

LIFESTYLE

TVLand lathered up to repeat 'Soap' / 5B



Wednesday
September 11, 2002

Entertainment 5B
Comics 6B
Good Neighbors 8B



Jo Ellen O'Hara

Book gives a good taste for wine

S you want to learn about wine but you're shy about asking friends for information.

There's a book for you. It's "The Wall Street Journal Guide to Wine (New and Improved)" by Dorothy J. Gaiter and John Brocher.

Here are just a few basics the book contains:

- How to choose the perfect pairing of wine and food.
- The best wines to take to a friend's house.
- How to choose a wine shop.
- How to throw a risk-free wine-tasting party.
- How to tackle a restaurant wine list.

These are a few of the tidbits that will make your wine tastings more enjoyable and put you on a more comfortable level with other wine drinkers.

The book is published by Broadway Books and sells for \$26.

Cooking classes

Sherron Goldstein has been teaching her "Fresh Fields" cooking classes here for several years now, and she's gearing up for another fall season. Here's the schedule:

- Oct. 1, Dressed to grill, 6:30-9:30 p.m., \$60.
 - Oct. 8, Room for dessert, 9:30-9:30 p.m., \$55. The course will be repeated 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Oct. 9.
 - Oct. 12, Room for dessert, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., \$35. These recipes are geared toward teenage cooks.
 - Oct. 16, One-dish wonders, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., \$45.
 - Oct. 22, Little bites to excite the mouth, 6:30-9:30 p.m., \$55.
 - Oct. 29, New England clam bake, 6:30-9:30 p.m., \$60.
 - Nov. 4, Viva vegetables, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., \$45.
 - Nov. 6, Elegant appetizers, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., \$45. Repeated Nov. 7, 6:30-9:30 p.m.
 - Nov. 12, Homemade dog treats, 6:30-9:30 p.m., \$45. Repeated Nov. 16 for teens 10 a.m.-1 p.m., with some people treats added, \$35.
 - Nov. 14, Dinner from the Mediterranean, 6:30-9:30 p.m., \$65.
 - Nov. 19, From earth to table, 6:30-9:30 p.m., \$60.
 - Nov. 21, Beef lamb, kidney and oysters, 6:30-9:30 p.m., \$55.
 - Dec. 3, Chesapeake, 9:30-9:30 p.m., \$45. Repeated 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Dec. 4.
- Goldstein will be happy to send more information about the courses. Call 957-8106.

Muscadines anyone?

Mary and Charla Brammer, owners of Morgan Creek Vineyards in Harpersville, are welcoming muscadine lovers to pick their own baskets of this traditional Southern fruit.

Muscadine pickers can come from sun-up to sun-down Monday through Saturday.

To get to the farm from Birmingham, take U.S. 280 West to Harpersville. At the traffic light, take a right. At the Methodist church, take a right. Go about six-tenths of a mile and turn to the left. For more information, call 672-9840.

Jo Ellen O'Hara's column appears each Wednesday in The Birmingham News

FOOD

Museum's acquisition

At 30, Jason Mezrano hopes to inject fresh ideas into Terrace Cafe menus

By JO ELLEN O'HARA
News staff writer

If you know about Jason Mezrano's family, you might assume Jason is just following a legacy since he is now chef at the Birmingham Museum of Art's Terrace Cafe.

But if you know Jason Mezrano, you realize that he is following his own course. Food is his passion.

Though his mother, Kathy G. Mezrano, is one of the city's most successful caterers, and his dad, an attorney-turned-business manager of Kathy G. & Co., are both entrenched in the family business, Jason, now 30, says they did not influence him at all.

Instead, he says his grandparents, Mary Ann George and the late A.B. George, were "huge influences" in his decision to become a chef.

As a child, Jason remembers going to his grandparents' home every Sunday for a "huge Lebanese lunch."

His grandmother still is known for her cooking skills, and his grandfather, who was in the produce business for many years, was a wonderful cook as well. (His grandfather died recently and left some of his most cherished recipes to his grandson because of Jason's interest and his career.)

