

Nosing Around the Kitchen

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Daniel LeBoon's sense of smell has led to great taste

Every good chef has a special ability, whether it's a certain dish, seasonings, sauce or dessert. Chef/owner Daniel LeBoon of Josephine's Restaurant in Marietta excels in many areas, but you might marvel at his extraordinary sense of smell, his wine savvy or his amazing flavor combinations.

"I'm crazy with food," says LeBoon. "I smell everything. I taste everything." In fact, LeBoon goes through 80 spoons a day and

consumes more than 4,000 calories just in tasting. He works by himself. "Just me and the dishwasher," he says. He prefers it that way, for consistency in the high standards he sets for his French- and Asian-inspired fusion cuisine.

Chef LeBoon and wife Barbara call it "fine dining redefined." With French country décor, the circa 1792 former stagecoach stop boasts log and stucco walls and lots of copper. Stunning art glass vases by frequent guest Joel

Philip Myers dot the chic interior with an unexpected, welcome touch of the modern. Hand-painted murals surround the cache of impressive wine. The food is decidedly upscale, but the atmosphere is purposely casual. The LeBoons dislike the stuffiness of many gourmet restaurants, choosing instead to offer their guests comfort and a friendly chat with the chef.

For nine years, Josephine's was selected by the readers of *Central PA Magazine* as the *continued on page 115 »*

As passionate as he is about food, Chef LeBoon is equally passionate about wine, and hosts special dinners with wine luminaries at his restaurant, Josephine's in Marietta.



Rib-Eye Steak with Pomme Annette

Serves 6

Six 9-oz. center rib-eye steaks

FOR THE POMME ANNETTE:

15 small Yukon gold potatoes
1-1/2 cups butter, melted
Fleur de Sel (sea salt) and pepper
2 tart pans

Peel and slice potatoes thinly, dip in melted butter and layer them in a circular pattern in small buttered tart pans. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, and bake at 425 degrees for 24 minutes. Melt remaining butter and heat to at least 160 degrees, being careful not to allow it to separate; retain at the same temperature (anywhere from 160 to 190 degrees). Take 1/8 cup water, 1/2 pound butter, place over stove and whisk until soft, not letting it boil.

Pan-sear steaks, place in 450-degree oven for 7 minutes (medium rare) and immerse in the melted butter. Top with pomme annette and surround with Asian demi-glace (see below for preparation), several pan-boiled scallion bulbs, patty pan sunburst squash and haricots verts (French green beans).

FOR THE SPICY ASIAN DEMI-GLACE:

1/2 cup white onion, diced
1/4 cup chippolini onion, diced
1/4 cup red onion, diced
1 cup diced tomato
1 bay leaf
4 sprigs of fresh thyme
2 Tbs. unsalted butter
1/8 cup of grapeseed oil

Sautee all ingredients in butter and oil. Remove vegetables from pan and allow them to come to room temperature. Deglaze pan with white wine and let cool. Combine the ingredients below in a mixing bowl and add cooled ingredients. Chill several hours before using.

1/2 cup of reduced veal stock
1 Tbs. of Dijon mustard
1/4 cup cider vinegar
1 cup of ketchup
1/3 cup brown sugar
1 cup sweet chili sauce

Wine Pairing: Cabernet Sauvignon
Chef LeBoon's recommendation: Paul Hobbs, Beckstoffer – Tokalon, Oakville, Napa 2001





Smoked Salmon Terrine

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| 1 lb. smoked salmon, sliced | 1 Tbs. butter |
| 2 lbs. shitake mushrooms, sliced | 1/4 cup grapeseed oil |
| 2 bunches of fresh chives, chopped | |

Saute mushrooms in grapeseed oil and butter and layer mushrooms 5 layers deep in between salmon slices. Drizzle each layer with oil and sprinkle with chives. Realign slices in a long rectangle. Use two rectangular molds, one on bottom and one on top, and press with a weight for two days in refrigerator. Slice about 2 inches thick. Garnish with blue chanterelle mushrooms, corn shoots, micro greens, chive oil and a chive blossom.

Wine Pairing: Champagne
 Chef LeBoon's recommendation: J. Dumangin, Brut, Chigny-Les-Roses, France, 1er cru



Kimchi Ice Cream

Yields 1/2 gallon

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| FOR THE KIMCHI: | 1 tsp. hot sauce |
| 1 cup Napa cabbage, chopped | 1 hot pepper, diced |
| 1 cup fresh spinach, chopped | 2 cloves of garlic |
| 1 cup cabbage, chopped | 1 small onion, quartered |
| 1/2 cup scallions, chopped | 1/8 cup grapeseed oil |
| 1/2 cup leeks, chopped | 1 cup sweet chili sauce |

Saute first 10 ingredients in large pan and then let cool. Place in a food processor with sweet chili sauce and puree. Chill in refrigerator. Kimchi will keep for 5 days in refrigeration.

