

coulee region

women

AREA HOME AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE

Food Issue

Michelle Schry
Knows Good Food

Coffee Bean Queens

Coulee Region
Restaurant Guide

Food & Wine:
9 Perfect Pairings

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FEBRUARY/MARCH 2012
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Food Issue



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Pictured on cover:

Michelle Schry, General Manager, People's Food Co-op, La Crosse

Photo by Janet Mootz Photography

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For everyone, food is a necessity. For many, it's much more than that. For some, it's a career; for others, it's a hobby; and for still others, an obsession. For me, food is love.

I didn't learn to cook until I was several years into my adult life. Sure, I could cover the basics well enough to feed myself and make the occasional dessert required of potlucks and parties, but that was all I could do. It was all I cared to do.

When I was about 25, a job change introduced me to a host of new coworkers. For lunch, they brought much more interesting leftovers than I did, and our nonwork conversations often revolved around food. My bland northern Wisconsin tastes were challenged at restaurants we visited while traveling and at dinners at their homes: *bouillabaisse*, *risotto*, *osso buco*, *coq au vin*, *paella*. I loved it all.

I once mentioned to my coworker Caryn that I wished I knew how to cook. She gave me a blank look. "Just get a cookbook," she said, "and follow the directions."

I bought a few and piled them on my nightstand for bedtime reading. The

instructions were fairly basic, and the ingredients intriguing. Best of all, each recipe was in and of itself a little story of the author's inspiration—a regional dish, an unforgettable dining experience, a childhood memory. I flagged page after page with Post-it Notes. Once in the kitchen, despite my dull knives and cheap pots, I spent many a happy evening alone assembling satisfying dishes while learning the meaning of *mise en place*. It was a practice, like meditation, like prayer. I came to love the preparation of food.

Not so long after, I started dating a new guy. One of our first dates was to a cozy trattoria in St. Paul, and for Christmas he gave me an authentic Italian cookbook he'd found at a used bookstore. Our evenings together were often spent preparing a meal, side by side, with good conversation, wine and Edith Piaf singing in the background. Over the course of a year, we baked pies, canned tomatoes and bottled honey from bees he'd raised himself. How could we not fall in love?

These days, our meals are conceived on the evening drive to day care, a mental scramble through what's in the fridge, what can be made quickly and what the kids will eat (our menu is slim). But occasionally, we find ourselves in need of something for a potluck or party, and the cookbooks come out, spilling their stories and inspiration. Out come the good knives and sturdy pots, the wine and the music. It's like falling in love, all over again.

For our first-ever "Food" issue of *Coulee Region Women*, we've found a host of women in the area for whom food is a career, an obsession—a love. From locally grown produce to your own garden offerings, from fine wine to fish fries, from coffee to cupcakes, we've had great fun recalling our own food memories, delving into the food stories that have made our region famous and meeting the women behind them. We hope you, too, enjoy each savory bite of this issue of *Coulee Region Women*.

Betty

coulee region women

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What could be more “Wisconsin” than beer, wine and cheese? Come celebrate all three on Saturday, April 28, at the 10th annual Between the Bluffs Beer, Wine & Cheese Festival, held 2-6 p.m. at the Oktoberfest Grounds in La Crosse (12:30-6 p.m. for VIP ticket holders). Sample beer, wine and cheese from more than 60 vendors, enjoy live music and a bean bag tournament, shop for official Between the Bluffs apparel and attend the Between the Bluffs Academy, featuring exhibitor booths and cooking demonstrations by area chefs. General admission tickets are \$30 in advance and \$35 at the gate; VIP tickets are \$75 and are available in advance only. For more information, visit www.betweenthebluffsbeerfest.com. Tickets go on sale Thursday, March 15, and are available by calling 608-782-2220 or 800-658-9424.

TINY TIM BENEFITS AREA AGENCIES

Funding applications are now being accepted for the 26th Annual Tiny Tim Gala, Festival of Trees and Jingle Bell Brunch Benefit. This annual benefit event of the Franciscan Healthcare Auxiliary has raised over \$830,000 for local health-related charities since its debut in 1987. Interested local agencies may obtain a funding application by contacting the Franciscan Healthcare Volunteer Office at 608-392-9766 or visiting www.tinytimgala.org/charities.aspx. Submission deadline is April 9.



