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BALTIMORE DINER

Celebrating crabs of the soft-shell variety

Baltimore restaurants add specials May 24-June 2

By **RICHARD GORELICK**
 The Baltimore Sun

More than a dozen Baltimore restaurants will be adding soft-shell crab specials to their menus for Baltimore's fifth annual Soft-Shell Crab Celebration.

The restaurant promotion, sponsored by the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore, will run May 24 through June 2. The participating restaurants include Alexander's Tavern, The Black Olive, Diamond Tavern, Grille 700, J. Paul's, Kona Grill, Miss Shirley's, Pabu, The Oceanaire, Phillips Seafood, Regi's American Bistro, Roy's, Ryleigh's Oyster, Ten Ten, Townhouse Kitchen & Bar and Vino Rosina.



Jesse Sandlin

On the eve of the 10-day celebration, Downtown Partnership and Vino Rosina will host a five-course soft-shell crab tasting featuring chef Jesse Sandlin's contemporary interpretations of classic recipes. The menu includes cream of soft-shell crab soup, a soft-shell sandwich and a soft-shell Amish crab pretzel.

The soft-shell tasting dinner is 6:30 p.m. May 23 at Vino Rosina, 509 S. Exeter St. Tickets are \$55. For more information, call 410-528-8600 or go to vinorosina.com.

The participating restaurants' soft-shell crab specials can be viewed on the Downtown Partnership's Dine Down-See **DINER**, page 2

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PREAKNESS 2013

'TOP' MENU

Jockey Club taps celebrity chef Mike Isabella to boost culinary experience

AMY DAVIS/BALTIMORE SUN PHOTO

Celebrity chef Mike Isabella displays two of the dishes that will be part of this year's Preakness menu at Pimlico Race Course: chicken with his signature pepperoni sauce that he created for the finals of "Top Chef All Stars," and broccolini with feta and walnuts.

By **RICHARD GORELICK** | The Baltimore Sun

Company's coming to Pimlico Race Course.

For the throngs expected at Saturday's Preakness, the hospitality team at Pimlico Race Course is bringing in 7,000 pounds of crab meat and 3,000 pounds of aged tenderloin. Did someone remember to get ice? Yes: 30,000 bags of frozen water are already in place.

Those were just a few of the items on the Preakness list of Tommy Inzer, director of hospitality for the Maryland Jockey Club, which has been hosting the Preakness since 1873.

Another item on Inzer's list — a celebrity chef.

This year, the Maryland Jockey Club is trying to spice up the Preakness brand, and has brought in "Top Chef" alumnus Mike Isabella to create the menus for the Turfside Terrace, where guests pay \$315 for spectacular finish-line views, and for the Preakness Village, where corporations entertain on grand and semi-grand scales.

The most coveted Preakness Village invite will be Kevin Plank's Under Armour party, which has evolved in four short years into the Preakness' celebrity nerve center.

In past years, according to Inzer, the Under Armour hosts would ask for changes See **CHEF**, page 3

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RECIPE FINDER

A healthful lunch or light supper

By JULIE ROTHMAN

For The Baltimore Sun

Pat Arata from Mishawaka, Ind., was looking for a recipe she had lost for making crispy fried salmon patties that she thought was once printed on a can of Crisco. She said the patty puffed up a little when fried, which made her think the recipe likely contained baking powder or soda.

Evelyn Bledsoe from Letart, W. Va., sent in a photocopy of the recipe taken from a Crisco can many years ago that she thinks is the one Arata was searching for. The recipe has several handwritten notes on it. One says you “can add a small amount of mashed potatoes to the patties if desired.” The other is a reminder to coat the patties with fine bread crumbs before frying. Bledsoe says her husband really likes these salmon cakes, or patties. “They are quick and easy to make,” she said, “and good to munch on if left over.”

These cakes cook up crispy and light, and I think Arata is correct: The baking powder is what helps them puff up a bit. I would recommend using canned red salmon instead of the pink if you are able to spend a little more. It has a less fishy flavor and usually fewer of the tiny bones. I also think the cakes could be fried in a little canola oil, instead of the Crisco, if you are looking for a slightly more healthful

Quick-and-easy salmon patties

Makes 6 to 7 patties

- 1 can (15 to 16 ounces) pink salmon
 - 1 egg
 - 1/3 cup minced onion
 - 1/2 cup flour
 - 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
 - 1 1/2 cup Crisco
- Drain salmon; set aside 2 tablespoons

of its juice. In a mixing medium bowl, mix salmon, egg and onion until sticky. Stir in flour. Add baking powder to salmon juice; stir into salmon mixture. Form into small patties and fry until golden brown (about 5 minutes) in hot Crisco.