See Mezrano, Page 4B



NEWS STAFF/BEVERLY TAYLOR

Salmon Nicoise is prepared by chef Jason Mezrano. It will be served during the upcoming French exhibit at the Museum of Art.



Blueberry clafouti, a popular dessert in France, also can be made with other berries or cherries.

INSIDE Hungry for peach pound cake? Minestrone salad? Check out Recipes, Please / 2B

REMEMBERING SEPT. 11



NEWHOUSE

The Twin Towers of the World Trade Center are visible in this scene from the film "The Godfather Part 3," set in New York City in 1979.

Ghostly images of Towers loom in old shows, films

By MATT ZELLER SEITZ
Newhouse News Service

In the opening of the 1990 gangster movie "State of Grace," hoodlum-turned-undercover cop Sean Penn looks across the East River at Manhattan.

The camera tracks slowly from right to left, revealing the midtown skyline, including the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building, coming to rest on a profile of Penn's mournful face as his commanding officer approaches to deliver marching orders that will set the film's complex plot in motion.

A year ago, if you stumbled on "State of Grace" while channel surfing, you might have admired this scene for its rich photography, or for Penn's mysterious, closed-off expression. Today, your eye is drawn to what's in the background behind Penn as the camera comes to rest — the intact World Trade Center towers.

At this point in a movie, you ought to be thinking, "Who is this character?" or "Where will the story take us?" Instead, you can't help thinking not of

See Towers, Page 8B

Psychologist-mystery writers seek to enlighten readers

By KAREN PATERSCH
Knight Ridder Newspapers

CHICAGO — Some authors really know how to get inside their characters' heads.

These authors, like their characters, are psychologists. And the characters are solving not just mysteries of the mind but of murder.

By weaving professional knowledge into a popular genre of fiction, the authors hope to improve the public's understanding of psychology and its image of psychologists.

"One of the things that I have such trouble with is, when you go to the movies and there's a psychologist or psychiatrist, we look like idiots,"

author Roberta Isleib said in Chicago recently, during a meeting of the American Psychological Association. "We're crazy ourselves, we have no sense of boundaries, or we're the murderers." Think Tin Cup, and the therapist who romped with her patient, or Hannibal Lecter.

Isleib, a clinical psychologist in Connecticut, told a gathering of mystery and psychology aficionados that she wanted to create someone "who did not sleep with their patients, nor did they murder them."

In her book, "Six Strokes Under," an amateur sleuth and aspiring pro golfer relies on the help

See Writers, Page 8B



Christopher Reeve had hoped to walk again by his 50th birthday, Sept. 25. But he says he's still encouraged, even though he won't reach that goal.

Reeve regains some movement, sensation and feels pinprick

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Christopher Reeve has regained some movement and sensation in his hands and feet, seven years after a horse-riding accident left him paralyzed from the neck down.

The "Superman" star also can breathe on his own for 90 minutes at a time, according to an article in the Sept. 23 issue of People magazine.

"To be able to feel the just lightest touch is really a gift," Reeve said.

The actor has received treatment for the past three years through the "activity-based recovery program" that his doctor, John McDonald, created. The therapy consists of

See Reeve, Page 8B

MEZRANO

Experience best teacher

From Page 1B

When Mezrano finished John Carroll Catholic High School, he entered Spring Hill College with a major in political science. Four years later, in 1994, with a degree in hand, he decided that he didn't want to take the logical next step — going to law school.

He got a job at Highlands Bar & Grill and worked free for four months, doing odd jobs, he said, such as prep work in the kitchen. He later moved on to another position there, working under chef-owner Frank Stitt.

In 1995, he joined Hot and Hot Fish Club when chef-owner Chris Hastings opened the restaurant just off Highland Avenue.

Learning, traveling

As he seriously went about preparing himself for life as a chef, Jason enrolled at Scottsdale Culinary Institute in Scottsdale, Ariz., where he graduated in 1997. He then worked at some resorts in Arizona before heading for California and the Napa Valley.

