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## PLATE &amp; VINE | WINTER 2007

## Happy Holidays from The Wine & Food Foundation of Texas

As the holidays settle upon us, we take time out of our busy lives and schedules to reflect on friends, family – and giving. We gather round tables, reconnect and give of our time, hospitality, and our wallets. We reflect on those less fortunate around us and, in the spirit of the season, give.

Giving is the nature of a Foundation. The Wine & Food Foundation of Texas has given well over \$1 million to charitable programs and projects throughout the state since its inception ten years ago. The cornerstone of the Foundation's giving each year is the Grant Award Program – a competitive award program offered...

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### And Then There Were Five by Marie Hejl

Traditionally, "taste" is broken down into four categories: sweet, sour, salty, and bitter. Across the world, however, a fifth taste is slowly gaining attention. In Japanese, the taste is termed *umami*. Roughly translated, umami means "delicious" or "yummy" in English. So, unlike the other four, by definition...

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### What Santa's Sommeliers Might Put Under Your Tree

Compiled by Rebecca Robinson, Edited by Sarah Murray

'Tis the season and sometimes, along with the spirit of giving comes a cloud of confusion when it comes to selecting wine. We asked four of Austin's top sommeliers their picks for common gifting situations....

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### Member Profile: Brian Persinger by Natalie Sloan



A native of Los Angeles, it was the call of a historic music venue that convinced Brian Persinger to give Austin a shot. The Dessau Music Hall, a legendary North Austin dance hall that dates back to 1876, was one of the major motives to relocate 1400 miles from home. And since...

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## FEATURE ARTICLES



[Reinventing Rhubarb No Longer Just for Pies](#)  
by Rebecca Robinson

[Ripple's Revenge: The Great Screw Cap Debate](#)  
by Jane A. Nickles

[Interview with Superstar Food Blogger Julie Powell](#)  
by Sam Armstrong

[Perfect Climate for Growing Grapes in Eastern Washington](#)  
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## Contributors

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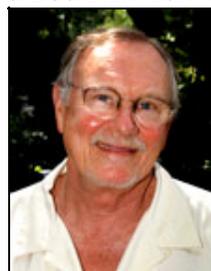
### Plate & Vine Contributors

**SAM ARMSTRONG**

Sam Armstrong is the marketing coordinator for Texas Culinary Academy and the Austinist food editor. He likes to make Irish Soda Bread during the holidays, and usually adds more butter than called for in the recipe. He doesn't feel bad about it.

**SHAYN BJORNHOLM**

Shayn Bjornholm, MS is the Wine Education Director of the Washington Wine

**J. BUCKNER HIGHTOWER**

Mr. Hightower is a fifth-generation Texan and a graduate of the University of Texas. His professional career is a fascinating mosaic of manufacturing, restaurants, real estate development, international aerospace, and music recording. In several of these industries he has held

ideal for vine dormancy, allowing the plant to rest and restore.

- Average daytime high vineyard air temperatures for June 1 to October 15: 78 degrees Fahrenheit. During the all important August/September months, that climbs slightly higher to 84 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Average daytime high temperatures for December to March: 32 degrees Fahrenheit. In addition to allowing proper dormancy, these cold winter temperatures kill many vineyard disease carrying pests such as phylloxera, moths, mites and nematodes. As a result, very few chemical based pesticides are required, leading to sustainable vineyard practices that leave vibrant, healthy, lively soils and water sources.

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## Eating Well in Paradise

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### Eating Well in Paradise by Rona Distenfeld



Palm trees, white sand, and the warm turquoise water of the Caribbean. As winter hits here in Texas, the islands beckon.

The U.S. Virgin Islands are easy to get to, don't require a passport (although it's always handy to have), and don't make you deal with the annoyance of currency exchange. They also offer some treasures for food and wine lovers that even Bluebeard wouldn't have dreamed of when he was calling these islands home.

#### Rockefeller's Legacy

St. John is generally acknowledged by Virgin Island locals to have the best restaurants. It's

#### Luxury at the End of the Road

If you want to feel like you've really left the world behind (but not the things that matter), head over to the far side of St. Croix at Carambola Beach Resort & Spa. Literally located at the end of the road, all you hear at night is the sound of the waves and the tree frogs.

