. Flimsier shells or those that have torn are better to just fill and roll like a donair. They're also fantastic for packing in a school lunch. You're on notice, sandwiches.

Homemade Falafel

The best way to eat falafel is in a pita wrap. Make falafel at home from scratch and customize it to your liking. If you don't have a ton of time, you can use a pre-mixed ingredient pack that you hydrate and cook, or you can buy pre-made falafel balls in the vegetarian aisle of your favourite supermarket.

Freeze Them

While pitas are meant to be eaten fresh, preferably within three days of being made, you can pop any extras in the freezer and they'll hold up well for a month or two.

Pita Pizzas

An excellent option for pitas that are maybe a few days old. Let your kids grate the cheese, spread some sauce on, add some toppings, then top with the cheese and bake. It's a fun way to experiment with different pizza toppings without having to commit to using dough from scratch.

Bread Crumbs

Pop it in a blender, give it a whirl and you're good to go.

Pita Chips

When all else fails, you can turn those extra unused pita shells into pita chips. Season as you like or keep them plain. Just pay attention if you're baking them in the oven, as they can go from perfect to burned in no time.

Kitchen Experiments?

"You can wrap a Twix bar in pita bread and deep fry it," Araj says, noting they tried this the other day. "It's a little too sweet for me, but some people prefer stuff like that."



Rita and Rudolf Trossen are wonderful

small producers in Kinheim-Kindel (middle-Mosel). They have been biodynamic since 1978. We met them on a trip to the Mosel not so long ago, and the wines are now available in Alberta via the small but mighty import agency Garneau Block. So happy about that. The wines all share a sense of vitality and clarity and appropriate alcohol (no 15 per cent ABV bruisers here). The **Trossecco Pet Nat** is fun and lively, slightly sweet, ideal for Prosecco lovers. The **Purellus Pur'us** (Langfuhr vineyard, grey slate) is a more serious bubble, with deep and vibrant flavours of honey and apple. It's a gorgeous rosy colour too. There are several Riesling in this shipment including the sprightly **Schieferblume** (flower of the slate), a blend of four different vineyards and the single vineyard **Madonna Pur'us**, glorious.

Let's not forget the reds. The **Trossen Rot** (Dornfelder and Pinot Noir) is a generous wine, suitable for hearty dishes. The **Pinot Noir Pur'us** is a silky-textured, gentle and delicious Pinot. This vintage is made by carbonic maceration (grapes are not crushed, the initial fermentation happens within the grape) allowing for superb flavours and balanced acidity. All the wines are fermented naturally and the Pur'us wines have no intervention at all, no sulphur added, and are unfinned and unfiltered. Check out the full selection and find your favourites at Color de Vino, Highlands Liquor, 121 Jasper Liquor and other fine wine shops; in Calgary at Bricks Wine, Kensington Wine Market and Vine Arts.

The Hungarian grapes Furmint, Hárslevelű

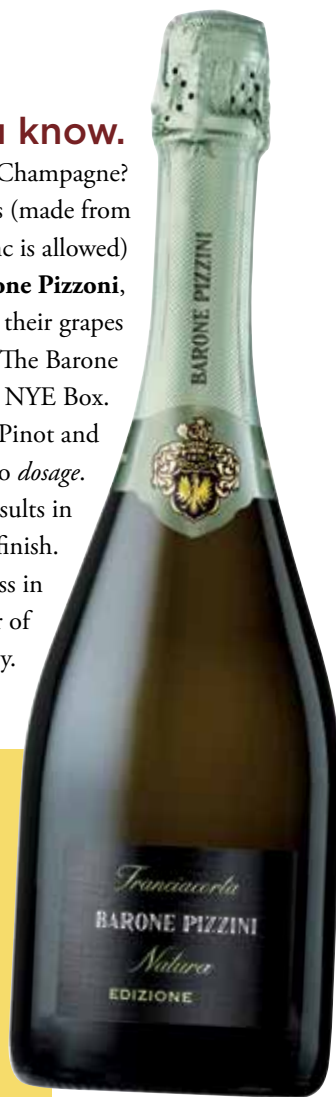
and the red Kadarka (sometimes called Gamza) not well known yet make some wonderful wines you will want to get to know, from Zsirai, a small sustainable producer new to our market. All the wines are well priced, actually, for the quality are bargains, especially the dessert wines. The **Tokaji Furmint** is fragrant with honey and lemon zest, has a lovely beeswaxy texture, a slightly salty, lemony character and a long finish. Chardonnay lovers, give this wine a try. The **Tokaji Hárslevelű** is a little spicy, meatier, with some weight and lots of freshness. The **Villányi Múzsza Kadarka** is a fetching cherry colour, super fresh. Gamay-ish aroma, has presence.