He worked at Pinot Blanc, a restaurant in St. Helena, for 2½ years. He says he learned a lot from Sean Knight, who is the chef there and is amassing a reputation for quality in that hotbed of food and wine. Mezrano called Knight "a wonderful chef."

A two-month trip to France, Italy and Spain with fellow chefs preceded his return to Birmingham in 2001.

He joined Kathy G. and Co., working at the firm's off-premises facility with chef Joe Shaw. This is the area of the business that is heavily involved in catering events at vari-

"Culinary school was fun, and good to learn the basics, but work experience is the best by far."

Jason Mezrano

ous locations around the city.

He learned about the busy Christmas business and says, "I had not known catering on that level. It was good for me to learn."

To the museum

During the winter, Kathy G.'s company took a contract on a restaurant to be located in a new building, One Federal Place, in downtown Birmingham. Geoff Sate, who had been chef at the museum for several years, decided to go to the new site, to be called "G."

"I could have gone with Geoff," Mezrano says, "but I thought it was time to go on my own."

He began working at the museum's Terrace Cafe in February, first as Sate's sous chef. Now that Sate is involved in the new restaurant, which is to open this fall, Mezrano has taken over the museum cafe.

Calling the Terrace Cafe a "beautiful place to work," Mezrano has some immediate goals for the cafe, such as building up the lunch business. He also hopes to put some fresh ideas in the menu.

The cafe at the museum is open Tuesday through Saturday for lunch and on the first Sunday of each month for a jazz brunch. There also is a monthly First Thursday dinner beginning at 5 p.m.

With the special "Stuff of Dreams" French exhibit Sept. 22-Jan. 5, there will be other special events, such as a French wine and cooking demonstration Mezrano will do Oct. 19. The demonstration will be followed



NEWS STAFF/BEVERLY TAYLOR

Chef Jason Mezrano will serve a French-inspired menu during the coming museum exhibit, "Stuff of Dreams."

by dinner.

In addition to the scheduled events at the cafe, the staff at the Terrace Cafe also does an enormous amount of catering at the museum for events such as wedding receptions and corporate events.

Satisfying career

So far, Mezrano is quite happy with his choice of careers.

He says that early on he talked with Chris Hastings, who encouraged him to work in the restaurant field to decide if that was the life he wanted.

"I loved the work. The pulse (of a restaurant) invigorated me. The pace was stimulating," Mezrano says.

He recalls the stimulation he got when he heard Stitt and Hastings talk about what was fresh, putting a menu together, making a plan for an evening.

"Working with great chefs is a

wonderful experience," he says.

"Culinary school was fun, and good to learn the basics, but work experience is the best by far."

The menu he has planned for the coming French exhibit will have a bistro influence, he says. Two items on the menu will be a grilled salmon Nicoise salad and a dessert called mixed berries Clafouti.

When there is free time, and few restaurateurs have much of that, Mezrano can be found at his apartment in Mountain Brook. He is an avid reader and walker and a movie buff. Also, he has a lot of friends in town. One is Michael Locascio, a longtime friend who recently opened his own restaurant, Standard Bistro, at Mt. Laurel.

Asked what he does in his free time, Mezrano says he selects some wine and goes to restaurants — Highlands Bar & Grill, Hot and Hot Fish Club, Bottega or Daniel George — and enjoys a good meal.

RECIPES FROM JASON MEZRANO

These are two of the recipes that Jason Mezrano will use to prepare food served during the "Stuff of Dreams" exhibit Sept. 22-Jan. 5.

GRILLED SALMON NICOISE SALAD

(Makes four servings)

- 1 pound mixed lettuces (arugula, radicchio, etc.)
- 8 ounces haricots vert (slim green beans), trimmed and blanched
- 2 red bell peppers, trimmed and julienned
- 1 red onion, halved and sliced thin
- 6 ounces marinated olives
- 2 eggs, hard cooked, peeled and halved
- 4 celery stalks, washed and trimmed
- 6 small creamers or red-skinned potatoes, boiled and halved
- 16 ounces grilled salmon

Lightly toss greens and place in the middle of a plate. Arrange on each plate in order, green beans, red peppers, onions, olives, one-half cooked egg and potatoes. Lay grilled salmon atop above ingredients. Garnish plate with celery stalks.

