



Pastry chef Anthony Chavez perfects a dessert at 2941 Restaurant in Falls Church.

ANDREW HARNIK/EXAMINER

Sweet rewards

2941 chef started early and worked hard to achieve success

By **Alexandra Greeley**
Special to The Examiner

The underlying passion for cooking must start early with most chefs, and that is certainly true of Anthony Chavez, who oversees the pastry kitchen at the stylish Falls Church restaurant 2941. Thanks to the initial training from his mother and his grandmother, this native Californian got turned on to cooking, then to fancy baking, as a child.

"My interest started at home. My grandmother was a great cook," he says. "She made the food and I made the desserts. She also made a great lemon meringue pie and coconut cream pie."

But he also pays tribute to his mother's firm hand: She taught him knife skills when he was only 8 years old, and because she is Italian, she was always making ravioli, gnocchi and pasta sauces, he says. So it's not hard to see how Chavez took so much interest in kitchen work.

"Even as a kid, I wanted to do pastries," he says. "My mom thought I was a better at cooking than baking."

A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Chavez began dreaming about pastries during his externship at Dean and DeLuca in Charlotte, N.C., and he went on to study pastry making at the French Pastry School in Chicago, learning from such well-known chefs as Sebastien Canonne, John Kraus, Stephane Glacier and Emmanuel Ryon.

This intensive work gave him a leg up in the pastry world. It gave him the credentials to work first at

Do you cook at home?

I cook at home, but I do not bake at home. I get frustrated without all the tools and oven. I love seeing what a chef does, and I do that at home for [my wife].

What is your comfort food?

I love everything, but especially ice cream and chocolate.

What are your must-have ingredients?

Valrhona chocolate, bourbon vanilla beans, locally grown products, like a good fig. And

King Arthur pastry flour — I use pastry flour for everything.

What was your luckiest culinary moment?

When I got the job [here]. I did a tasting. I flew in from Chicago, and the next day I made 10 desserts. It went off well. The chef rated it a 9 out of 10.

What's in your fridge?

Milk, cheese, charcuterie, I don't eat much at home. A jar of salsa, condiments. And deer meat in the freezer.

IF YOU GO

2941 Restaurant

» **Location:** 2941 Fairview Park Drive, Falls Church
 » **Contact:** 703-270-1500
 » **Hours:** Lunch — 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., Dinner — 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Monday-Friday, Dinner — 5 to 10 p.m. Saturday-Sunday

For more with this chef, visit dce Examiner.com.

the Ritz-Carlton Chicago, where he wound up being the executive pastry chef, and then to move on as executive pastry chef at the Sofitel Chicago Water Tower — proving hard work and a sugary imagination do pay off. Now facing the challenge of creating and fine-tuning a sweets menu that changes often, Chavez says he works closely with the executive chef to find his sweet inspirations.

"I bounce ideas off him," he says. "He and I have sort of the same vision of food. But I also read and pick up ideas from the staff."

Preferring his desserts to highlight a fruit's flavor and to not be overly sweet, Chavez regales the restaurant's guests with plated desserts — his favorite way of presenting them — that meld savory technical ideas with artistic flair.

"These desserts require lots of creativity, and when done right, they are beautiful," he says. "And I hope they taste great."

Patrons may find such gustatory splendors as his chocolate quartet, a composition of a Jivara 40 percent chocolate tart, Guayaquil 64 percent chocolate cake, Caribe 66 percent chocolate cremeux and a Tanzanie 75

percent frozen truffle. Chavez says he believes this chocolate lover's fantasy has probably garnered the most raves — "I'm proud of all my desserts," he says, but this one stands out. But who would not fall in love with his Meyer lemon petit gateaux with a milk chocolate dacquoise and coffee crème anglaise?

To an outsider, this all sounds like the stuff of sweet dreams. But for Chavez, the long kitchen hours and the exacting science required for successful patisserie art are all in the day's work. As he concludes, "I love what I do."