Then there are the sweet wines. The Tokaj region has long been known as the home of incredibly luscious, long-lasting sweet wines painstakingly made by hand. The beauty of these dessert wines lies in their balance. Although they are decadently sweet, they are always fresh in the mouth due to the naturally high acidity. The 2012 **Tokaji Szamorodni** has beautifully complex spice notes, well-integrated sweetness and a finish that goes on for minutes. Have this with the leftover Christmas cake. The Aszu category of Tokaj wines have grapes affected by noble rot added to the must, giving the the wines even more complex and unique flavours. They are rare wines and last for decades. The **2009 Tokaji Aszú 6 Puttonyos** is heady, yet the freshness is astounding.



Prosecco you know.

But do you know Franciacorta? Italy's answer to Champagne? They are high-quality traditional sparkling wines (made from Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and some Pinot Blanc is allowed) from a small hilly region in Lombardia. **Barone Pizzoni**, one of the best producers in the region, grow their grapes organically and use sustainable practices. The Barone Franciacorta wines were featured in Bar Bricco's NYE Box. New to Alberta is the **Brut Nature**. The blend of Pinot and Chardonnay grown on limestone-rich soil has no *dosage*. It has spent up to 40 month on the lees which results in a bone dry, elegant wine, structured, with a long finish. The beautiful acidity contributes to the freshness in the mouth. Just a delicious wine. If you are a lover of bubbles this is must try.



Solo cocktails for solo times.

Since we are spending so much time alone, it's individual cocktails to the rescue. And the **Fort Distillery** make delicious bottled cocktails. There are five available, two made with the Fort's craft vodka: the **Shaft** (Alberta honey and cold brew coffee) and the **Cosmo** (BC raspberries, cranberries, citrus). The **Daiquiri** is made with the Fort's cane spirit, lime and sugar. And they have two **Old Fashioneds**: the **Classic**, with the Fort's whisky, brown sugar, aromatic bitters and orange and the **Maple Old Fashioned** with Fort's gin, aromatic bitters and Ontario maple syrup. Shake and pour over ice, and it's done. No muss no fuss. Recycle the glass bottle and aluminum cap. Available at Color de Vino, Sherbrooke and other fine shops. 🍷

All prices are approximate. Not all wines and spirits in all shops.

Mary Bailey is the editor of The Tomato.



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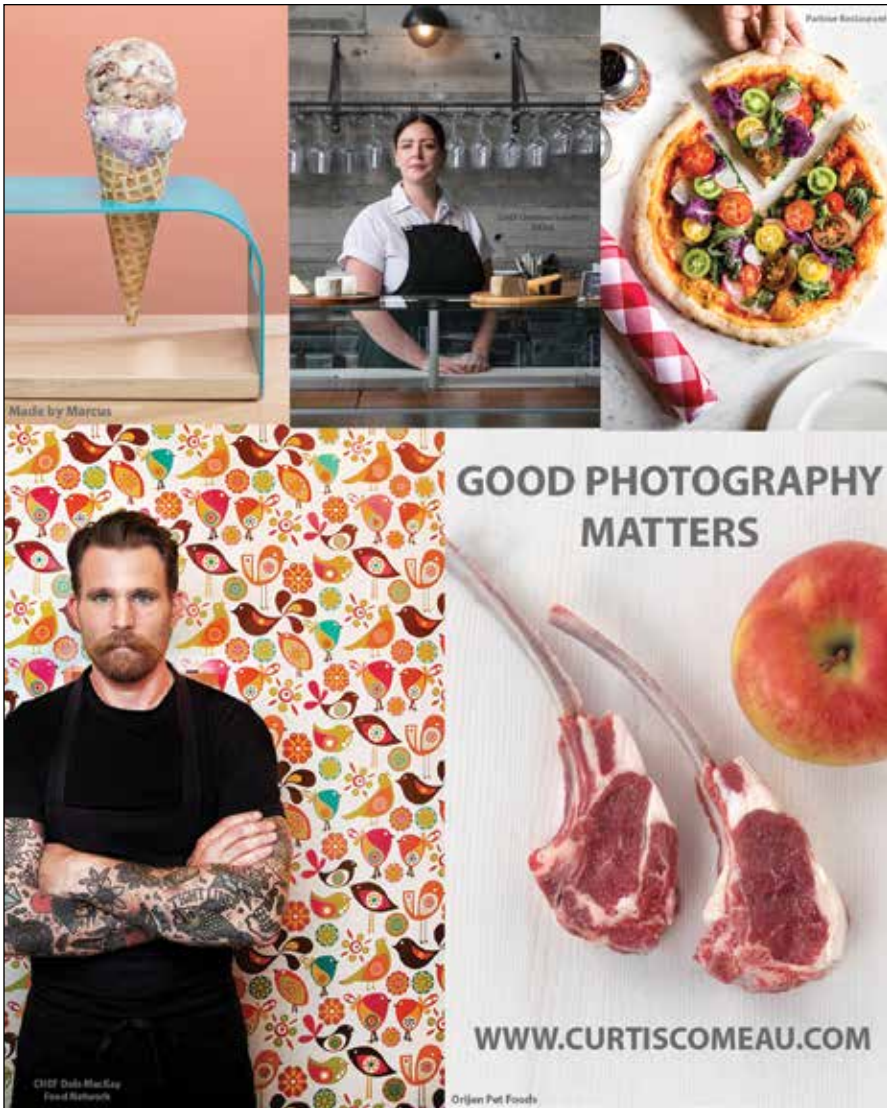
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Beer Guy

Brewing love

The couple that brews together, stays together.