You won't see any lights from other resorts or towns here, and boats don't usually moor in this bay; you'll feel like you've left civilization behind (except for the flat screen TVs, comfortable beds, and marble showers). Carambola Bay's beach is considered the best on St. Croix, and the two on-site dive shops can outfit you to scuba or snorkel right off the beach. A "wall" can be found a short swim away and offers excellent views of the local marine life.

The resort's main restaurant features a dinner menu that is creative and superbly prepared. But, after lying around in a hammock by the water all day, you may just want a simple supper. Take advantage of the full kitchen in every Carambola suite. Just be sure to pick up groceries in town on your way out.

If you feel adventurous, the restaurants back in town offer a variety of dining experiences. Local favorite Savant offers intimate dining with excellent food and service, and a creative

also where folks from St. Croix and St. Thomas go when they want to get away for a relaxed or romantic weekend.

Most of St. John is a National Park, a gift of Laurence Rockefeller. He also created what is now Caneel Bay, A Rosewood Resort, within the National Park boundaries. With seven beaches, it's easy to find peace and quiet just beyond the steps of your back porch.

This is no rustic hotel in the wilderness, however. The staff at Caneel is quite accustomed to pampering their guests, including more than a few of the rich and famous. A complimentary High Tea is served daily on the Verandah, and the Turtle Bay Estate House offers an inspired menu of classical and creative American cuisine and a surprisingly informed cellar.

The Caribbean's only fully operational, temperature-controlled Wine Room, located within the walls of an 18th-century plantation house, seats up to ten for a private dinner. Try the prix fixe, seven-course menu, carefully selected to highlight Caneel's wine collection. More than 265 bottles have been chosen to complement tastings and pairing dinners, and of course, to delight the palates of the resorts most discriminating guests.

### Romance and Harbor Views

There's great dining outside of the resort, too. Just up the hill, a short cab ride away, Asolaré is a favorite with couples seeking a touch of romance. Dinner comes with a view of the harbor at Cruz Bay, excellent service, and the sense that you've discovered a spot far from the tourist track.

Menu choices here favor a fusion of French and Asian cuisine. Try the prawn and coconut milk soup and the special spicy seafood pasta dishes. The full-service bar plays host to the social scene of the local and quasi-local beautiful people, and Asolaré offers an eclectic wine selection with something to tempt every palate.

Feeling a little homesick for some stateside comfort food? Paradiso is a favorite with locals and frequent visitors. This restaurant and night club keeps things simple but good, with cheeseburgers, salads, and pizza at lunchtime and classic steak, chicken, fish, and double-stuffed or country mashed potatoes for dinner.

If Italian is more to your liking, enjoy the open-air atmosphere and excellent food at ZoZo's, right in the heart of Cruz Bay. This is where the action is. Cruz Bay offers shopping, nightlife, and lots of great people-watching, but lacks the sometimes hectic vibe of the more frenetic St. Thomas. If you prefer to stay where the action is you'll find a good selection of villas, condominiums, and bed and breakfast inns from which to choose.

excellent food and service, and a creative bartender who will make you your own special drink, provided you offer a few hints about what you're looking for. The food is eclectic and excellent, combining Thai curries, Central American styles, and island flavors. This place is small (just 20 tables) and very popular with the locals, so be sure to make a reservation, even in the "off" season.

Down by the docks in Christiansted, the Fort Christian Brew Pub has great food — fresh fish, huge burgers, and their own ales and beers; perfect after a morning spent sailing and snorkeling the reefs.

### Shop 'Til You Drop

If your vacation isn't complete without great shopping, you'll find some of the best in the Caribbean in St. Thomas. This is a tax and duty-free zone for U.S. citizens, so it's the perfect place to buy luxury items like diamonds, gold, watches, cameras, perfumes — almost any imported luxury goods.

You can also bring back up to six bottles of alcohol as long as at least two are locally produced. Cruzan Rum, made locally, is an excellent buy here and comes in light, dark, and flavored varieties. The best place to buy it is the local K-Mart, where a bottle of light rum can run just \$4 and a bottle of banana-flavored rum just \$8.