Serve with tartar sauce or Caesar salad dressing.

Bettie Vogt from Bend, Ore., would like to have a recipe for making Ezekiel bread, using beans and seed instead of flour.

If you are looking for a recipe or can answer a request, write to Julie Rothman, Recipe Finder, The Baltimore Sun, 501 N. Calvert St., Baltimore 21278 or email baltsunrecipefinder@gmail.com. If you send in more than one recipe, please put each on a separate piece of paper and be sure to include your name, address and daytime phone number. Important: Name and hometown must accompany recipes in order to be published. Please list the ingredients in order of use, and note the number of servings each recipe makes. Please type or print contributions. Letter and recipes may be edited for clarity.

Requests

Mary Geis from Baltimore is looking for a dessert recipe that her mother made some 45 years ago. The bottom layer of the dessert was about one inch of some sort of flour/butter mixture. Over the top of this layer, she placed fresh plum halves, skin side up. It was then baked in a 13-by-9-inch pan. She recalls that it was not sweet but rather tart.

WINE FIND

From: Monterey, Calif.

Price: \$23

Serve with: Red meat, roast poultry, tuna steak



This full-bodied, earthy red wine combines some of the best elements of Burgundy style and California ripeness. It has some of the gamy low notes that distinguish fine Burgundies, while the black cherry and cassis notes are bold up front. While it's a lush, opulent wine, it's also well-balanced and complex, with good acidity in the finish and no trace of alcoholic heat. It's a versatile wine that will pair with many foods and comparable to pinot noirs at twice the price.

— Michael Dresser

FROM PAGE ONE

Chef aims to elevate Preakness cuisine

CHEF, From page 1

to the standard catering menu offered in Preakness Village. But not this year. Inzer said Under Armour signed off on this year's menu, which includes the kind of original, Italian-inspired fare served at Graffiato, the restaurant Isabella opened in Washington's Chinatown neighborhood in June 2011.

On Isabella's Preakness menu: a roasted beet salad with green peppercorn vinaigrette; coffee-dusted roasted tenderloin of beef, dry-rubbed, seared and sliced, accompanied by smoked fingerling potatoes and baby peas; and free-range pepperoni chicken, served with the pepperoni sauce that Isabella whipped up for the finals of “Top Chef All Stars.”

“Every year for the Preakness we try to elevate things,” said Maryland Jockey Club president Tom Chuckas. “By bringing in Mike Isabella, it has elevated it to another level. And with that, the people that were here last year and had a memorable time will have an even more memorable time this year.”

The idea of bringing in a celebrity chef to design the Preakness menu, Inzer said, emerged out of last fall's planning meetings.

But the race to create a classier food experience at Preakness began in earnest with the Maryland Jockey Club's hiring of Inzer, whose resume includes luxury properties like The Breakers in Palm Beach, Fla., and the Park Lane Hotel in London.

Inzer was hired in March last year, not enough time to make big improvements before the annual May event. Inzer said he needed to see, and get through, last year's big day.

“Now I got it,” Inzer said. “Now I know what we can do differently and here's how we can elevate the experience. It takes a lot of forward thinking: What's hot in the industry? How can we stay on the cutting edge?”

Once they committed to the idea of a celebrity chef, the next step was getting one. Isabella was on the planners' early list, Inzer said, in part because he had some Preakness experience. Isabella appeared at the 2011 Preakness, doing cooking demonstrations in the corporate village.

It turned out that Inzer knew someone with a direct connection to Isabella, so they asked him.

“I thought it would be a great opportunity,” Isabella said. “I get to see the races, I get to hang out, and I get some people to see my food who don't always get to D.C.”

Along with a chef-driven menu, the Maryland Jockey Club decided to get serious about where and how they got the food for Preakness. The 6,000 guests in the Preakness Village and Turfside Terrace will be treated, the jockey club said, to “the largest Farm to Table dining experience in the world.”

Inzer stressed that farm-to-table doesn't necessarily mean local but regional. Crab cakes this year will be made with Maryland crab meat, he said, and the raw bar will feature Chesapeake Gold oysters from Hoopers Island.