La Crosse Symphony Orchestra

PASS THE BATON

Step up and support the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra by voting for your favorite guest conductor in the 2012 Conductor Wannabe Contest. The contestants for this year's event include our own *Coulee Region Women* magazine publisher Diane Raaum. The other Conductor Wannabee contestants are Nancy Vandermus, Bjorn Blomquist, Terry Rindfleisch and Dr. Steve Shultz.

The Conductor Wannabe Contest is a fund-raiser for the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, and the top two winners of the contest will each conduct one piece of music at the April 21, 2012, concert. Votes are \$1 each and can be cast with cash, checks or credit cards. All gifts are tax deductible, and gifts over \$25 will be acknowledged in next season's program.

Contact Diane Raaum at 608-783-5395 or by e-mail at diane@crwmagazine.com to support her in this contest. More information can also be obtained by calling the La Crosse Symphony office at 608-783-2121.



CRW PLANS READERS' ISSUE

We at *Coulee Region Women* always welcome story ideas from our readers, but this year, we are planning a new and exciting way for readers to be heard and see their ideas in print. In celebration of the 10th anniversary of *Coulee Region Women*, our August/September 2012 issue will be our first-ever “Readers’ Issue,” devoted to stories pitched to us by our readers.

Now is your chance to nominate an area woman you admire, a woman-owned business you enjoy, a women-run organization making a local impact or any women's issue you feel is important to our community. We'll consider them all. Additionally, if you've ever wanted to try your hand at writing for *Coulee Region Women*, please email editor@crwmagazine.com for writing guidelines.

Story ideas for this issue will be received until June 15, 2012, and may also be sent to editor@crwmagazine.com. We're excited to put this issue together and can't wait to hear from readers like you!



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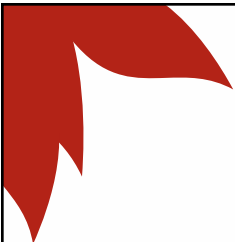
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From left to right: Lea, John, Sherry, and Abby.





A COOPERATIVE EFFORT

Michelle Schry of the People's Food Co-op makes cooperation organic to her career.

BY SUSAN C. SCHUYLER

Photos by Janet Mootz Photography

It's one of Michelle Schry's favorite stories.

Soon after she took over as general manager of the People's Food Co-op (PFC) in 2001, the City of La Crosse and the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse published a survey of businesspeople identifying needs in La Crosse's downtown. As Schry read the study, she was "vaguely perturbed" that although the PFC had operated in the heart of downtown La Crosse as a grocery retailer since 1993, the study concluded that the downtown needed a grocery store. "It immediately became clear to me that people saw us as irrelevant," Schry says.

The report's findings weren't really a big surprise to Schry, who has forged a two-decade career as a grocery and food service manager and an advocate for food cooperatives—or co-ops—around the globe. She

also was no stranger to the PFC; Schry worked at the co-op's Adams Street location for two years while she was a UW-L student. "The story isn't necessarily about me. The story is essentially the inspiration this co-op gave me 20 years ago," says Schry.

The fixer

After a brief stint in the Twin Cities, Schry moved to Madison to work for four years as a manager for Kwik Trip. A lot of what she learned about running a business came from the excellent training she received there, she says. Then came the chance to help manage the Magic Mill co-op in Madison, which was in financial trouble. "I had an opportunity to take an enormous pay cut to go back into co-ops, which I felt really good about," Schry says.



In the food service business, Schry was known as a “fixer,” someone sent in to help struggling stores. Her success in stabilizing the Magic Mill made her attractive to an East Coast contract program, where for almost three years she helped tiny co-ops expand. She loved the work, “but boy did I miss the Midwest,” says Schry.

Her strong ties to the Midwest took root in the soil of a family farm on Highway 21, just 10 miles from Oshkosh, Wis., where she grew up with two younger brothers. Her parents took factory jobs “because farming was no longer a sustainable family business.” Their struggles shaped her passion for supporting local farmers.

The co-op way

According to the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives (UWCC), co-ops surged during the 1960s and 1970s, then declined during the 1990s. However, by the middle of the past decade, consumers interested in market-system alternatives drove renewed growth in the industry. “There

are as many food co-ops under development at this very moment as there are in existence,” Schry says.

The co-ops’ business model makes them unique. Most co-ops require their members to purchase membership shares, which are considered an equity contribution. In other words, PFC members are its owners, although anyone is welcome to shop at the store. Members receive discounts, member-only specials, patronage rebates and voting privileges. Schry says that democratic ownership resonates with consumers at a time when people are increasingly concerned with concentrated ownership by big-box stores and chains.