BLUEBERRY CLAFOUTI

(Makes four servings)

- 1 pound ripe blueberries
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1 tablespoon confectioner's sugar
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- ½ cup milk or light cream
- 2 eggs
- Grated zest of ½ lemon
- Pinch of ground nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

Mix the blueberries with the lemon juice and confectioner's sugar and set aside for 1 to 2 hours.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Generously butter four individual, oven-proof ramekins.

Sift the flour into a bowl, add the sugar and slowly whisk in the milk until smoothly blended. Add the eggs, lemon zest, nutmeg and vanilla extract and whisk until well combined and smooth.

Scatter the blueberries evenly into the baking dishes. Pour over the batter and bake for 45 minutes, or until set and puffed around the edges. A knife inserted in the center should come out clean. Serve warm or at room temperature.

G: Brings G-whiz to downtown

► From Page 306

The wine list at G is extensive and nicely chosen.

Our server suggested a new wine to us — Loimer Gruner Veltliner "Lois" 2001 from Austria at a very reasonable \$24. This dry wine tasted crisp and grassy with a surprising hint of effervescence — perfect for the first courses and the seafood dishes.

We finished with two desserts — a small but intense pyramid of chocolate (\$7) served with creamy and exotic cardamom ice cream. (That ice cream alone is reason to go back.)

The crisp caramel pecan basket filled with white chocolate and banana mousse and sweet, caramelized bananas (\$8) offered another delicious taste entirely.

Lunch on a recent Friday at a table for two with a view of the busy city street also pleased.

This time we tried an earthy and complex lentil soup along with another bowl of that delicious green tomato soup. Both were great, but the green tomato concoction was still the favorite.

A large, tender ravioli filled

with subtly seasoned free-range chicken (\$10) featured a lovely and smooth smoked tomato sauce.

The barbecue pork sandwich (\$8) was a surprise. The pulled pork here has a decidedly Asian flavor with the addition of a Five Spice mixture. The white and black sesame seeds on the bun were a nice touch, too. We also loved the crisp, colorful slaw with its own sesame flavor and the generous helping of crunchy sweet-potato chips.

We finished with a lovely blend of sweet and tart. The lemon meringue tart (\$6), with an absolutely delicious crust, was large enough for two to share.

Other lunch offerings include a farm-raised catfish po-boy with a Creole remoulade and home-made chips (\$8); baby spinach salad with grilled organic salmon, crispy noodles and a soy-ginger vinaigrette (\$12); and a burger with grilled Angus beef, Cajun spices and bleu cheese (\$8).

At the bar

A third, largely unplanned, visit started with the idea of a quiet drink between friends. We wanted to try the signature cocktails Cheree Dobbs makes at the bar.

Her Manhattan, called a

"Brownwater Special" here, is made with Maker's Mark bourbon and sweetened with vermouth and a bit of cherry juice. The "G" Tini has both Belvedere vodka and Bombay Sapphire gin with bleu cheese-stuffed olives.

We tried the "G" Cosmo made with freshly muddled lime and lemon juices and Bacardi O — an orange- and tangerine-flavored rum.

The Raspberry Royale was a juicy mix of Stolichnaya raspberry vodka and Chambord with a hint of cranberry.

At the last minute we decided to share a plate of wild-mushroom risotto cakes atop tender autumn vegetables with a smoked tomato coulis (\$16). Dobbs cheerfully prepared our set-up at the bar and made us feel right at home. This shared plate made the perfect little meal for two and tasted so fall-ish; the hearty cakes were crisp on the outside and tender within.

G is elegant but extremely comfortable.

During each visit — dinner, lunch and that shared plate with martinis at the bar — everyone was warm and inviting. Service was attentive, smart and paced to match our moods.

In short, G is a wonderful addition to our ever-changing and definitely more interesting downtown.



NEWS STAFF/JERRY AYRES

The sweeping staircase at G was designed by Tammy Cohen of Cohen & Associates.