I thought this one evening in the before times, when we gathered in the taproom of Endeavour Brewing in St. Albert to celebrate a 25th wedding anniversary. Family and friends packed elbow to elbow, talking and laughing loudly across long, narrow tables, sharing beers—‘Here, try the saison, so good’—hugging, high-fiving. Remember this? Oh my god I miss it.

I looked towards the bar and there behind the beer taps were Endeavour co-owners, Matt and Georgia Atkins. They looked like proud parents, beaming at each other and the cheerful crowd. And in a way, they are parents, married for 19 years, birthing the brewery in 2018 and seeing their baby grow into a delightful youth. They had fallen in love with craft beer culture at a Houston brewery and vowed to bring that culture home. Looking around the busy taproom I knew they had been successful, creating a community space full of conversation fuelled by great craft beer.

The loss of community when shared spaces like taprooms had to close has been one of the toughest hits from Covid-19. Community is a common thread that runs through craft beer, and it is especially notable at breweries with couples in charge. Partners Andrew Bullied and Erica O’Gorman founded Annex Ales to make people happy by bringing them together in a community space. Launching in 2016, they told Haydon Dewes (now of Cabin Brewing) that, “we feel that we can effect change by making beer.” Born Colorado Brewing co-founders Wade Brown and Erin McQuitty say “community is the backbone of everything we do” and that their taproom “is a place where strangers become friends over good brews.”

For many couples, the pandemic has meant working from home and sharing the same workspace, gaining an appreciation for what their partners do all

day (‘Did you know you pace a lot? Like, a LOT.’). I know now that when my wife said she spends all day in meetings she was not kidding. This is old hat to brewing couples like Patrick Schnarr and Krysten Arlt of Outcast Brewing. Like other beer couples, they have different but complementary roles, with Patrick the brewer and Krysten the taproom manager. But with three young kids, working together is more like working apart as they stagger hours so one of them is always at the brewery and one is always at home with the kids. Parker and Andrea Pysyk of S.Y.C. Brewing say “you get to know your partner in a different way by working together”. Andrea notes they both “have more grey hairs but also more wrinkles from laughing”. Wade and Erin of Born Colorado Brewing told me working together means, “you see the best and worst in each other, which makes us closer as a couple”. Matt and Georgia of Endeavour said, “Starting our business was the most difficult thing either of us have ever done. We rely on each other. Most days we are best friends, other days...well, we make up quickly.”

Building a brewery together is a test which not all relationships pass. There’s the happy story of Neil and Lavonne Herbst, whose marriage survived and thrived during the 25 years they co-owned Alley Kat Brewing. Jason and Laurie Griffiths of Folding Mountain have been together 23 years. But there’s also the story of a Calgary-area couple who broke up under the strain of brewery-owning. All the couples I talked to said it isn’t easy but they have no regrets. Parker at Outcast said, “It isn’t as fun as you’d think and it’s going to be hard. But do it.” Matt at Endeavour gave some advice: “Be prepared for a lot of struggles but perseverance is the key. Eventually you will win. The best part of owning a brewery is seeing people come in, make new friends and try new beers. It is worth it.”

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TOMATO bite

Love is brewing six pack

Alberta beer couples recommend love potions sure to win the heart of your Valentine.



S.Y.C. Good as Gold Dortmund Lager, Edmonton

Parker and Andrea Pysyk, part-owners and co-founders, picked this as their favourite of all the dozens of great beers S.Y.C. has produced over the years. The Dortmund style balances the sweetness and malt of the Helles style with the hop crispness of the Pilsner style. Good as Gold hits the balance perfectly - a malty, golden lager with spicy hop bite.

Folding Mountain Afternoon Social Hazy IPA, Hinton

Jason and Laurie Griffiths. Jason is co-owner and co-founder, Laurie a designer who helped design the spectacular Folding Mountain Taproom. Jason suggests this bright and tropical hazy IPA will remind you of raising a glass on a sunny afternoon with the best of friends, sharing stories and laughter. Cross your fingers and hope that time will come again.



Born Colorado Arm Candy Milk Stout, Lacombe

Wade Brown and Erin McQuitty, co-founders and co-owners. Popular since day one, Arm Candy won the Gold Medal at the 2020 Alberta Brewing Awards as the best stout in Alberta. Arm Candy is a creamy, medium-bodied milk stout with notes of chocolate and espresso and a touch of sweetness from the added milk sugar (lactose).