The products co-ops sell also make them different. “The most extensive impact food cooperatives have recently had on the grocery industry has been their pioneering introduction of natural and organic foods, which began with the ‘new wave’ of food cooperatives in the early 1970s,” says the UWCC website.

Those values drive the PFC as well. “We

focus on the things that mean a lot to us, like food integrity, healthiness and organic standards,” Schry says. In 2011, 21 percent of PFC’s sales came from local products, and 22 percent of all products were certified organic. In its effort to support local producers, the PFC deals with 277 vendors, “which would make any other retailer blanch,” Schry says.

Unarrested development

Schry gets almost weekly requests to explore new co-op location opportunities, most of which she says don’t make a lot of sense. One reason is the prohibitive expense of building a new store from the ground up in today’s economy. “They’re very capital-intensive businesses,” Schry says.

No one knows that better than Schry, under whose leadership the PFC has thrived. With her leadership, the PFC launched its ambitious 2003 expansion, which took three years to plan and 11 months to construct. She also set an ambitious goal in 2003 of having 5,000 members, or 10 percent of La Crosse’s population. Schry reports the PFC

Grassroots Growth

For nearly 40 years, the People’s Food Co-op has been a staple in the La Crosse community.

Contributed photos.



1978

The PFC was incorporated with \$800-\$900 in average monthly sales. One year after relocating to a larger building at Eighth and Adams streets, sales had grown to \$9,000 a month with a 300-household membership.

1986-87

Sales increased 56 percent, exceeding \$500,000 annually.

1990

Sales passed the \$1 million mark.

1973

PFC was started in the basement of a house at 10th and Badger streets by UW-L students who created a buying club to purchase wholesome foods. The founding members later rented a building at 403 Avon Street to start a cooperatively owned retail store, staffed entirely by volunteers.

1981

In May, PFC purchased Bruha’s Grocery at 911 Adams Street and relocated there.



1991

The PFC board voted to change to a member equity system rather than a dues-based membership program to help build capital for a planned expansion and move to a new location.



is just a “stone’s throw away” from that goal today, with 4,400 members.

Schry is active in co-op advocacy on a national—and even international—level. She is on the board of the National Co-op Association, which lobbies for co-ops in the United States and has an international development arm. On its behalf, Schry recently traveled to Ghana. She also has visited co-ops in 26 states. In her role as president of the National Cooperative Grocers Association, she worked on a merger to create one single organization,



Schry recently traveled to Ghana as an international co-op advocate.

which did more than \$1.3 billion in annual sales last year.

Cooperative cooperation

When developer Gerrard Corporation of La Crosse approached the PFC in 2010 about anchoring a new co-op project in Rochester, Minn., Schry respectfully declined, but connected the developer with the board president at an existing Rochester co-op, the Good Food Store, which was planning a move downtown. Gerrard Corporation then pitched a proposal for a new store in a downtown location, just three blocks from the Mayo Clinic, to the board of the Good Food Store. “They heard the whole dog-and-pony show and they said, ‘Wow, it is a great location. It is exactly the kind of thing we’d like to be. But we have absolutely no resources to be able to do it,’” Schry says. And so the possibility of a partnership with the PFC began as boards at both co-ops began conversations about goals and visions for the project.

“I was incredibly impressed by the fact that folks really got it,” Schry says. Both

boards agreed the best approach would be to combine the two co-ops’ membership as one entity to leverage the PFC’s financial strength and draw on its management expertise to move and expand the Rochester store.

The new Rochester co-op, which is planned as the anchor tenant in a mixed-use development that will also feature 40 housing units on its upper floors, is scheduled to open by May 2013. The PFC will begin managing the existing Rochester location in January 2012, with a groundbreaking for the new development to follow the next month, according to Schry.

Although Schry can’t predict the outcome of the Rochester venture, she is sure of one thing: “In the future, no one in a survey of downtown La Crosse is going to say we need a grocery store. I think we’ve got that covered now.” **(CRW)**

Susan C. Schuyler is a freelance writer and UW-L instructor who also is proud to be one of the PFC’s first 1,000 members and the designer of its current logo.



1993 On March 1, the PFC opened at its new location at 315 Fifth Avenue South in downtown La Crosse. Sales climbed past \$2 million, product offerings expanded and the staff grew from 15 to 50 members within days. Volunteers were replaced entirely by paid staff members.