If all that shopping has made you hungry for excellent food and a quiet place to enjoy it, try Virgilio's, just a few steps from the main street. Many of the recipes come from Mama Virgilio, and the restaurant is considered by many to be the best Italian food on the island. Stick with classic pasta dishes or the osso bucco, or try one of the more surprising dishes, like cioppino (a savory seafood stew). The walls are stacked with original art, and the service is attentive without being intrusive.

All in all, the US Virgin Islands offer a very civilized way to get away from civilization.

### When You Go

US Virgin Islands  
www.usvitourism.vi

Caneel Bay, A Rosewood Resort  
(340) 776-6111  
www.caneelbay.com

Carambola Beach Resort  
(340) 778-3800  
www.carambolabeach.com

Asolare  
(340) 779-4747

Savant  
(340) 713-8666

Virgilio's



virginia  
(340) 776-4920

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## Good Things in Threes - TRIO Review

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### Good Things in Threes - TRIO Review by Rona Distenfeld



The truly great, in any field, never rest on their laurels. They continue to improve, refine, and sometimes reinvent themselves. This is certainly true at Four Seasons Austin, where both the hotel and its restaurant are on an ongoing quest for excellence.

For two decades, the Café at the Four Seasons was a favorite with discerning locals and visitors looking for inspired food and a superior wine selection. The Café closed earlier this year to make way for Executive Chef Elmar Pramb's latest vision: TRIO.

It would be easy to call TRIO just another steak and seafood place, but for three things: the emphasis on unusual and inventive side dishes that can be ordered on their own, the beautiful patio overlooking Ladybird Lake, and the comfortable wine bar offering more than sixty wines by the glass as well as flights.

#### Wine or Dine Al Fresco

The look and feel of a restaurant can add or detract a lot from the total dining experience. TRIO didn't stint. The look, designed by Engstrom Design Group of San Francisco and Austin-based Antenora Architects LLP, is clean, modern and comfortable, with Hill Country colors and a touch of Asian influence in the table settings.

Engstrom designed Spago in Las Vegas for famed chef Wolfgang Puck, the Veranda restaurant in the Four Seasons Hotel in Las Vegas, and Kent Rathbun's Abacus restaurant in Dallas. They took advantage of the Four Season's lakeside location by expanding and covering the patio, creating a year-round space to dine outdoors or just relax with a glass of wine as you watch the moon rise.

#### 300 Wines, 60 by the Glass

TRIO takes its place as one of Austin's best wine bars, too. You can sit at the bar or one of the lounge-area tables, or enjoy the view from a comfortable couch on the patio as you sample wines from around the world.

Sommelier Mark Sayre has put together a selection of flights that let you taste and compare interesting and less-common reds and whites. Or, create your own flight from any of the sixty wines served by the glass.

Sayre was voted Texas State Sommelier for 2007, and that expertise has helped TRIO develop a notable cellar, as well as providing

### Starters and Sides

It's not all that hard for a good restaurant to serve a great steak, and TRIO is no exception. There are also many entrée choices that are more interesting and creative, like the Sautéed French Dover Sole or the Trio of Beef, a lovely presentation of beef ragout, oxtail, and Wagyu. But the sides, where many restaurants falter, are exceptional here.

Take the beets. Yes, beets. Prombs has a passion for them, and so will you once you try his colorful, delicately flavored offering of maple-roasted yellow and red baby beets. Or the gnocchi that practically melts in your mouth. Or the sweet corn crème brulée that could be mistaken for a dessert, it's that good.

Or you could make a meal of nothing but starters here, beginning with the Trio of Foie Gras. The crab fondue has big chunks of crabmeat, perfect for scooping with the pieces of flat bread that come with it. Or try the delicious Texas quail.

Combine these starters and sides with TRIO's extensive wine offerings, and you have the perfect recipe for an enjoyable evening, especially if your evening plans call for lighter fare.

When a full dinner is part of your plans, however, these starters and sides nicely round out a meal focused on fresh, seasonal ingredients, and meant to be enjoyed with a good wine.

guests with excellent food and wine pairing suggestions. Chef Prombs has kept the wine lover in mind while developing the menu, too, avoiding strong flavors like Wasabi that tend to overwhelm the palate.

He and Sayre work together to create a total gustatory experience that will make you want to return to TRIO again and again and again.



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