Annex Zenosyne North American Black Ale, Calgary

Andrew Bullied and Erica O’Gorman, co-founders and co-owners. Zenosyne is the sense that time keeps going faster, entirely appropriate as the name for a Covid-era beer. A black ale or Cascadian dark ale balances dark maltiness with hop bitterness. Zenosyne is dark in colour with a light body and features fruit and pine on the nose with a subtle roasty taste.



Outcast The Forgetful Brewer Double IPA, Calgary

Patrick Schnarr and Krysten Arlt, co-founders and co-owners. The story of the name comes from when Patrick had a lot on his plate as a new father and forgot to order enough malt for a batch of Outcast’s breakfast stout. He did have copious hops at hand, so brewed this monster of a double IPA, redolent of grapefruit and pine and hiding its 8.2% ABV dangerously well.

Endeavour Daily Jolt Porter, St. Albert

Matt and Georgia Atkins, co-founders and co-owners, share a love of the outdoors. The name Daily Jolt comes from a time hiking the Iceline Trail in Yoho near the Daly Glacier when they got caught in a serious thunderstorm, with a bolt of lightning striking nearby gave them a jolt. Daily Jolt is nicely balanced, with a complex malt profile plus a touch of citrusy hops.



Peter Bailey runs a community space where people gather: a public library. It’s like a taproom but without the beer. He’s on Twitter and Instagram as @Libbarbarian.



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Drinks

Let's get hygge: warm drinks for cold days

Stock up on thermoses. This is how we stay warm this winter. We may be outside six feet apart but we will be able to enjoy a hot drink (with or without alcohol) with friend and family.

Glühwein (Mulled Wine)

The best mulled wine ever was at a Christmas Market in Munich. Maybe it was the setting or the cute mug you were able to keep, but it was so delicious—not bitter, not too sweet, just warm and winery. Use something fruity with ripe tannins. Don't let it boil. No overt oak. Gamay, Grenache, Syrah blends or Tempranillo would be great, or you could try a rosé for something different. Think cinnamon sticks, cloves, star anise or cardamom and black pepper. Or, try the Zinter Brown Mulled Wine Spice Mix (Italian Centre Shops, Sunterra, Save-On), it's local and it's really good.

Adapted from a Punch recipe for glögg.

Amari Caldo

Amari are the Italian aromatized wines drunk after dinner to aid digestion. Every region makes their own style. We can thank Daniel Costa at Corso 32 who introduced regular Edmontonians to the whole concept. He was the first to encourage drinking amari and stocks a wide selection for after dinner. Cibo Bistro has a good selection too. To buy for home, check out the amari section at Color de Vino. Nonino with its citrusy flavours would be delicious, Nardini is a classic, Montenegro and Averno are easy to find. Or try the less-known Alpine amari such as Braulio, with notes of pine and juniper, it's like you are drinking the forest—how wonderful after a walk in the woods.

three parts amaro (we used the excellent Antico Amaro di Serravalle from Piedmont)

five parts hot water

750 ml red wine (we used El Bonhomme, Cune Crianza would also be good choice)

1 c aquavit

1 c port (we used Taylor's 10 yr old Tawny)

1 c water

1/2 c brown sugar

3 sticks cinnamon

6 cloves, whole

5 pods cardamom, crushed

2 star anise

Pour into a glass and twist lemon peel over. Easy peasy.



Mulled wine, Amanda LeNeve photo

Mary Bailey

1 orange peel, whole
1-inch fresh ginger, peeled
1 bean vanilla, split lengthwise

Add all ingredients to a large sauce pot. Bring to almost a boil, then reduce heat to low. Do not let it boil. Simmer over low heat for 30 minutes. Strain and serve into individual glasses.

Makes 5-7 servings.

Hot Chocolate

Most mixes are way too sweet and have too much stuff in them, but a good one is Baru in a fun striped cylinder. You can make your own with cocoa powder, milk and a mug. The key is to make a paste first with a ¼ c milk and the cocoa powder, then add the rest of the milk. Whisking gives you some frothiness. Top with whipped cream, marshmallows—the kids might like their hot choc garnished with a candy cane. Tip in a splash of brandy, Grande Marnier or peppermint schnapps to make an adult beverage. In the name of research I also had a beautiful hot chocolate at Cococo on 124 Street, similar to the following:

Parisian Hot Chocolate

Adapted from a recipe by David Lebovitz. Use the best quality chocolate you can find to make this luscious hot chocolate. It improves if made ahead and allowed to sit for a few hours. Rewarm before serving.

2 c whole milk
130g bittersweet chocolate, best-quality, finely chopped
2 T light brown sugar, optional

Heat the milk in a medium-sized saucepan. Once the milk is warm, remove from heat and whisk in the chocolate, stirring until the chocolate is melted. For a thick hot chocolate, return to heat and cook at a very low boil for about 2-3 minutes, whisking constantly. Be careful and keep an eye on the mixture, as it may boil up a bit during the first moments.