2003 With more than 2,200 member households and 65 employees, the PFC initiated purchase of its retail space to begin a major renovation and expansion project.

2005 In February, the PFC’s renovated, efficient and sustainable facility was completed with a new meat department, expanded deli and produce operations, 2,500 new packaged grocery selections and hackberry’s, an upscale restaurant.

1998 PFC purchased the house adjacent to its store in May to create meeting rooms and office space.

2001 Michelle Schry took the helm as the PFC general manager in May.

2004 A purchase agreement for the property was finalized in May, bolstered by \$520,000 in direct member investments. After demolishing the neighboring office house, the multiphase, 11-month, \$4.5 million expansion began, increasing the PFC’s building size from 11,000 to 29,000 square feet.

2011 During July and August, the boards and members of Rochester’s Good Food Store and the PFC voted to merge operations.

2012 The new Good Food Store is scheduled to open on November 1 in downtown Rochester.

organically grown

**Organic Valley's
Theresa Marquez
reflects on a career
of good food
and good folks.**

BY THERESA WASHBURN
Photos courtesy of Organic Valley



Theresa Marquez, Organic Valley

Theresa Marquez can easily say she grew up in the organic, cooperative movement, but she never imagined where that movement would take her. Now in her early 60s, Marquez is about to retire from a position she has held for more than 17 years, one in which she had the opportunity to be part of astounding growth while serving local farmers and helping the environment. She

looks back on this time as one of incredible opportunity, but realizes that the organic movement has just begun.

Marquez joined the Coulee Region Organic Produce Pool (CROPP) in the early 1990s as the chief marketing executive. She oversaw the marketing of their brand Organic Valley, milk, cheese and butter. When she arrived in the small offices in the Kickapoo River town of La Farge, Wis., CROPP was still a small player in the organic dairy industry with about \$5 million in yearly sales. It was an exciting time. "I loved every aspect of the work, from marketing to crunching numbers to store management," she says. "At that time, the industry was not male dominated, and there was a great deal of opportunity for growth, particularly for women."

From seven farmers

CROPP, now almost exclusively known as Organic Valley, emerged from an evening meeting with a handful of local farmers who were looking for a way to sell their organically grown vegetables, cheese and other dairy products at competitive prices. After some rough starts, the cooperative found its feet in the organic dairy business, took the brand name Organic Valley and began selling regionally, but it quickly

became one of the largest sources of organic milk in the nation. Over 22 years, Organic Valley grew from seven dedicated farmers to the 1,658 farms in 35 states it is today. In 2011 Organic Valley posted sales of \$720 million.

"We just became the largest employer in Vernon County," says Marquez. Pride in that statement is clear as she emphasizes the mission of the cooperative. "We want to revitalize regional farm communities." However, this cooperative movement in southwestern Wisconsin has done a great deal more than that. According to Marquez, through the practice of organic farming, the area has prevented millions of pounds of pesticides and herbicides from entering its waterways. In addition, Vernon County has more organic farmers in one region than anywhere in the world.

The natural systems of life

With all this good news, Marquez is not about to rest. "I just was appointed Chief of Mission," and while that position will be part time, it is clear that Marquez's passion for the organic food industry will keep her working hard. When asked, "Why buy organic?" Marquez answers, "Do you have a couple hours?" When pressed, she gives a quick answer: "Everyone should buy organic, but I really believe women with children should think about it the most. Conventional cows eat corn, and that corn eats pesticides. I know I don't want that in my children's bodies." Marquez is part of a growing movement of people who look to science, which argues that all of the food chain is inextricably linked. She is and will continue to be dedicated to a movement that honors the natural systems of life and the concept of a member-driven cooperative industry. **(crw)**

Theresa Washburn is a freelance writer, designer and program presenter. She lives on a few acres in the Coulee Region with her family and a menagerie of animals.



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Fruitie & fun!

The Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition's Footsteps to Health Project encourages us all to eat more fruits and veggies. Each month a different fruit and veggie will be featured and tastings are held at area grocery stores. Find recipes and fun activities for children, helping promote healthier eating!!



