



... WHEN THE CONVERSATION IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE WINE

SUMMER 2013

The Mad Scientist

...ON MIDNIGHT SNACKS & FRIED SPAM

COLORFUL SPLASHES ON THE TABLE

If you're like Chris and nibble on midnight masterpieces with a glass of wine in hand, drink in style with creative coaster tiles made by one of our local artists.

Joann Tomsche has lived in Idyllwild for 24 years and finds Middle Ridge's home town to be the perfect setting for her work. "I love the natural setting of the mountain, the community, the peacefulness. Being in nature is an important part of my daily life. It's invigorating, inspiring, calming, refreshing. The beauty and solitude, the quiet of Idyllwild, are why I like working here." And, indeed, it was her own artwork that inspired these colorful coasters. "The tiles came about because I was making small original collages for my gallery. I also wanted to make something beautiful that anyone could take home. So these are reproductions of my paper collage pieces and original paintings."

But Joann doesn't just make these for other people. She finds them handy to have in her own home as well. "I use these coasters every day with wine, with food, as colorful accents. The collage designs have little visual surprises to spark conversations and their bright colors are appealing to people."



You can purchase Joann's coasters at Acorn Gallery, 54750 North Circle Drive, Idyllwild, CA 92549 (951) 659-5950

IDYLLWILD

If you spend any time with Winemaker Chris, a couple of things immediately become apparent. First off, he really enjoys people and treats everyone he meets like a longtime friend. Secondly, he absolutely loves and enjoys food ... a lot of different food. For Chris, it's ALL good.

We caught up with him in his Idyllwild home and, no, he wasn't tinkering in his winemaking lab. Instead, he was busy having fun in his second favorite "lab" – otherwise known as his large, welcoming kitchen – so, of course, the conversation turned to cooking, eating, and entertaining.

Q: I was told that the architect who designed your home in Idyllwild described it as a "kitchen with two bedrooms attached." Why is there such a focus on the kitchen?

Chris: As you can see, it's not just a kitchen. It's really a Great Room – one big room that includes the kitchen, living room and dining room. We designed it that way because when friends and family come to visit, we all end up in the kitchen.

I love the way this one is designed with both an island and a countertop that have seating facing each other, and with the cooktop smack dab in the middle. I start cooking and serving up glasses of wine, and everyone joins in the conversation ... and some join in the food prep and cooking, too. I picked up my approach to entertaining from my Japanese mother – you never want guests to be bored or hungry!

Q: I understand you're a fantastic cook. How did that start?

Chris: It was more or less something I came into when I was a bachelor. It's called survival cooking – I had to learn to cook! And I wanted to eat good food, so I started experimenting. First I'd follow recipes. After a while, I started throwing things together to see what worked. As it turned out, I became pretty good at it!

I also found out that cooking was a great way to take my mind off of work at the end of a long day, so it became a way to relax. And I enjoyed having friends over, so cooking was a good skill to have. Bringing wine, food and people together always makes for a fun time!

Q: I've heard about your fondness for midnight snacks. Tell me about that.

Chris: Oh yeah, for sure. My midnight snacks can be complex but, more often than not, they're pretty simple. I've been known to go out and buy some chicken and then pan roast it, especially if there's a bottle of wine

open – I use the wine to deglaze the pan. Delicious! Sometimes I just want to quick fry a Spam sandwich. Not that flavored Spam stuff, though. I flavor the Spam myself. And I use grilled garlic bread that I make with roasted garlic and oil. It's the best!

Q: Wow, sounds great! I'd love to try it.

Chris: Come back at midnight, and I'll get you all set up!



Wine in the Lines

IDYLLWILD MEETS MANHATTAN

Middle Ridge is excited to be partnering with Christo Gonzales, an executive chef who hails from Manhattan. He may live over 2,000 miles from Idyllwild, but the distance doesn't keep him and Winemaker Chris from creating amazing food and wine pairings together. Chris and Christo have a lot in common – and we don't just mean their similar names.

Experiencing Manhattan

Chris hasn't visited Manhattan in many years, but it's time to return! And who better to connect with than Christo? You just know this local chef will give him a fantastic food-inspired "insider's" tour.

Here are Chef Christo's five favorite things to do when Chris visits The Big Apple:

Grimaldi's

"One of the first things we'd do is rent a bike and ride over to Grimaldi's for pizza. It's under the Brooklyn Bridge in an area called DUMBO, which stands for 'Down Under the Manhattan and Brooklyn Overpass'. My favorite pizza at Grimaldi's is the Margherita, which I really like because its understated simplicity makes it stand apart."

