

Wine Ready

Take your guests around the world to keep them happy



The Globetrotting Wine Guy

The selection of wines for today's wine service is increasingly important. More people enjoy wine with their meals, and many travel to the major wine-producing countries from which they return home with a better appreciation of world wines. Once smitten, consumers never regard "good wine" as before: They prefer to experiment with wines from everywhere.

The best way to satisfy this interest is to offer a good selection of affordable wines from around the world at the most popular price points for one's market. An excellent example is Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide with its global "Wines of the World" program (successor of the original Sheraton program.) A variety of premium wines represents some of the best examples of each appellation from South Africa to Champagne. And programs vary by division, so by-the-glass selections in Latin America differ from North America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia-Pacific.

Would it not be refreshing for guests to be presented with a menu taking them on a wine world tour by a trained server? The well-trained server can speak intelligently about each wine, offering sound recommendations on the most reliable pairing of the menu items and available wines. This is not to suggest we train master sommeliers because not every hotel requires this level of sophistication. But, we simply must raise the bar with wine servers as to the importance of taking a few minutes before each shift to absorb the information on each wine and note the recommendations for the day's menu.

During my travels I often encounter "wine gods" in training who covet titles. Talking with Kevin Zraly, wine god without academic title, he groaned, "Titles, titles, titles . . . Everybody has to have a title to be somebody today!" He continued, "What the industry really needs to provide guests are good wine values from around the world, served with care by professionals who demonstrate their commitment to guest-friendly wine service."

Naturally, the quality level of your choices will vary depending on your operation. But, no matter how basic or sophisticated, selections should cover the globe as much as possible, and quality must never be compromised by close-outs or special deals. Build a lasting and successful wine program that appeals to the ever-increasing number of guests electing to order wine and who vote for this important point of differentiation with their credit cards. Starting in January, I'll be leading a yearlong tour through the world of wine choices in this column to help ensure your property's wine list is ready for the world. Cheers.

Fred Tibbitts, president Fred Tibbitts & Associates, is the foremost wine by the glass consultant for chain hotels and restaurants in the world.

UNDER THE COVERS

The Soul of a Chef: The Journey Toward Perfection

Michael Ruhlman, Viking, 2000, \$26.95, hardcover

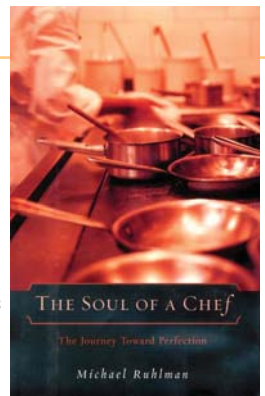
For his first book, *The Making of a Chef*, hands-on journalist Michael Ruhlman attended the Culinary Institute of America where he earned his chef's whites and began cooking professionally. Ruhlman ventures further into the secret lives of chefs with his second book, *The Soul of a Chef*. Here, he takes the reader on three journeys in an attempt to get inside the heads and hearts of professional chefs.

In part one, he shadows seven chefs during the grueling 10-day marathon to become a Certified Master Chef. For various reasons, few take this test, and few pass it. The author takes us into the minds of those professionals driven to spend thousands of dollars for the chance to earn the title Certified Master Chef.

In part two, we visit the kitchen of Michael Symon, chef/owner of Cleveland's Lola Bistro. Symon is not interested in the CMC test; he just loves cooking and entertaining his guests. A section about John Mariani, Esquires restaurant critic, reads like a suspense novel and inspires you to root for Symon to ace the meal.

Ruhlman ends with an in-depth look at Thomas Keller, head chef at the French Laundry in Napa, California. Keller, a personality opposite of Symon, is said to take cooking to levels few have or can. The thread connecting these three tales is Ruhlman's quest for culinary perfection: Does it exist? Is it possible? How is it even measurable?

While experiencing the superb service and cuisine of the Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, recently, an epicure I frequently dined with passionately recommended this "can't put down" read. —MRC



JOEL GUILLON, EXECUTIVE CHEF AT THE ARGENT HOTEL

SAN FRANCISCO, is one of only two chefs in San Francisco to carry the title Maitre

Cuisinier de France, putting him in the elite and very exclusive company of over 300 of the

most famous chefs in the world. SO HE'S CHEF ENOUGH TO SHARE . . .



WELL DONE

SQUAB STAYS FOR RAVES

I have a dish that is very popular, Squab Pot Au Feu. You do a squab consommé, clarify it, and give it a beautiful color, then debone the squab, and roast it. The bones and red juice with the consommé give it a wonderful flavor. Then I use baby vegetables, blanched, and put on the side. The breast is deboned, then wrapped with foie gras and cabbage. Then I debone the leg, and wrap with mushrooms and cabbage. That's one of the dishes that people say "What about the Pot Au Feu?"

HALF BAKED

COQ AU VIN COMES BACK

We used to have it on the menu, chicken marinated in red wine, carrots, and onions. It was marinated for 4-5 days in red wine, and then we sautéed it in the red juice from the wine and beef stock. Sometimes people ordered it and—I don't know if it was the way it was described on the menu or maybe the flavor was too strong—but you could see the dish come back.