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COULEE REGION COMFORT FOOD

From Wisconsin traditions to classic American fare, the Coulee Region serves up all you can eat.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE
Contributed photos

Special occasions call for fancy restaurants, but let's face it—on Friday night, for no reason other than we just want to, we Wisconsinites love to head out for a night of casual dining and drinks with friends. This tradition is rivaled only, perhaps, by heading out for a hearty breakfast the next day. We at *Coulee Region Women* have assembled a list of our favorite area haunts, focused into four familiar categories: the diner, the pizza joint, the supper club and the Friday night fish fry. Join us in sampling some all-American, all-Wisconsin, all-Coulee-Region fare.



Red Pines Bar and Grill, Onalaska



Blue Moon Saloon & Roadhouse, Onalaska



Jacqlen's Country Cafe, Holmen



Digger's Sting, La Crosse



The Hungry Peddler, La Crosse



Kate's Pizza Amore, La Crosse



DINERS

Whether a sunny café or a structure that resembles a railroad car, diners are a classic symbol of Americana—and they serve hearty helpings of affordable homemade cooking. Meatloaf, mashed potatoes and gravy, with a dinner roll thrown in to sop it all up—you'll find this and more in the classic American diner. Dating back to the 1920s, these dishes were designed to satisfy the appetites of busy patrons who favored meat-and-potato dinners, but didn't have time for a sit-down meal. Proven to be a lucrative trade, unscrupulous owners looking to make a quick buck turned many establishments into unsavory "greasy spoons." But like Mom, who's there to make things right, it was women who revamped their image, making a trip to the diner just like a visit home.

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SUPPER CLUBS

Dim lights, the clink of ice swirling around in a brandy old-fashioned glass and a table set to invite conversation—nothing beats the nostalgic ambience of a supper club. During the middle of the 20th century, these lounge-style restaurants aimed to bring big-city sophistication to the Northwoods. Despite their name—a term borrowed from Prohibition days, when all-in-one establishments offering dinner, drinks and dancing got their start—supper clubs are open to anyone. Though the element of dancing has mostly disappeared, supper clubs have perfected the art of mixing cocktails and preparing dinner—think charbroiled steaks and prime rib—making that the nightly entertainment.

Blue Moon Saloon & Roadhouse

716 2nd Ave. N, Onalaska

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Digger's Sting Restaurant

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FRIDAY NIGHT FISH FRY

Did you hear about the one that got away? Just wait—on Friday night you'll be certain to find it at almost any respectable restaurant in Wisconsin, served up in big, fat planks and batter fried. Finding themselves in a state rich in rivers and lakes, our immigrants pioneered the idea of the fish fry. With the abundance of fish, early settlers relied heavily on it to feed their families. But as with any steady diet of one particular food, their enthusiasm for fish waned. So, in an effort to change things up, they fried it. Quick and easy to prepare, fried-fish suppers became a community event, especially for Catholics striving to keep alive the tradition of meatless Fridays. Add some fries, creamy coleslaw and an ice-cold beer, and you've made yourself a great catch.

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Martha Keefe enjoys writing about area attractions, especially when they involve food.



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BEAN QUEENS

Women entrepreneurs brew up coffee, community and change in the Coulee Region.

BY KIM BRASEL

Photos by Megan McCluskey, Atypik Studio

It's a cozy embrace enveloping you from the inside out, a wellspring of comfort on a frigid day. It's the taste, the aroma, the little lift you get just when you need it the most. It's a feeling. It's a culture. It's a necessity—it's coffee. And for three area women, coffee isn't just a drink of choice—it's a career, a calling and a love.

Theresa Weld—Bean Juice

The need for caffeine may be what draws you into Bean Juice, a coffeehouse in La Crosse's Jackson Plaza, but it's the homey atmosphere created by owner Theresa Weld (pictured above) that will keep you coming back.

"This is a community," she says. "When people go out for a cup of coffee, they aren't just going for a drink. A coffeehouse has a certain feel that invites laughter and conversation."

Inside you'll find the usual makings of a coffee shop: baked goods encased in glass, whirring espresso machines, comfy chairs and the aroma of freshly brewed coffee. You'll also find Weld working the counter, greeting customers by name and inquiring about their lives with genuine interest.

Just past the coffee counter, next to burlap sacks of coffee beans, you'll find a stainless steel tabletop coffee roaster. Weld and her parents roast the beans in house, something they started in 2005, when no other coffee shop in the area was doing it.

Roasting the beans in-house has numerous benefits, including a fresher product. Weld says they can roast about three pounds of beans in 15 minutes. And it gives Weld the flexibility to experiment with flavors and make blends.

