

# Kiawah Legends Magazine

March 2013



*In the 1920s, only a select few knew Paris to be a haven of high culture, creative expression, and impeccable taste. Writers and artists living in the Left Bank had little notion of what their cultural hotbed would represent a century later—they simply flocked to the community that encouraged their art.*

## E + FOOD

• Food Festival enchants epicures in its eighth year  
• Charleston as a new culinary darling of the nation

WRITTEN by KRISTEN GEHRMAN  
PHOTOGRAPHS by SULLY SULLIVAN

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This is the comparison that Patrick Emerson, top sommelier of Maverick Southern Kitchens, makes to Charleston on the eve of the 2012 BB&T Charleston Wine + Food Festival. And judging by the roster of internationally renowned chefs, luxury wine importers, and high-profile guests from across the country, all drawn to the talent and camaraderie of Charleston's culinary milieu, he might be on to something.

"Charleston is in a renaissance of food and culture. We don't always recognize it, because we are in it. Do you think James Joyce knew what he was a part of in Paris?" Emerson asks. "I've been in New York and San Francisco and all over the country; there is no culinary scene as hot as here. We really are on fire."

The Festival, preparing for its eighth year, draws over 21,000 guests to restaurants and venues downtown for four days in March. Of those guests, 38 percent come from out of town, many visiting Charleston for the first time. In 2012, the weekend brought \$8.6 million to the local economy, up \$2 million from the previous year.

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If opening night is an hors d'oeuvre and the luncheon an appetizer, then Friday evening's Perfectly Paired Dinners are most certainly the main course of the Wine + Food Festival. Showcasing the finery of seventeen local restaurants by pairing each local chef with a celebrated guest chef, the dinners highlight a unique collaboration in five courses.

At East Bay Street's Magnolias, executive chef Don Drake partners with chef Tory McPhail of Commander's Palace in New Orleans to concoct the perfect pairing of Lowcountry and Louisiana flavors. The result: five unique dishes that speak to a new tradition of culinary teamwork.

Chef Drake's stone crab garnished with Cajun-style avocado, mango, and cucumber are followed by wild Louisiana white shrimp brought in Chef McPhail's suitcase and andouille sausage with red beans. The competing delicacy of the third and fourth courses proves that two award-winning chefs need not settle on just one main dish. Chef Drake's chicory coffee lacquered quail follows Chef McPhail's red fish topped with bright orange Bayou crawfish.

Tahmiene Momtazi, a guest from Portland's Maysara Winery and the youngest female winemaker in the United States, selected wine to accompany each course. A fiery addition to Magnolias' traditional ambiance, Momtazi threw off all sommelier snobbery in favor of her personal philosophy for selecting wine: "Is it yum or yuck?"

Following a final course of white chocolate pistachio mousse, the two chefs returned for a final applause. "Tonight's dinner was all about camaraderie," said Chef Drake. "We welcome out-of-town chefs into our kitchens to learn from their techniques and to share some of our own. I have friends all over the country because of this festival, and I hope after tonight, you all can say the same."



MAIN COURSE AT MAGNOLIAS,



TORY MCPHAIL OF COMMANDERS PALACE AT MAGNOLIAS,

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