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| FOR THE ICE CREAM: | 1 oz. of peach liquor |
| 6 egg yolks | 1 oz. of peach puree |
| 1 cup heavy whipping cream | 1 cup of sugar |
| 1 Tbs. of kimchi | 1/2 cup of water |

Whisk yolks. Boil sugar and water until it forms a soft ball, then whisk into the yolks and whip. Add remaining ingredients, whisking with each addition. Chill in freezer overnight before serving. Serve over chocolate genoise (sponge cake) or with shortbread cookies.

Wine Pairing: Sauterne
 Chef LeBoon's recommendation: Chateau Bastor la Montagne 2001

region's best French restaurant, but in the two years since the LeBoons have owned it, they've been working to re-educate the region about their new approach to cuisine. "I'm French-trained," explains Chef LeBoon, "but we're not a French restaurant." His grandfather was French, but he incorporates flavors from Morocco, India, Thailand and elsewhere.

The French name, which they kept, was bestowed by the former owner, for whom LeBoon worked for several years. Chef LeBoon had earlier completed an apprenticeship at Le Bec-Fin in Philadelphia and studied under the famed Alain Soliveres in Paris. After reigning as executive chef at the Historic Strasburg Inn, he became general manager and sommelier at the Farm House Restaurant in Chester County, then was hired as executive chef at Josephine's. He was wooed away in 2000 to work a second stint at the Historic Strasburg Inn, but when Josephine's owner contacted him two years ago wanting to sell the restaurant, LeBoon was game.

The LeBoons consider running the restaurant "like having people over," and clearly enjoy it. According to Barbara, Daniel's paternal grandmother loved to feed people. "She would sit you down and make something for you and watch you eat it, saying 'Is it good?' 'Do you like it?' 'Do you want some more?'" Daniel's becoming her more every day.

Chef LeBoon is passionate about ingredients and uses organic produce. He's even been known to open a shockingly expensive bottle of wine just for use in one of his sauces. He springs for imported French butter and the premier Fleur de Sel sea salt, which can run \$27 a pound. "I want the best of the best," he asserts. LeBoon is also a fanatic about using *beurre monte* (a uniquely French butter composition). He declares, "That particular butter is the key to my career."

This obsession with fine ingredients pays off. His "Crab Cloud" has become so popular news of it reached *Bon Appetit* magazine. The editors pursued his recipe, but LeBoon graciously declined. Modest, he turns away even the label of his profession. "I'm not a chef, I'm just a cook," he says, but his skill belies this. His inventiveness makes every dish interesting, and nothing is a given.

He creates a kimchi ice cream and pairs it with a dreamy chocolate ganache over genoise (sponge cake). He combines curry with strawberries and cream for a surprisingly light and refreshing chilled soup. A signature



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dish, braised boneless short ribs, are glazed in a hypnotic reduction of pomegranates, grapefruit and Syrah. "That ribs dish," says LeBoon, "explains who I am."

LeBoon runs a tight ship in the kitchen and doesn't tolerate mistakes. Once he almost fired an employee who mistakenly placed a whipped egg mixture in the freezer rather than the cooler. Fortunately for the employee, LeBoon smelled it, tasted it and realized he had "discovered" a new way to make beyond-rich, creamy ice cream.

As passionate as he is about food, LeBoon is equally passionate about wine, and hosts special dinners with wine luminaries. In fact, internationally known sommelier Joseph Spellman, in a rare personal appearance, headlined a recent wine event at Josephine's and said LeBoon's rib eye was the best he'd ever had. To complement the rib eye featured

on page 113, Chef LeBoon recommends a Paul Hobbs Beckstoffer-Tokollon Cabernet Sauvignon; for the salmon terrine, a J. Dumangin Grand Reserve champagne; and for the dessert, a sauterne by Chateau Bastor la Montagne.

Whether it is selecting wine, cooking or preparing food, LeBoon's sons are following in his footsteps; Nathan, age 10, is quiet, and prefers to slice vegetables, care for the grounds and do the dishes. Eight-year-old Josh has inherited his father's nose for wine and fine foods, his skill in the kitchen and his gregarious nature, often visiting dining guests in his chef's hat. At a recent Flyers game, Daniel says Josh was the only kid he saw going to his seat with a tray of sushi.

Perhaps one day, people will say of Josh what Barbara says of her husband: "He was born to do this." **SS**