

Beckta dining & wine

May 2009 Newsletter

Welcome from Stephen Beckta



Dear Friends: I hope you're getting through our slightly frosty Spring all right. Only in Canada do we have to wait until Victoria Day to really start our gardens, and we still have to worry about whether frost will get our precious first plantings. Luckily, we have some wonderful farmers and foragers that are already showing up with great springtime stuff like morels, ramps and fiddleheads which we are pairing up with this year's first releases of rosés and crisp whites. Of special note is Southbrook Vineyard's Cabernet Rosé, Canada's very first biodynamic wine, and a beautiful new Chinon rosé that we are pouring by the glass at Beckta right now. To me, there is nothing better to welcome the warm weather. We also have a couple of fantastic events coming up which are in this month's newsletter including a return visit from Quails' Gate's Tony Stewart and a stunning Spanish wine and cheese evening. We hope to be able to see you at either event or a more intimate dinner in our main dining room soon. Happy Spring!

Steve Beckta and the family at Beckta dining & wine

A Word from our Chef

Control! A scary word, but it's something we all aspire to in one form or another. Different degrees of control affect our everyday lives, from what we choose to eat to when we choose to eat it. Personally, control goes even further in choosing who will supply our restaurant with products. In these days of a local focus on food, the number of options regarding supply has increased exponentially with no sign of slowing down. While there is no apparent downside to more local farmers, I find myself having to make tough decisions. Do I stay loyal to my existing suppliers or do I help a new producer grow his business? Am I compromising your dining experience by not trying to find the latest and greatest, or am I committed to using the best of the seasons from trusted suppliers and friends who have served me so well over the last years? Perhaps the answer is right in my own kitchen. As you read on, you will see that we are taking on a new supplier this year...ourselves! The kitchen staff, led by Chef de Cuisine Dirk McCabe, is now a micro-processor, and we eagerly anticipate the latest and greatest this new supplier has to offer.

Hope to see you at Beckta soon. Eat well, Mike



A publication for the friends and guests of Beckta dining & wine

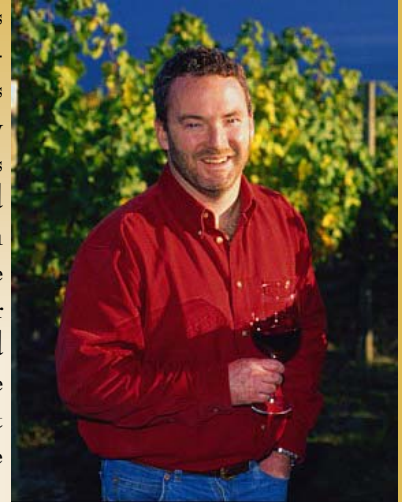
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Q u a i l s ' G a t e W i n e D i n n e r



Join Tony Stewart (right) of the Okanagan Valley's legendary Quails' Gate Winery for an intimate dinner featuring some of the best west coast wines around on Wednesday May 27th at 6:30pm. Tony will be showcasing five of his greatest bottlings (including their Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir) alongside of a specially created menu by Executive Chef Michael Moffatt and Chef de Cuisine Dirk McCabe. The cost will be \$125 per person plus taxes and gratuity. Space is very limited as there are only 20 seats around our private dining room's communal dining table, so contact us at 613-238-7063 as soon as possible to reserve your spot!



O u r 2 C a p t a i n s



This time of year is all about newness and growth. So what better time to publicly announce a change to our Front of House management? It is with great happiness that we welcome back a very familiar face, Haz El-Gabalawy (left), from his West Coast excursion last year. The winner of the Service Person of the Year Award at the 2008 Ottawa Restaurant Awards, Haz returns to us to work

alongside his fellow Head Server and good friend, Bill Mannering (right). Both of these excellent servers are founding members of *Beckta dining & wine*, and they bring a wealth of skill, knowledge and caring to every guest's dining experience. Haz, Bill and the rest of our service team hope to have the honour and pleasure of serving you soon!



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Dirk McCabe's Farm



Thanks to our Chef de Cuisine's negotiations (and his profound love of the outdoors), *Beckta dining & wine* has entered into an agreement with Ian Walker from Mariposa Farm to create a small farm and garden on a corner of his land. How are we getting the farm ready? Since it's an area which hasn't seen any real agricultural use, it has to be prepared from scratch and much of the kitchen staff has been involved. Our first tasks were the construction of a fence and tool shed. We then let our three little pigs (the Tamworth and Boar mixes seen below) roam free, and they fertilized and tilled the soil for three weeks prior to planting. After the pigs are nudged back into their corner of the garden and

with the threat of frost now much less, planting of crops will begin later this week. Dirk (above left...the one with the hat) and his crew will be growing a variety of heirloom vegetables including carrots, beets and pisello (an Italian pea variety that Dirk's great-grandfather, Petro Chuc, brought with him from Italy in 1908, and his family has protected ever since). Also expected are asparagus peas, mini black watermelon, giant pumpkins, and some varieties of cucumbers. Lastly, Dirk has been nursery-growing twenty-five varieties of heirloom tomatoes since the first week of March, and these are coming along great. He has every color from red, white and green to yellow, orange and black. These will be moved to the farm in the coming weeks. Expect both more updates as the season goes on and appearances of these crops in our dishes!



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THE MOST FAMOUS CHEESE OF ALL: LE CONQUISTADOR

I remember when I first took over the cheese program at Biff's Bistro in Toronto. I was young, eager and not very well versed in the world of cheese. I read as many books as I could and tasted as many cheeses as I could get my hands on. Over time, I was able to create a vocabulary to describe the cheeses much like describing wine. The man who gave me my start as a "fromager" and was one of my first mentors in the art of cheese presentation: Bruce McAdams. Bruce was the Director of Operations at Oliver Bonacini and saw potential in my eagerness to learn. When I took over the cheese program, I remember him giving me a book on French cheese and telling me to run with it. Seeing my "deer in the headlights" look, he told me a funny story I'd like to share.

He recounted a time when he was thrust into a cheese presentation without having reviewed what was on the board. He was completely engaged with the guests, eagerly describing each cheese with a little story and getting lost in each cheesy delicacy. That is, until he came to a hard cheese, with a distinctive chevron pattern on the rind. Feeling a little hot under the collar he couldn't remember its name. So, with a grand gesture he plodded on, "Ahh, this cheese, this cheese is the most famous cheese in Spain. A rare delicacy that is only made in small batches this time of year. It's called...it's called, Le Conquistador!" The guests loved it and were determined to find this precious gem although this cheese does not exist. He told me no matter what happens, be passionate about what you do! I thank him for this and for never, ever being able to forget Manchego or as Bruce likes to call it – Le Conquistador.

With this Spanish great in mind, please join us in our beautiful second floor Private Dining Room on Sunday May 31st for an exploration of Spanish cheese and wine. I will host the event along with our sommelier, Pieter Van den Weghe, and guide you through 6 cheeses and 4 wines from across



Spain. Come and enjoy the various flavours, textures and subtleties of these cheeses, and discover for yourself the joy of a fantastic food and wine pairing.

The price is \$50 per person plus taxes and gratuity. The event will begin at 7:00pm with a glass of sparkling wine and end at 8:30pm. However, if you wish, join us before to enjoy some appetizers or perhaps use the cheese to jumpstart your evening and continue afterwards with other dishes from our menu in our main dining room. Space is limited to the first 20 people so reserve your spot today and help create a new tradition here at Beckta dining & wine!

Cheese,
Steve Whittaker