"It's also a good show," she adds. "People like to watch, and it's fun to tell customers, 'My mom just roasted a batch.' It makes it that much more personal."

Originally from West Bend, Wis., Weld went to Eau Claire for culinary arts school, then moved to La Crosse and started working as the manager of A.J.'s Java Joint when the shop opened. Six years ago,

"Behind every successful woman is a substantial amount of coffee."

—Stephanie Pistro





"Green Queen" Debra SwardFihn of Coulee Coffee Roastery proves social action can happen through coffee.



Joan Wilson of Moka demonstrates that treating others well brings success.

she bought the business and changed the name to Bean Juice. She says she didn't have any fear about taking on her own business, and felt that with her parents by her side, everything would be all right.

"I'm blessed to be doing what I enjoy," she says with a full smile. "My heart is in it and I love it. It's my passion."

Debra SwardFihn—Coulee Coffee Roastery

Debra SwardFihn has always been passionate about taking care of the environment and people, but she never thought coffee would be her path to educating others about how everyday choices impact people around the world.

"I've always believed we are responsible for each other, whatever we do," states SwardFihn, co-owner and "Green Queen" of Coulee Coffee Roastery, a La Crosse company that sells their products wholesale to local stores and has expanded to Black River Falls, Richland Center and Stuartville, Minn.

SwardFihn's focus is on sustainability, a method of harvesting or using a resource so that it is not depleted or permanently damaged. "I want to educate people about the whole process, so they are aware of where their coffee comes from, who makes it and that it's not just something they bring home in a can," she says.

Coulee Coffee Roastery is dedicated to buying coffee beans that are fairly traded. "We pay above the floor rate, or what the average bigger roaster would pay," SwardFihn says. "It's important that the farmers get a fair price so they can take care of their families, get adequate health care and provide their kids with an education." Knowing whom they buy from includes meeting the farmers in person. SwardFihn took her first trip to Guatemala this past December.

Growing up, she says, she was aware of social issues but became more aware of challenges facing the environment after taking a class at Viterbo. "We may think that what we do doesn't have an impact anywhere else, but it does. Even having to ship coffee leaves a mark, so we try to balance that with activities such as planting trees to offset the carbon footprint," she says.

She knows that not everyone can reasonably afford to buy organic products, but feels that just being aware is half the battle.

"Coffee has become the vehicle for me to follow what I am passionate about," she says. "It's a gift to get paid to do something you love."

Joan Wilson—Moka

Joan Wilson's business philosophy of operating from the inside out has served her well and helped grow her business from one location 10 years ago to six locations in three different cities today.

Wilson, owner of the Moka coffee shops, feels strongly about the importance of how you treat your customers, your employees and each other. "We should help each other," she says matter-of-factly. "It's simple, but true."

Customer service is high on the priority list at Moka, but what Wilson enjoys is hearing about how her employees make a difference in someone's life. She often gets emails or letters from people telling her stories about how the employees at Moka helped turn someone's bad day around.

"I really believe that if you are in business for the right reason, you treat people well and provide a good product, you will be okay," she says.

Wilson spent 20 years in the pharmaceutical industry and decided one day she wanted to do something different. "I thought to myself, if I'm going to do it, then today is the day," she says.

At a coffee show in San Francisco, she met people with the Java Detour franchise and started her coffee business with them. After 10 years, she decided to cut ties with the franchise and create her own brand, Moka. "I realized they were going in a different direction than what I wanted, so I rebranded and came up with a new name and logo, with the goal of being more simple and modern," Wilson says.

There are two locations in La Crosse, one in Madison and three in Rochester, Minn. The most recent one to open is a kiosk at the new Olmsted clinic. "We've found that it's not just patients stopping to buy coffee, but also people in the surrounding neighborhood."

Wilson feels that coffee shops have endured because they are a dynamic part of our culture. "People are drawn to them not just to drink coffee, but to meet friends, interact and have a conversation," she adds. *Viva la café.* (crw)

Freelance writer Kim Brasel enjoys her morning cup of coffee and wholeheartedly agrees with whoever said, "A morning without coffee is like sleep."

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Prior to joining the Center for Women's Health and the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Dr. Chapman practiced in Mayo Clinic Health System Franciscan Healthcare's Department of Surgery.



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Travel Leaders Receives Award

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RUSTIC MODERN

The Blair Barn House is a work of art, a metaphor for the Midwest and a practical home all in one.