Taste and add brown sugar if desired. Serve warm in demitasse cups, small coffee or tea cups. Garnish with a sprinkle of Maldon or other good flaky salt.

Makes 4 Parisian-sized servings.

Caffè Corretto

Corrected coffee—espresso with alcohol. Ask for one at the Italian Centre Shop cafés and you will get an espresso with a slug of Sambuca. Ramazzotti (sometimes called black sambuca) is very good in a caffè corretto or you could try grappa or eau de vie.

Hot Toddy

The lobby bar at the Marriott makes an excellent hot toddy—easy to make at home too. I would use Eau Claire's new Rupert's Whisky, it's round and rich flavour and reasonable price make it a natural.

Add an ounce of whisky (or bourbon) to a cup of hot water. Add a squeeze of fresh lemon juice, some honey (smoked honey would be fun) and a cinnamon stick and star anise. Stir and serve.

For the garnish, you could go full mixologist by using dried orange peel (or a circle of dried orange) then burn it over the glass.

Makes 1.

Hot Buttered Rum

My Dad would sometimes make hot buttered rum after winter sports.

He would boil water, add a healthy splash of rum, add a teaspoon of brown sugar, stir, grate on some nutmeg and a jolt of butter on top. He would make it for the kids with apple juice instead of the rum.

Use a high-quality rum such as Appleton's or Mount Gay. Your ratio of rum to water is one-part alcohol to six parts hot water.

Remember that alcohol doesn't really warm you up, so be careful to not overdo it and don't drink and drive. 🚫

The Tomato editor Mary Bailey stayed warm researching this article.

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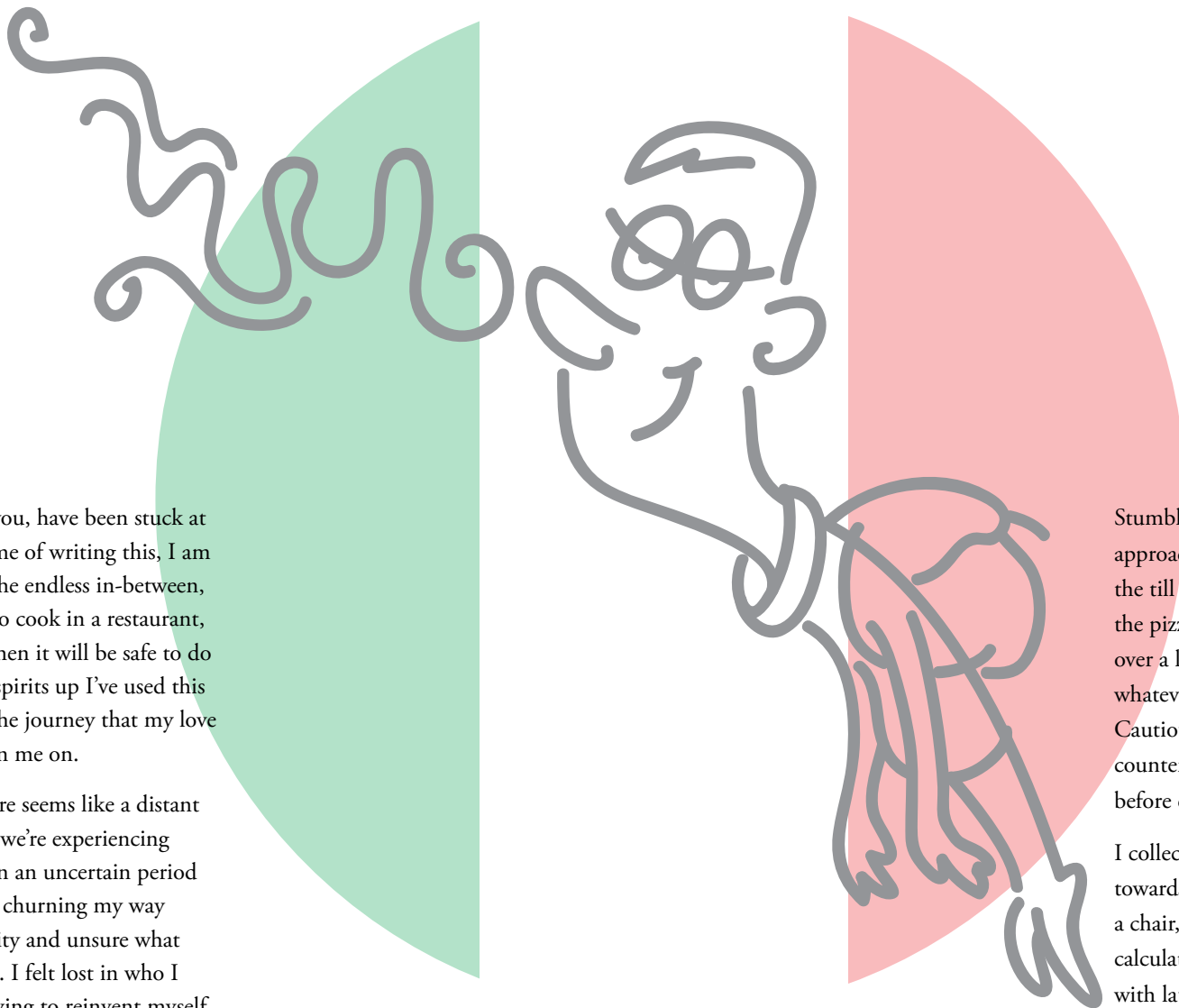
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A young man's quest