Still, some of the efforts to even go regional were stymied, Isabella acknowledges, by the effects of a cold spring. Eight days before the Preakness, Jackie Ludden, a Washington-based consultant whom Inzer brought in to assist with the farm-to-table efforts, was waiting to hear if she'd be getting oregano from a New Jersey herb farm — or from Mexico.

“It's the single most difficult project I've had to do in my career,” said Ludden. “It has been a huge effort by an army of people to make this happen.”

“Certain things will come from Maryland or Virginia or Jersey,” Isabella said. “Certain things will come from here and there. We only can do so much. My focal point is getting pepperoni from someone in Virginia [instead of] getting it from Italy. We want to source everything locally, and whatever we can't get locally, we focus on domestically.”

Baltimore chefs in and out of farm-to-table restaurants said they appreciated the

The menu

Here's what chef Mike Isabella has planned for diners at the Turfside Terrace and Preakness Village:

The Bakery and Gourmet Cafe

- Gourmet coffee and tea selections
- Fresh-squeezed juices
- Warm croissants and muffins
- Seasonal fruit salad
- Yogurt parfait

Village Raw Bar

- Sponsored vodka Bloody Mary bar
- Fresh seafood raw bar

Deluxe Open Bar

- Whiskey, bourbon, vodka, rum, Scotch, brandy
- Chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon, white zinfandel
- Domestic and imported beer
- The official Preakness cocktail, the Black-Eyed Susan
- Juices, soft drinks and water

Main Buffet

SALADS AND SIDES

- Artisan display of fresh-baked breads
- Broccolini peperonata salad with feta and walnuts
- Roasted beet salad with green peppercorn vinaigrette and smoked yogurt
- Whipped sheep's milk ricotta with tomato caramel and lemon thyme
- Roasted cauliflower with pecorino and mint

ENTREES

- Chesapeake jumbo lump crab cakes with guanciale, kohlrabi slaw, drizzled with a garlic hollandaise
- Coffee-dusted roasted tenderloin of beef, dry rubbed, seared and sliced, accompanied by smoked fingerling potatoes and baby peas
- Free-range pepperoni chicken with a farro risotto

DESSERTS

- Rosemary panna cotta with orange and pine nuts
- Nutella cookie sandwiches
- Mallow pop treats
- Cold Stone Creamery ice cream

efforts.

“At the end of the day it's more about sustainability and ethics,” said Chris Becker of Fleet Street Kitchen, which serves a seasonal menu featuring produce grown at the restaurant's private farm. “[Farm to Table is about] not using factory farm ingredients and using local farms whenever you can.”

And standards for farm-to-table, Becker acknowledged, vary from place to place. “If it were true farm-to-table, you couldn't use lemons or limes,” he said.

Chad Gauss, chef and owner of the Food Market in Hampden, said that farm-to-table doesn't have to mean local. “If they're looking at it as regional, it makes complete sense,” Gauss said.

But both Becker and Gauss did have some concerns about other local credentials — Isabella's.

“I think it's great to have a celebrity chef,” Gauss said. “And I respect every chef and every chef's craft. Any chef who chooses to put on the apron and put in the hours gets my support. But if it's farm-to-table, the chef should be from Baltimore.”

“I was a little surprised that it wasn't a Baltimore-based chef,” Becker said. “At the same time I just hired a chef, Chris Amendola, who wasn't from Baltimore.”

One Baltimore chef will have a prominent role on Saturday. Jonah Kim, executive



AMY DAVIS/BALTIMORE SUN PHOTO
“It's definitely a challenge,” says chef Mike Isabella. “I've never done anything like this before, for 6,000 people.”

chef at Pabu, the Japanese restaurant at the Four Seasons Hotel Baltimore, will be creating the sushi bar in the International Pavilion, which this year is featuring a Japanese theme. And Kim's Pabu colleague, Tiffany Soto, a master sake sommelier, is supervising the beverage program for the pavilion's invited guests.

Isabella, who is opening three new restaurants this year, seemed ready for Saturday, but he acknowledged some fatigue.

“It's definitely a challenge. I've never done anything like this before, for 6,000 people,” Isabella said. “But it's gone a lot smoother than I thought it would.”

Not all of Isabella's fatigue was work-related, though. He had recently attended the Kentucky Derby.

“It was an amazing experience,” Isabella said. “But I had a better time at Preakness.”

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