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Morsels Archives November 2008

Written by Dante Dominick

Thanksgiving Day Feast at The Driskill Hotel

For those with plenty to be thankful for, the Driskill Hotel and Grill are preparing two very grand Thanksgiving feasts. The Hotel kicks off Turkey Day with a special brunch (11am-3pm) served on the elegant mezzanine. Delights include herb-crusted turkey, brown sugar pineapple ham, traditional fixings, crepes, Belgian waffles, omelets, and more. The brunch is \$58 for adults, \$29 for children (ages 5-12), and free for tots under five. Even more opulent is Thanksgiving Dinner at the Driskill Grill, with a five-course chef's tasting menu. A standout first course offering includes truffled pumpkin soup with crab (see [austin.com's non-pie pumpkin recipes](#)). Main course selections are maple-roasted turkey, Beef Wellington, dijon-crusted lamb chops, or roasted monkfish. The Grill opens on Thanksgiving at 5:00pm, the menu is \$85 per person. (Brunch and dinner reservations at 512.391.7121.)



Cupcake and Wine Pairing This Wednesday

Not often heard at a wine tasting: "Oh yes, this would go well with the buttercream icing." Two newcomers on the Austin scene are out to change that, along with perceptions of wine. House Wine (on Josephine St., behind P. Terry's) has welcomed The Cupcake Bar into their eclectic fold with a special Cupcake and Wine Happy Hour, November 19 at 6:00pm. A \$12 pairing menu sure to replace the old vanguard of wine and cheese (OK, so probably not) includes a tempranillo paired with a double chocolate cupcake, pinot grigio matched with vanilla lemon cupcake, and a sparkling Spanish wine with a mimosa cupcake.



A Toast to Vino and Victuals

On November 20th, the Wine and Food Foundation of Texas submits a tasteful collection of wine, champagne and food for the inspection and appreciation of the discerning. The Sixth Annual Big Red and Bubbles soiree will uncork at 6:30 in the beautiful Driskill Hotel and flow for a three hour inventory of over 50 red wines and champagnes. The viticultural pageantry will be accompanied by an exposition of top-tier cuisine from over 20 of Austin's best restaurants; Cru a Wine Bar, Fete Accompli, Kenichi, and III Forks among others. With the music of cellist Steve Bernal playing off the tinkle of silverware and the sparkle of gold and burgundy, the atmosphere is certain to make a cameo appearance on the list of intoxicants. If the names you drop tend to be from Sonoma instead of Hollywood, than this the event for you. \$60 for Foundation members and \$75 for general admission. Call 512-327-7555 or email murray@winefoodfoundation.org to reserve tickets.

Dinner, Music, Art to benefit Girstart

Hosteria Verde Supper Club & Catering will bring together a unique sense of taste and style for the cocktail reception to benefit the Girstart program on November 20 at 7:00pm. The roving supper club will take root at Ann Kelso Salon for this special event. Hosteria Verde will supply a delicious repast of five special appetizers with five specialty cocktails while attendees soak in art from local artist Judy Paul and Austin Art Garage. Music will be provided by el John from Thievery Corporation. Girstart is a non-profit that empowers girls in math, science, engineering, and technology. Tickets to the cocktail benefit are \$50. The menu isn't finalized, but here's a work in progress: tuna sashimi on wonton crisps; slow-braised jerk pork over plantain crisps and fresh scallions; lemongrass lamb skewers with black currant glaze; cranberry, pancetta and parmesan-stuffed endive with citrus vinaigrette; and crispy tofu spring rolls and sweet-and-sour sauce.

Food Menu

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An ode to Mondavi and a look forward to spring festival.

The Texas Hill Country Wine and Food Festival is hosting November Night to Remember on 11/6 in the Victorian Room at the Driskill Hotel. The evening will feature gustatory delights prepared by Chef Jon Gelman expertly paired with Mondavi wines, paying tribute to the late winemaker. Enjoy a four-course dinner followed by a lively auction of fine wines, private winery tours and tastings, chef prepared dinner parties, and many other fabulous items. Tickets are \$110; reception is at 6:30pm. The event is a fundraiser for the Texas Hill Country Wine and Food festival, a non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote Texas wine and food and to increase appreciation of Texas' impact on food and wine throughout the world. Reservations can be made at 249.6300 or info@texaswineandfood.org.



Winery tailgating road trip.

