

CONFESSIONS OF A BACHELORETTE ■ A ROMANTIC NAPA GETAWAY

# diabolo

The Magazine of the East Bay

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Winemaker  
**KARL WENTE**

# DIABLODISH

## »»» Grégoire Jacquet, owner of the popular Berkeley California-French takeout spot Grégoire, is pursuing two new ventures.

*Diablo* has learned that in addition to the second **Grégoire** location he's launching this spring on Piedmont Avenue in Oakland, he is also opening a new restaurant in the **Epicurious Garden** development on Shattuck Avenue next to **César** (the same location as the on-again off-again "culinary marketplace" *Dish* has followed). The new spot will be called **Socca Oven** and will specialize in savory Niçoise cakes made with chickpea flour.

East Bay chefs are making themselves at home in San Francisco. Former **Duck Club** chef **Evan Crandall** and **Camille and Hakki Goksever**, who own **Ephesus** in Walnut Creek, are opening restaurants across the Bay. The Goksevers' new spot in Pacific Heights is slated to open this summer, while Crandall plans to open a fine dining restaurant within the year.



The team at **Va de Vi** is in high gear these days. After publishing *The Va de Vi Cookbook*, co-owner **Dale Raen** says the owners are looking to open a retail business, possibly in Lafayette, called **Va de Vi To Go** that would sell prepared foods and wine. They're also interested in starting a catering business.

We caught up with Va de Vi's wine director and nascent winemaker **Brendan Eliason** en route to his new Emeryville-based winery, **Periscope Cellars**. He opened the winery and tasting room in a World War II submarine-repair building. Eliason joins a growing number of urban winemakers in the East Bay. "It's a new thing, all these smaller, high-quality winemakers, displaced from the Wine Country because of high costs, setting down roots in the city," he says. Several such wineries have banded together to form the **East Bay Vintners Association**.

Another member of the association, **Lost Canyon Winery**, known for its delicious Russian River Valley Pinot Noir and Syrah, has opened its new winery and tasting room on Dennison Street in East Oakland at a site where **Jack London** once lived.

In other East Bay wine news, Livermore's **Big White House** winery opened its tasting room at the end of Greenville Road. And *Wine Spectator* keeps praising bottles from the East Bay's 2003 vintage. Rosenblum's 2003 Rockpile Zinfandel, from the **Rockpile Road Vineyard**, ranked third in the magazine's list of the Top 100 wines of 2005. Rosenblum's 2003 Paso Robles Richard Sauret Vineyards Zinfandel also earned a spot, as did DuMOL Syrah Russian River Valley 2003, from former **Prima** owners **Janet and Michael Verlander**.



**Peet's Coffee & Tea**, which got its start at the corner of Walnut and Vine streets in Berkeley, is widening its East Bay presence. The company has opened new stores in Emeryville and Concord, and will soon break ground on a new roasting operation in Alameda. *Got Dish? E-mail us at [dish@maildiablo.com](mailto:dish@maildiablo.com).*

## diablo dining

### VENTICELLO'S RISTORANTE ITALIANO

911 First St.  
(707) 747-5263

Part of the appeal of a stroll down First Street in Benicia is the diversity of its dining options. Adding to this appeal is Venticello's. This stylish restaurant serves classic Italian fare. While the menu doesn't hold many surprises, many dishes are prepared with a refreshing lightness that lets the individual ingredients shine. Stuffed eggplant, salads, homemade soups, and pastas are all good. It's only when the kitchen strays into non-Italian territory that some dishes suffer. There's a small but inviting outdoor seating section, perfect for watching life go by on a warm night. And for lingering with dessert, the classic tiramisu is creamy, rich, and big enough to share. Lunch and dinner Mon.-Sat., brunch Sun. ☼ \$\$\$.

### BERKELEY

#### BENDEAN

1647 Solano Ave.  
(510) 526-3700

Don't be surprised to find eight-year-old Ben, son of chef-owner Lance Dean Velasquez, busing your table or playing when you visit this neighborhood restaurant named for him and Dad. Do roll up your sleeves and enjoy Dean's way with simple dishes, from cauliflower soup touched with truffle oil to braised short ribs with potato purée and oyster mushrooms. Look for California cuisine and occasional Mediterranean and Latin dishes. Not to be missed: Ben's Supper, a three-course meal available from 5 to 6 p.m. for \$13. Such a deal! Dinner daily. ☼ \$\$-\$\$\$.

#### BETTE'S OCEANVIEW DINER

1807-A Fourth St.  
(510) 644-3230

This ever-packed and cozy diner is like home to its regulars, and a slice of motley Berkeley life for out-of-towners. The wait can be long, and the service crisp, but you won't leave hungry or unsatisfied, especially after tearing into huevos rancheros, soufflé pancakes, or a wedge of pie à la mode. Breakfast and lunch daily. ☼ \$.

#### BISTRO LIAISON

1849 Shattuck Ave.  
(510) 849-2155

This Shattuck Avenue bistro, just down the street from the heavy hitters in Berkeley's famed "gourmet ghetto," offers unpretentious French fare in a friendly atmosphere. Executive chef and proprietor Kenneth Kniesse formerly starred as chef de cuisine at the popular Left Bank restaurants in Larkspur and Menlo Park. Liaison has a similar French-but-not-fussy feel, and the menu features hearty favorites like beef Burgundy stew, niçoise salad, and French onion soup, as well as several vegetarian choices. A wine list with numerous Northern California and French selections complements the fresh cuisine. Lunch and dinner daily, brunch Sun. ☼ \$\$-\$\$\$.

#### CAFÉ CACAO

914 Heinz Ave.  
(510) 843-6000

This chocolate temple located at the Sharffen Berger chocolate factory also offers a small menu with a clean California sensibility. Seasonal dishes such as wild local salmon,