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Wednesday, 11 July, 2007

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Say goodbye to Simmer and hello to Chefables

By Tom Luther
InScope

Wave goodbye to Simmer and say hello to Chefables. Lesley Kohn and Ken Harris have closed Simmer, their Corte Madera restaurant at 60 Corte Madera Ave., and started their new business, Chefables, a day-care catering business.

What is Chefables, you ask? It's a service for foodie parents to raise their kids to be foodies. The company offers parents at participating day-care centers the opportunity to buy three-course from-scratch hot lunch for their children. There is an optional 'tea time' delivered daily to the site. The idea came to Harris when he was fixing fresh for his young daughter Emily.

"It's a passion of Ken's and mine. What kids eat the first five years is so important. This way we get kids eating healthy while they're young," explains Kohn. Chefables currently serves over 100 children of dozen day-care centers in San Francisco and Marin that are clients. They are both veteran opened Simmer in 2005.



Nick's Cove to open

The long wait is over. Nick's Cove in Marshall on the coast is set to open the first week of July. Kuleto and Mark Franz have been working on this project for a few years. This is a combination restaurant and lodge that has been in existence for almost 100 years. The building sat empty for many years.

Kuleto is the restaurant designer of many of the Kimpton Hotel Company's restaurants and an Estate winery, known for sangiovese and cabernet. Mark Franz is the chef of Farallon restaurant in San Francisco, which just celebrated its 10-year anniversary. Kuleto designed Farallon, one of the best dining atmospheres in the Bay Area. Its menu of what's termed "coastal cuisine" features seafood dishes that are unusual fish not typically found in most traditional restaurants.

World's largest salmon barbecue

The world's largest salmon barbecue - we're talking quantity, not salmon-size - will be held from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., at Noyo Harbor, in Ft. Bragg. Cost is \$20, (\$10 for kids under 12) with proceeds going to the Salmon Restoration Association of California. Independence Day fireworks follow. Visit salmonbarbecue.com for more information.

This year's salmon season has been called really dismal so far for North Coast fishermen, with very little salmon being caught. Persistent wind and unusually cold Pacific Ocean water made for a slow start to the season.

and sport salmon fishing season on the North Coast, bumping up the retail price for the bright salmon at local markets.

Hopes for a rebound from last year's highly restricted salmon season - officially declared a federal government - are on hold, with fishermen banking on a better summer, when the sea hits its peak.

West Coast salmon fishermen will be getting \$60 million in federal relief from a measure introduced by Mike Thompson, D-St. Helena, who called the funding "long overdue."

The total West Coast commercial catch of the 2006 salmon season was 12 percent of a typical year, resulting in direct losses to fishermen of \$16 million. The Commerce Department declared the salmon fishery but no federal aid, other than small-business loans, was authorized. The relief approved last year for fishermen and communities in Oregon and California as far south as Santa Barbara. Money, in the form of grants, will be distributed by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

New book about Mondavi dynasty

A new biography of pioneering vintner Robert Mondavi, likely to stir controversy in the Napa Valley community, was just released last week. "The House of Mondavi: The Rise and Fall of an American Dynasty" by Julia Flynn Siler traces the family infighting and financial pressures that led to the sale of Robert Mondavi Corp. to the global conglomerate Constellation Brands in 2004.

Although inspired by modern-day events, the book spans almost 100 years, from the time Charles Mondavi, Robert's parents, passed through Ellis Island from Sassaferrato, Italy, in 1906.

Delving into the Mondavis' early days in Lodi, their important years at Charles Krug and the company's growth and expansion at Robert Mondavi Winery, Flynn Siler interviewed more than 250 sources, including many members of the immediate family.

Flynn Siler also spoke to many alums of "Mondavi University," as the Robert Mondavi Winery has been called in many years. The list of noteworthy winemakers who passed through its doors is long. Mondavi's first winemaker was Warren Winiarski, who went on to found Stag's Leap Cellars.

"I haven't read the book and don't intend to," said Tim Mondavi, Robert's younger son and third-generation winemaker for many years. "Robert Mondavi Winery was a magical place and we accomplished things I'm really proud of. We helped educate America as to the role fine wine had. My guess is that the book discussed at all in the book."

Harvey Posert, a longtime public relations adviser for Mondavi who secured Robert's last form of funding from Flynn Siler in March 2005, is none too pleased with the way the book turned out. "It's an unbalanced view of a hardworking family and what they did," he said. "It's well-researched, but the valley has been gossiped about before. This is just about the bad times; it's sad, instead of being an instructive cautionary tale."

Despite the book's unflinching look at a family's failures, Flynn Siler doesn't think it will ultimately hurt Mondavi's well-established reputation and the more than half a century's worth of good will he has built throughout the wine world. "His legacy of a tireless pitchman for the Napa Valley, California wine industry is secure," she said. "I think it makes no difference that Constellation bought the winery, and I don't think that in any way my book will hurt that legacy. I think it will deepen the understanding of what it took to do what he did - a focused, driven personality."

At 452 pages, "House of Mondavi" goes to great lengths to explain that history, but Flynn Siler also touches on some of the good times for which the winery also was well-known.

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