Taco Truck in Queens

"Some of the best tacos I've ever had have been from the taco trucks in Queens. These are authentic Mexican-style tacos made only better with traditional ingredients like tongue and pig's ear – they're definitely not for the faint of palate, that's for sure!"

Eataly

"A trip to Eataly is a 'must.' This high-end Italian food market is like a Disneyland for food lovers – there's a new delight around every corner. It has to be experienced to be believed."

Picnic in Central Park

"No visit to New York would be complete without a visit to Central Park. The view of Belvedere Castle is just beautiful and, of course, there's the Bethesda Fountain. Nothing would be more fun than preparing one of my special dishes and taking Chris there for lunch. Of course, he'd have to bring the wine!"

Mushroom Hunting

"Mushroom hunting isn't something that comes to mind for most folks when they think about Central Park. But for me, it's one of the hidden beauties of this lush park. The New York Mycological Society makes frequent trips hunting for these delicacies, and I am sure Chris would enjoy the results."

Color & Texture

The Art of the Chef

You can catch Chef Christo making appearances on the Weather Channel as a member of the Char-Broil All Star team, or creating videos for eHow.com. You can also find him catering some of New York's swankiest events and elite private parties, wowing everyone with his colorful, mouthwatering presentations. Lately, you might also spot Chef Christo sipping some Middle Ridge wine.

"I've always wanted to be a chef, ever since I was a little boy."

Christo fondly remembers how he used to race home from school to catch Julia Childs on television. "I tried to learn as much as I could – I wanted to try everything I saw Julia do."

Life has a funny way of working though, and Christo didn't become a professional chef right away. Instead, he worked for more than a decade as a fashion stylist for major magazines and then moved on to other non-food related jobs. But he kept cooking as hobby while his desire to cook professionally simmered in the background. "I was a single dad, and I'd take my son to the playground and bring my soup for us to eat. Other parents at the park started tasting my soups and liked them. So I turned it into a business." One of his happy customers told him about a company that was looking for a chef. One job led to another, and now he's the Executive Chef at Showstoppers Catering and a personal chef for some of Manhattan's top movers and shakers.

"Experimenting is second nature to me."

Christo's experimenting doesn't start in the kitchen, though. "I put together unique food combinations in my mind. As I shop for the ingredients, I visualize the final product. Then I go to the kitchen and try it on the plate to make sure it all works."

"Food has to look good!"

Christo is known for his eye-popping food presentations. "In fact, I use a color wheel to help me pick contrasting colors for the ingredients in my recipes. For example, if I use corn as an ingredient, I might put it with purple potatoes. I go about my cooking the art school way."

"It's exciting to see how Chris approaches wine."

"Chris' reds have wonderfully smooth tannins. And I was impressed with the intensity and variety of the aromas and flavors – from chocolate and berries to pepper notes. I really enjoyed the Pinot Grigio, too. It's very bright and refreshing and has enormous flavor. I knew it could stand up to just about any dish I wanted to pair with it."



Check out "Chef Christo Gonzales" on Facebook, or enjoy his blog – ChezWhat? – at alittlebitofchristo.blogspot.com.

Experiencing Idyllwild

Chef Christo hasn't been to our hometown yet, but when he visits, Winemaker Chris definitely has the inside track on where to go and what to do for a really enjoyable time.

Here are Chris' five favorite things to do when Christo comes to our mountain community:

Ziplining

"Ziplining is a total blast! I'd take Christo over to my friend's place, hook him up and then watch him fly between the trees and over Strawberry Creek. With a little luck, he'd have a gentle landing on the platform. After that, only two more landings to go!"

The Mad Scientist Lab

"Spending some time in my wine lab is definitely in order. I'd let Christo tinker around and try his hand at blending wine. Who knows what he would come up with? It would definitely be an adventure!"

Suicide Rock

"Idyllwild is known for its breath-taking scenery, and one of the most majestic views is from the top of Suicide Rock. We'd hike up there and enjoy a sack lunch with our feet dangling off the side of the rock. The trick is to not reach for your napkin when the wind blows it away!"

Garner Valley

"This is where the opening scene of the TV show *Bonanza* was shot, and it's just beautiful. It's also on the way to the Temecula and Ramona wine countries, so some wine tasting is definitely on the agenda!"

Idyllwild Deer Sightings

"Given his art background, I think Christo would appreciate going on a tour of Deer Sightings. It's a public art exhibit of 22 life-size deer located throughout the town and painted by local artists to celebrate the history and culture of Idyllwild. Middle Ridge Winery is one of the sponsors of this Art Alliance of Idyllwild project, and we're looking forward to the exhibit's opening in October."

