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Aug 6, 2008

# Dinner Rush Love Story

BY PENNY POLLACK & JEFF RUBY

No Privacy Issues Here

Here's a new one on us: **Hank Dreyer**, owner of the new **Wine & Vine (105 S. York Rd., Elmhurst; 630-832-9463)**, jumped up on the chef's platform in the open kitchen during the height of dinner last Sunday and proposed to his partner, **Beth Corcoran**. "Beth, it's true that I'm married to Wine & Vine," he said, in full view of his staff and customers. "But I'd much rather be married to you." Then he pulled out a ring. Corcoran said yes. "Then she told me to get down off the counter, because someone has to clean that," Dreyer said. All the food at Wine & Vine, which includes a wine den, a retail shop, and cooking classes, is made to order on that platform. "Everything is done right there in front of people," says Dreyer. "We are hiding nothing. I mean nothing." No kidding.

## Quotable

"Thou shall not kill. Thou shall not commit adultery. Don't eat pork."

"I'm sorry, what was that last one?"

"Don't eat pork. God has spoken."

"Is that the word of God or is that pigs trying to outsmart everybody?"

—**Jon Stewart** (b. 1962), American comedian

## 5 Questions for Bob Amick

Amick, 58, is the founder/managing partner of **Concentrics Restaurants**, an Atlanta-based big-name company planning three restaurants in **theWit Hotel (201 N. State St.)**, a luxury boutique hotel opening in May 2009 in the Theatre District.

**D:** Can you run us through each restaurant?

**BA:** Second floor will be seasonally driven modern Italian, the signature restaurant at the hotel. 130 seats. A spectacular space with a floating 5,000-bottle wine vault. We will age and cure our own salumi. We have an incredible chef's table and chef's room in the kitchen that will also include this [glass] wall where we will cure visibly. Also a major cheese cabinet.

**D:** OK, that's one. What next?

**BA:** It's going to be a chef-driven, casual, contemporary American spot, but a little bit of a gastropub feel to it. We are going to do artisanal and local beers. Seats about 110. Very intimate, very cool space on the first floor. Cork floors, lots of wood, and lots of leather. I hired The Johnson Studio [**Tru**] to do the design.

**D:** And number three?

**BA:** Number three is the rooftop lounge, on the 27th floor. A complete small-plate menu, a sophisticated mixologist for cocktails. Woodburning oven up there. Outdoor space has a fire pit and a bar and live music.

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**D:** How's the view?

**BA:** The wall is floor-to-ceiling glass. It's got spectacular views looking past Millennium Park to the lake and great glimpses of the river. There's an incredible seven-foot glass fireplace so you can see in and out the window.

**D:** Sounds impressive. Will the rest of the hotel be as impressive?

**BA:** The hotel is very dynamic. They have great ideas for that, like an incredible state-of-the-art 50-seat theatre with stadium seating on the fourth floor. . . . State Street is making a huge comeback. We are excited to be a part of it.

### **Gift That Keeps On Giving**

"I've been making pizza since I was 20 years old," says **John Fornari**, an owner of **Paula & Monica's (1518 W. Chicago Ave.; 312-929-3615)**, a new takeout pizza joint in West Town. "I use old baker's ovens. Make everything by hand. No rollers, no machines. Make our own sauce. All the ingredients are fresh and very good quality." Fornari and his partner, **George Dragne**, serve subs, salads, and gelato in addition to deep-dish and thin-crust at the tiny spot, which they built and named for their wives. A nice gift—but they've also put their wives to work at the place.

### **She Said It**

"I don't want to annoy anyone, but when I eat out, I want to be able to modify the menu item to something that I enjoy. A lot more Americans are ordering like that now: 'I like this, but you could take this off and put this on.' When they come here to Nirvana there is such a tremendous variety of fresh food, I think it's easier for picky people to eat." -**Alaine Lubin**, owner of the new **Nirvana Wine & Grillerie (701 N. Milwaukee Ave., Vernon Hills; 847-918-7828)**. Nirvana's menu consists of dishes such as curried penne pasta with mango chutney, garlic, cannellini beans, roasted sweet potato, roasted eggplant, and golden raisins (\$7.45), and is made up of Lubin's favorite recipes—which, of course, she's modified over the years.

### **Am I Blue**

It was all downhill after the olive oil at Pollack's recent dinner at **Blue 13 (416 W. Ontario St.; 312-787-1400)**. She enjoyed the crusty bread, even if wasn't house made, but the lobster pizza was laden in so much cheese, caramelized onions, and garlic purée that the seafood nuggets almost got lost. (Those who love excess will dig it.) The puny broasted poussin lacked flavor, and no way did it live up to its \$24 price tag. Worst for last: The opah tasted skeezy. Pollack skipped dessert but now she's on the lookout for Frutatto extra virgin olive oil.

### **Things to Do**

1. On your lunch break on August 7th, wander over to the Daley Plaza Farmers' Market (**Washington and Dearborn Sts.**), where **Mark Mendez (Carnivale)**, **Jimmy Madla (Coobah)**, and **Kaminsky Thomas (Anteprima)** face off in the second annual **Country Chef Challenge**, a live *Iron Chef*-style competition.
2. [Buy tickets](#) for "the nation's premier culinary event to end childhood hunger" on August 11th.
3. [Read this story](#) about the political ramifications of a KFC in Fallujah; then skim the comments

below it. Fascinating.

### Dot Dot Dot . . .

**Café Furaibo (2907 N. Lincoln Ave.; 773-472-7017)**, a sleeper sushi restaurant, serves a mean tofu steak: \$5, mongo size. . . . Down the block, **The Parmigian (2826 N. Lincoln Ave.)**, which supposedly opened on May 2nd, looks abandoned, and the phone has been disconnected. . . . Great waiter of the week: Andy at **Big Jones (5347 N. Clark St.; 773-275-5725)**. The guy should give lessons. . . . **Sam Youkhanna (Wild Onion, Room 22)** has teamed up with **Cy's Restaurant Group** to upgrade the menus and modernize the décor of its restaurants. . . . Spotted dining at **Schwa (1466 N. Ashland Ave.; 773-252-1466)** the other night: **Michelle Obama**. "No one bothered her during her meal, and everyone in the restaurant wished her luck as she left," we were told. . . . **Hot Woks Cool Sushi (3930 N. Pulaski Rd.; 773-282-1818)** has opened. . . . Sign spotting: **Hillbilly's Smoke House** at **5009 North Clark Street**. That sounds promising.

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