Dylan Greenhough



I, like many of you, have been stuck at home. At the time of writing this, I am still existing in the endless in-between, eager to return to cook in a restaurant, but unsure of when it will be safe to do so. To keep my spirits up I've used this time to retrace the journey that my love of food has taken me on.

My initial venture seems like a distant echo from what we're experiencing today, and was in an uncertain period of my life. I was churning my way through university and unsure what it was leading to. I felt lost in who I was, tirelessly trying to reinvent myself with a rotating cast of new hobbies and declarations. In the midst of that mania, I decided that I wanted to become a *pizzaiola*. Never being one to do things half-way I booked a solo trip to Italy, believing that I might uncover some ancient culinary secret that would kickstart my career before I knew how to hold a knife.

A few weeks later I landed in Torino. A short bus ride from the airport took me to the central metro station, a magnificent, imposing building crowded with strangers trying to escape the hot summer sun. People shouted at one another in Italian, puffing cigarettes and bumping past me, trying to catch a train or a bus or a criminal, I couldn't tell. To escape the noise, I veered off from the directions to my lodging, opting instead

to explore the city for something to eat. I eventually stumbled across a little restaurant with a rustic sign swinging in the window, assuring me that they carried something tasty.

Bursting through the glass doors, an unexpected gust of cold air made me shiver. The employees watched with lazy suspicion as I scanned the room, searching for clues that would tell me how to proceed.

Then I saw it.

Glowing behind a glass window, a piece of pizza called out to me.

Waddling towards the counter, my cause was interrupted by a crash from behind me. I turned around to see a cart of pamphlets scattered across the floor, my backpack having knocked it

over when I lurched across the room. An employee started shouting at me, crawling around on his hands and knees to clean up my mess. Instead of helping him I ran out the door, the baker's barks bellowing behind me as I retreated into the unfamiliar city.

I put several blocks between me and the commotion before pausing to catch my breath. Having fumbled over the first hurdle on what was supposed to be the adventure of a lifetime, I was crestfallen, unsure if I could survive this city alone.

My anxiety was interrupted by a stranger's hearty laughter, cackling from the shade of an unseen corner. Looking up from my misery, I saw the stranger watching me between sips of beer under the canopy of a food truck.

Stumbling across the street, I approached the vendor. The woman at the till eyed me curiously. I pointed at the pizza in the window and handed over a large fold of bills, happy to pay whatever it cost to fill my aching belly. Cautiously, she slid my feed across the counter, giving me one last funny look before disappearing.

I collected my spoils and slithered towards the open patio. Collapsing in a chair, I devoured the pizza in quick, calculated bites. The stranger erupted with laughter, rubbing his belly and shouted "much better!" I smiled back weakly before sinking into my seat, my mission fulfilled, my mind at ease.

From that first meal I began to recognize that something was different about the food I was eating. Not just in taste, but in the surrounding culture too. It encouraged me to take my time and breathe the air. I was fascinated, indoctrinated, eager to uncover whatever secrets there were to uncover.

After exploring Italy for a few more weeks, I went to Barcelona, where I met two French travellers who invited me to join them in a whirlwind tour of France. I accepted, that youthful impulsivity disregarding any dangers that might await, with our destination set for Ablain-Saint-Nazaire.

We pulled up to my companions' home in the early afternoon, settling ourselves around a picnic table in the front yard. Our hosts presented a feast of vegetables, bread, cheese and beef in the shade of an ancient walnut tree. First, I reached for a plate of tomatoes, dappled with olive oil, fresh basil shingled across their flesh. I took a bite and disappeared into the taste, a fruity, herbaceous kiss plucked fresh from the garden, still warm from the gentle summer sun.

As I chewed, I felt something new open inside. By slowing down and paying attention to what I was eating, the rest of my mind slowed down, too. I felt at peace.

When I bumped back down in Edmonton, it wasn't long before I felt a new passion calling, telling me that the next place I needed to go was a professional kitchen. But where to begin? I knew next to nothing about Edmonton's current food scene, just that Biera was the best, Butternut Tree the most adventurous and all of it was thanks to Corso 32. It wasn't long before I started washing dishes at Woodwork in exchange for an on-the-job education in cooking. This was only the beginning, though, and over the following year, I found myself under the direction of three distinct chefs, each one sharing a piece of wisdom with me.