Eight Central Texas wineries, known collectively as the Way Out Wineries, will be tailgating the weekend of 9/26-28 with football-inspired food paired with the vintner's wine. From old tailgate favorites like barbecue chicken to some new recipe twists, the common denominator is replacing the requisite beer with handcrafted wines. A \$15 ticket is good for the whole weekend at all eight wineries. The [Way Out Wineries](#) are located from just north of Austin to just south of Dallas. Tailgate Road Trip hours will be 10am-6pm Friday and Saturday, and noon-5pm Sunday.

Ranch 616 unveils new patio.

Ranch 616 reopened its doors to ooooohs and aaaaahs from their legion of regular customers on September 13. Although the renovation is still in progress, the brand new patio arrived just in time to enjoy our recent spell of fall-like weather. Stop by and check out the river stone fire pit and admire the wide variety of cacti that found a home in the sculptural steel planters lining the patio.



While you're at it, try some of their legendary cocktails and new refreshing creations such as Ricky's Ting, made with fresh lime juice, Ting grapefruit soda, and your choice of tequila or vodka. New menu items appear regularly, but as far as appetizers go, we are partial to the amazing fried oysters and grilled quail. Grab a table on the patio, kick back Ranch-style, and dig the lovely weather!

Ike Johnson is back!

Austin foodies are surely familiar with chef extraordinaire and cheese guru Ike Johnson, and have certainly missed seeing him around town. The former Grapevine Market chef has thankfully resurfaced recently with a new venture, joining forces with Executive Chef Bill Boyer as the catering director for Tapas Catering and Special Events. Tapas provides full scale catering and event planning services designed to fit every budget. Best of all, Ike's fans will be delighted to hear that he will continue doing what he loves the most: leading cooking classes, wine tastings, chocolate classes, and cheese classes. These will be tailor-made to customers' requests, so if you've always wanted to host a wine-and-cheese-pairing party but didn't even know where to start, now you know (tapasaustin.com). The lovable and knowledgeable chef Ike will take care of every detail for you.

At long last...the muffin trolley is open!

The newest addition to the foodie trailer scene is Taste No Evil Muffin Company. The once-green Dillo trolley parked in front of Maria's Taco X-press is now open for business. If you've been to Maria's recently, you've seen Top Muffin Karisa Prestera selling her muffins in the patio, awaiting final renovations and permits for the trolley. As the name implies, there is nothing artificial 'bout Taste No Evil muffins. "You'll be able to pronounce every item on our ingredient list," boasts Prestera. In addition to muffins, the trolley offers yogurt, fruit, and muffin-top ice cream sandwiches. But here's the big news: Taste No Evil offers muffin delivery. Catering to the office crowd, Prestera added rhetorically: "What's better than a cream cheese coffee cake muffin baked fresh this morning and hand-delivered while you're sitting in a boring meeting full of blowhards going over the same old poppycock." Is poppycock flavor?



Just opened Olivia hottest buzz



restaurant in town.

Take one accomplished chef who knows French cooking forwards and back. Now add another chef who knows Italian food just as well. Next, toss in a credited Austin architect; then lightly fold in a knowledgeable wine guru, and voilà! You've mastered the recipe for Austin's newest funky South Austin bistro, Olivia. The ever-changing menu comprises French classics, Italian favorites, and inventive derivations. Executive chef/owner James Holmes, who named Olivia after his 2-year-old daughter, has worked for some of the world's most renowned restaurants from Strasbourg, France, to Taos, New Mexico. We recognize chef de cuisine Morgan Angelone as the executive chef from that cute little Hyde Park Italian eatery, Asti. The artfully angular, well-lit building (by architect Michael Hsu) has helped fuel the buzz, and begs patrons to declare, "just one more glass of wine."



Uchi expanding...twice.

Turns out the rumors were true: chef/owner Tyson Cole officially announced plans for a second Uchi location in North Central Austin. Space isn't secured yet, but the goal is to open within a few months. Turns out a second location for the massively popular Japanese/sushi restaurant is only the tip of the ginsu. Perhaps Austin's most celebrated chef, Cole also announced plans to open a new venture, Canteen, that will blend Spanish and Japanese cuisines. Canteen will launch inside W Hotel when it opens in 2010. The venture promises to be exciting, but the second Uchi—which will have some slight variations—will serve for more immediate gratification.



Photo: Paul Bardagjy

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