Scott Greenberg » The Vine Guy

2007 Calif. vintage: Run, don't walk

I know that we're in the middle of a worldwide economic crisis. I know that the unemployment rate is up and the stock market is down. And above all, I know that the last thing on anyone's mind is spending money on nonessential consumer luxuries such as wine ... particularly wine they won't even see for two or more years. But knowing all of that, I still have only one thing to say about the opportunity to buy futures of 2007 California vintage wines: Run, don't walk.

I recently had an opportunity to taste more than 70 barrel samples of California wines at the 24th annual California Futures Tasting, presented by MacArthur Beverages. The event was originally conceived by Addy Bassin, the original owner of MacArthur Beverages, to mimic Bordeaux's Union de Grand Cru, the annual weeklong affair where members of the wine trade get a sneak peak of newly vinified wines. Bassin wanted to give Washington-area consumers the same type of exposure to the California wine industry so they could have an opportunity to purchase the not-yet-released domestic wines at a discount.

This year's event featured the 2007 vintage. In Northern California, the vintage started off with a mild winter and a warm, dry spring that led to a healthy bud break and then a smaller-than-average fruit set. The normally hot summer months were relatively mild with just a few heat spikes early in the season. The long, even weather continued through the end of August and eventually cooled in mid-September, allowing farmers to take their time with the harvest and even extend it into October for cabernet sauvignon.

This long harvest provided winemakers with the luxury of picking the grapes when the seeds were brown and nutty but the fruit was still fresh (green seeds can impart an herbaceous or vegetal quality to the wine). It also let producers vinify the wines in smaller lots, giving them more control in the blending process.

Almost all of the wines are fruit-driven but remarkably in balance, with tannins and acidity near perfect pitch. Many of these wines will drink well young and even better with a few years in the cellar. I have broken the wines down into three categories: Favorites, Indulgences and best buys. All wines are from California. Prices listed are the "pre-release" price offered through MacArthur Beverage in Washington, D.C., and are subject to availability and future delivery.

■ **Favorites:** These are top-of-my-list wines that I would buy based on quality and price.

2007 Dunn Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$65)

Wow — this is the most approachable Dunn HM I have ever tasted. Fabulous fruit and great structure that will easily age for 10-plus years. A steal at this price.

2007 EMH Vineyards Black Cat Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$60)

One of my perennial favorites, made

from a tiny vineyard, this super-structured wine makes me feel like I am drinking a cult cabernet at a fraction of the cost.

2007 Elyse Morisoli Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$56)

The fruit shines through, and sweet tannins and the 4 percent of petite sirah add amazing depth.

2007 Kathryn Hall Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$65)

Small berries and thick skins produce ripe fruit with a long, luscious finish.

2007 Larkin Cabernet Franc, Napa Valley (\$60)

Great balance and remarkable finesse for such a big wine. A "must buy" for Cabernet Franc fans.

2007 Madrigal Vineyards Sonnet 63, Napa Valley (\$55)

A blend of cabernet sauvignon, merlot and Cabernet Franc provides nice balance and loads of ripe fruit.

2007 Moffett Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$55)

A very nice wine with ripe, black fruit and solid tannins. Great structure.

■ **Indulgences:** All of these wines are opulent, big wines that are worth the money — and the wait — for serious collectors.

2007 Diamond Creek Volcanic Hill Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$145)

The fruit is beautifully interwoven with notes of mineral on a well-balanced frame.

2007 Fisher Wedding Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$125)

A "wow" experience where the fruit is in harmony with tannins and acidity to provide great depth and balance.

2007 Miner Family Vineyards Oracle, Napa Valley (\$70)

A blend of Bordeaux varietals, this massive wine has a great mouthfeel and abundant tannins to keep the rich fruit in check.

2007 Morlet Family Vineyards Passionnement Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$185)

An incredible wine — rich and complex with concentrated dark fruit built around sweet tannins and toasty oak.

2007 Stelzner Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$75)

This big cabernet has amazing depth and structure. Needs five-plus years in the cellar.

■ **Best Buys:** These wines are value-driven, providing great fruit and structure for the money. Perfect for drinking on the younger side while waiting for the bigger wines to mature.

2007 Hope and Grace Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$40)

2007 Ravenswood Winery S a n g i a c o m o Merlot, Sonoma (\$20)

2007 Regusci Winery Stag's Leap Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (\$40)

2007 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel, Paso Robles (\$35)