First, I fought alongside David Leeder, a Noma ex-pat, and the cook who gave me my first job. His lesson came as a passionate fit during the height of my first service. During the rush, a piece of fish was returned to the kitchen, the diners having complained about its liberal seasoning. Leeder eyed the dish with ferocious contempt, an intensity unwavering by the chits piling up and pouring out of the printer. After tasting it, he threw up his hands, stormed to the walk-in, and shouted vulgarities as creative as the dishes on his menu. Elbow deep in somebody else's spit, I looked down into the sudsy water and locked eyes with my greasy reflection, an unfamiliar comfort swelling in my chest. I'd finally found my people, romantics, idealists, willing to go to war every night for the love of their profession, a place where the only limitation was how dedicated you were to the work.

Next, I worked with Tony Tipping, a soft-spoken skate-boarder tasked with taking over Woodwork after Leeder had left. Tony taught me that success was defined by the cleanliness of your station. Through his war on clutter, he demonstrated the importance of organization, proving that having everything in its place was the only way to survive when the orders started to overwhelm the line. Tony's discipline was balanced with a light-hearted love to nourish others, teaching me that, at the end of the day, after the dishes are done, the most important thing is to make sure that you're having fun.

Finally, in my most recent excursion, I worked under Ben Staley at Yarrow. Ben's kitchen was a constant flip between finesse and frenzy as he swam against the chaotic current of opening a new restaurant, his passion flaring hotter than anything I'd seen before. We spent many late nights together, drinking heavily, trying to keep up the high from surviving another service. Through those conversations, captured between his quiet anger and cacophonous celebrations, I saw what it costs to pursue your dreams with unbridled passion.

Although my culinary journey has just begun, I've accepted that it's on an indefinite pause for now. Just like that first taste of pizza in Torino, or the sultry lunch I shared in France, this pandemic has pushed me to reflect: by slowing down to take in the world around us, we can lead an enriching, honest existence, one that affords the freedom to enjoy the fruits of life wherever we find them.

I don't possess the expertise to speculate about what'll happen to our city's hospitality once we reach the other side, but I place my faith in the optimism I learned while working with cooks, who, when the prep wasn't done and the orders started pouring in, demonstrated an innate will to fight against the rising tide, ensuring that we'd always survive 'til the end of service, no matter what the world threw our way. 🍷

Dylan Greenhough is a writer, cook, and real-piece-of-work livin' little in the City of Champs. He can't touch his toes and sleeps in a microwave.



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Hilton Dinner, Bon Ton Bakery, remembered

• Mary Bailey •

Hilton Dinner passed away November 14 with his wife Michelle by his side. He was a big part of the food community in Edmonton and he will be missed.

I first met Hilton when he was with the Bagel Bin. Hilton knew bread, he knew flour and he knew business. Bon Ton was the subject of many articles in *The Tomato*, and of course I tried to sell him ads, with varying levels of success. When I was co-chair of the Edmonton Food Council I asked Hilton to consider joining the council (he did). I thought it could benefit from his straightforward, sensible and compassionate way of looking at things. Family and community came first with Hilton. You always knew where you stood, he was direct and kind. I will miss him and his point of view.

Gerry Semler, managing partner of the Bon Ton Bakery worked with Hilton for 15 years. “I met Hilton about 25 years ago. I was working at Debajis at the time; we bought pastries from the Bagel Bin.

“We were acquaintances first, then friends, then colleagues. What was special about our relationship? He was a great mentor, a lot of wisdom shared and taught. At first it was more of a teaching piece, then it evolved into more of a partnership piece. We had such different skills sets, but we worked together closely, Bon Ton is a wonderful place to do that.

“When I started 15 years ago, we had 16 employees, now we have 28. We were able to do that growth together. He was most proud of not only the success of the bakery but the family atmosphere. He said we were a bakery of the world—10-13 countries are represented here—people from every continent coming together to build a successful bakery. That was his biggest joy, those relationships.

“It hasn’t been easy. It happened so fast, that was the hardest part. Hilton spent a lot of time this summer walking with Michelle and riding his bike all over town. Then the aches and pains started.

“There is this weird sense of emotions, going into the busiest time of the year. A staff member shared a video from a year ago, of Hilton and our head pastry chef doing laughing yoga one day during the Christmas season. Everybody was very jovial after that.

“He loved putting people out of their comfort zone. He was looking to get out of the normal pattern in an effort to connect. A customer would come in and ask ‘how are you?’ And Hilton would say, ‘gorgeous.’ Then a conversation would happen.

“What drove me crazy initially was how many times he would call out across the bakery, ‘Gerald!’ in that baritone of his. He refused to call me Gerry. I kept a tally one day of how many times he would do that—it was 30-40 times. It drove me bonkers at first, but I became endeared to it. Nobody calls my name like that anymore.