Aromas & Flavors

The Art of the Winemaker

When Chris isn't making wine or running experiments in the lab, you'll find him meeting with wine bloggers or sending off samples to wine reviewers and wine competitions. It's time well spent since his wine has been featured in *Wine Enthusiast* magazine and won numerous international awards, including Sweepstakes (best red wine) at the Long Beach Grand Cru, long considered to be one of the top international wine competitions in the U.S.

"I've always wanted to play with wine."

Chris' fascination with wine began early in his career when he traveled along the central and northern coasts of California to meet with IT clients. In between meetings, he would seek out small wineries where he could talk to the winemaker and learn the finer points of aroma, texture and various winemaking styles. Then he heard about the wine courses offered at UC Davis. "They sounded like a lot of fun, so I jumped in and took one class after another. The next thing you know, I'm making wine in my garage. I started with six gallons, then twenty, and before you know it I'm making 200-gallon batches. I submitted my wine to competitions, got some medals and thought 'Okay, let's start a business.'"

"Spending an evening in my wine lab is a real kick in the pants!"

One of Chris' early wine experiments involved a batch of Pinot Grigio. "I wanted to find out what different yeast strains and pH levels would do to the wine. It was fun to see how one combination gave me certain aromas and tastes, while another took the wine in a different direction. There's nothing like experimenting to get you thinking in new ways."

"Preserving the aromas and flavors of the grapes is what it's all about."

Every winemaker has his or her own style. "If I wanted, I could take a cabernet and make it smell real oaky. But my wines are 'fruit forward'. Don't get me wrong – I like hints of oak, but I don't want the oak aromas to be so heavy that they mask the smell of the fruit. I want my zinfandel to smell like a zinfandel. My merlot smells like a merlot."

"You can almost smell Chef Christo's food just by looking at his photos."

It was Chef Christo's photos that first grabbed Chris' attention, but it didn't take long for Chris to find out that Christo's talents were more than just pretty pictures. "The greatest thing is that his creativity is never ending. He's a storehouse of new ideas, and the way he puts his ingredients together really impresses me."



Lately, Chris has been having fun creating some great wine and food pairings with Chef Christo. You'll find highlights on the back page of this newsletter.

Bold & Colorful... And Delicious!

Winemaker Chris and Chef Christo are definitely colorful characters! It's not surprising that they joined forces to create some wonderfully delicious food and wine pairings. We're excited to share them with you. Short descriptions are provided below, and you can find the full recipes in the *News* section of our website middleridge.com.

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NEW YORK CHOP & SLAW

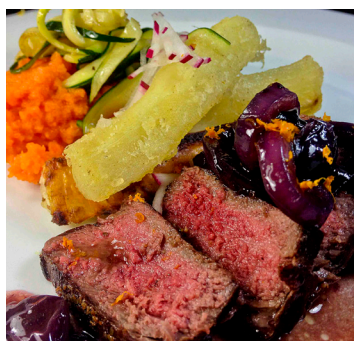


Grilled pork chops with garlic and parsley mashed potatoes, parsnip and red pepper puree, grilled zucchini, and cabbage slaw made with a green apple, carrot, and red radish.

Chef's wine recommendation:
2012 Pinot Grigio

"The coleslaw I created for this dish was absolutely inspired by the Pinot Grigio. I love the wine's crisp, refined taste, and I knew that the fresh slaw would complement it nicely."

CHOCOLATE CHERRY VELVET ANTLER STEAK



Tenderloin of venison with caramelized red onion and blueberry with orange zest. Finished with a bittersweet chocolate compound butter, and served with carrot puree, julienned zucchini and fried yucca.

Chef's wine recommendation:
2010 OldVine Zinfandel

"I took one taste of the Zinfandel and absolutely knew that I had to make a chocolate-cherry sauce to pair with it. Then I wanted a nice rich meat to go with the sauce, and I thought of venison. Just be sure to get a mild cut of venison -- you don't want anything too strong."

ORANGE SUPREME CHICKEN



Roast chicken with an orange glaze. Served with confetti mashed potatoes and arugula salad with orange supremes.

Chef's wine recommendation:
The Mule

"This dish pairs beautifully with The Mule. The drink nicely plays off the thyme-orange glaze and the soft unctuousness of the roast chicken. And the spicy bite of the arugula complements the effervescence of The Mule."

Come taste Middle Ridge wines at Crush & Brew in Old Town Temecula, which serves as our tasting room, and at special events in Idyllwild.



Crush & Brew
28544 Old Town Front Street
Temecula, CA 92590



www.middleridge.com