“Hilton didn’t come into the bakery much after March with the shutdowns, but we were in constant contact. Instead of calling my name he would phone. I would have the picture of Hilton on my phone, 10-15 times per day. Last week Michelle called me from that phone. It was surreal seeing his face come up.

“We have an amazing team to carry out his legacy. Eugene (Eugene Edelman founder of the Bon Ton) did a wonderful job and Hilton built on the foundation. Our job now is to continue to build on that.”

“While I admired Bon Ton Bakery and their delicious fare, I had never met Hilton and Michelle until spring 2015,” said Paul Shufelt, Workshop Eatery. “Hilton asked me to help him create a sandwich counter to

highlight their wonderful breads. The timing was interesting, as I had just branched out on my own, and was building Workshop Eatery. I was impressed with his attention to every detail of his business. Not only did the sandwiches have to taste delicious, but they had to showcase the bread nicely, and the smells created in the preparation of the sandwiches could never take away from the aroma of fresh baked bread. He understood his customers in a way few business people ever do, and he made a point of ensuring Bon Ton delivered on their every expectation.

“In the weeks that followed, whenever I delivered sandwich supplies or picked up bread, a quick hello often turned into a lengthy chat. He was one to give me his time, to listen to my dilemma, and always seemed to have a piece of wisdom to share for a young entrepreneur with a great deal to learn. He reminded me that if I wasn’t living in my business then I likely wasn’t working hard enough, although I was never quite sure if he was teasing. Both he and Michelle were staunch supporters. I could always count on him to share his honest feedback, whether great or otherwise, but it was delivered with the utmost care and desire to see me do well. I will miss his advice, I will miss our banter and I will miss his friendship. Rest in peace Hilton.”

“Hilton was more than an entrepreneur or a baker,” says Jennifer Fisk, Freestone Communications. “I remember

him wanting to do something for a Bon Ton anniversary. He wanted to find a cause or charity that no one was paying attention to—the overlooked, off the radar things that could benefit in a big way with some time

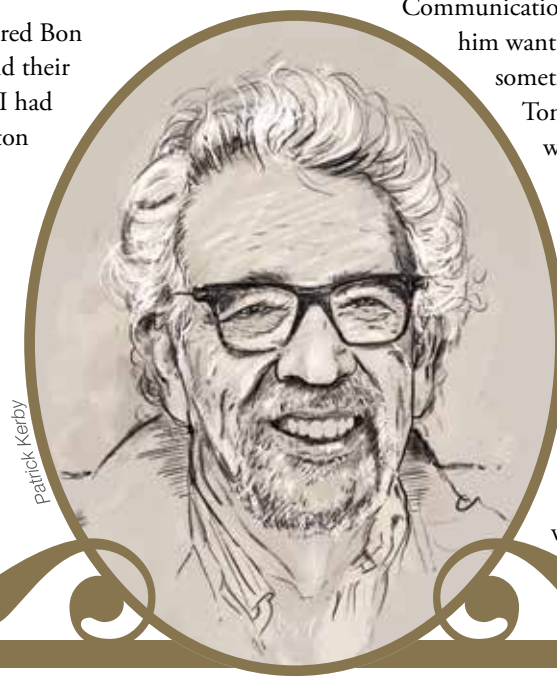
and dollars. He wasn’t noisy about it and he always made an impact, none of his time or his work was wasted. At the boardroom table he made his presence known, he was direct, he didn’t want to talk, he wanted to do. Who’s being ignored? That was where he wanted to spend his time.”

“I worked more with Gerry but whenever Hilton was there, he was always up for a little to and fro,” says Lexa Shropshire, Shropshire Sales. “It took some time to figure out if he was yanking your chain. I totally loved how he went from a shaved head for years and then he grew it out and he had a magnificent head of hair. He was like that, always surprising.”

“My good friend Hilton was a feisty, courageous and generous man,” says Isaiah Staav. “He reminded me of Don Quixote, an idealistic hero defending the helpless and destroying the wicked. Hilton believed deeply in charity and justice, setting an example to many as he supported many organizations in Edmonton. Hilton was most passionate about his family, his friends and the people he worked with. He was an extremely devoted and dedicated person. I will miss him tremendously.”

“All I can say is he left a big hole in my heart,” Pnina Staav, owner Le Gnome and family friend. “He was a very special friend. He cared about people. When you talked to him, he listened to you. Very rare these days. He loved good food. Michelle and Hilton came to San Miguel last February and we had an amazing month. They say Israelis are like a prickly pear, thorny on the outside warm and soft on the inside. He was like that. Under the loudness so much softness. Always saw the bigger picture.

“Even though I live in Toronto now and there are lots of good bakeries, it’s not Bon Ton. I still miss their cheese danish. The memories are good and sweet. He was one of a kind. He was just good.”





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The **top 100 best things to eat and drink** will be featured in the March April issue of The Tomato food & drink.

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