BY MELISSA HANSON

Photos courtesy of Alchemy Architects



When Donna Brogan and Bert Hodous resolved to build a home on their 200-acre farm near Blair, Wis., their wish list consisted of only a few adjectives: small, modernist, energy efficient. The rest they left up to their architect, Geoffrey Warner of Alchemy Architects in St. Paul.

First impressions

Nestled among the ebb and flow of rolling hills, barns painted red and grazing livestock lies a modest structure known as the Barn House. Despite its contemporary façade, the home blends harmoniously with traditional farm structures in its midst. For that, Brogan credits the architect's choice of simple, rustic materials.

The home is clad with rough-sawn white oak lumber, and the characteristic imperfections of traditional materials lend a rustic and agricultural feel to an otherwise modern structure. "Jeff's choice of materials speaks to people accustomed to rural settings," Brogan speculates. "They have a lot of familiarity; it evokes farms and farmhouses."

Warner's goal was to design a home that shared many characteristics with a traditional barn. For that reason, the home has what he refers to as a modest number of windows. That doesn't mean it is lacking for light, however. Meticulous planning went into the angle of the home and the placement of each window to capitalize not only on the sweeping views but also on the sun's energy.

The home's builder and president of Empire Development & Construction in Onalaska, Tony Szak, explains that this practical feature lends itself to the home's energy efficiency. In winter when the sun is lower, sunlight filters through the windows to help heat the home. In summer when the sun is higher, the windows are shaded to keep the home cooler.

But not all design decisions were rooted in practicality. For example, one corner of the home seems to twist as if buckling under its own weight. Call it artistic interpretation. Warner used this whimsical attribute, accomplished by building one corner of the home to protrude 4 feet farther than the others, as a nod to traditional structures throughout the Midwest that are crumbling into the landscape. "There's something sad and melancholy ... but also

cool about falling-down barns," Warner romanticizes. "I wanted to explore that in a sculptural way."

Behind barn walls

Self-proclaimed city dwellers, Brogan and Hodous have lived in the Twin Cities, Chicago and Boston. But in 1995, they answered an inner calling to the country. The property in Blair started out as a weekend retreat—one where they could unwind and grow their own vegetables—but the couple soon realized they were at home in Blair. "We came to country-loving a little late," Brogan contends, "but country life fills a spot with us."

Hodous is a family-medicine doctor who welcomed the change from medical practice in an urban setting to one in a more personalized and connected community. Brogan creates furniture from wood harvested on their land, and her work can be seen throughout the home. Together they care for their livestock, tend their vegetable garden and maintain their property.

Like its owners, the Barn House teeters the line between urban sleek and country chic. From start to finish, the home is an indisputable play of juxtapositions—like an industrial loft sprouted up through the floor of a farm building. From the vertical slats that flank the home's exterior down to the stainless steel doorknobs, lines and geometric patterns abound. In the kitchen and media areas, flat-panel, lacquered cabinets cohabit with rough-hewn wood planks that protrude and recede with varying lengths and thicknesses. And the coolness of diamond-plate stairs and hard-surface flooring is energized with warm light diffused through windows, skylights and two fanciful light fixtures fabricated from insect screens.

Size too blurs the line between fact and fiction. "It's not a very big house," Szak says, "but it is practical and efficient." With a modest 1,850 square feet of living space, the interior feels spacious thanks in part to streamlined cabinetry and the two-story height of the main living area. The second-floor master suite that opens up to a library reads like a hayloft with the kitchen and entertainment areas nestled beneath. Additional bedrooms, storage and an authentic root cellar are located in the lower level.

Szak says this project was challenging because it is such a unique structure, but he adds, "It was a thrill to be part of it because it was so great working with the architect and the homeowners." The result of this collaboration has been a buzz of publicity, a whirl of curious passers-by and well-deserved accolades including a 2011 National Housing Award from The American Institute of Architects.

"It might be a once-in-a-lifetime kind of build," Szak posits, "but I hope it isn't."

Conventional construction simply was not an option for the homeowners. They were familiar with Warner's work and his creativity, and they both agreed to trust his vision. "We had the feeling that we were hiring an artist to make us a piece of art," Brogan explains, "so you don't monkey with it." An indicator of the well-suited partnerships with their architect and builder, they agree that the year spent building their dream home was a great experience—and even go so far as to call it fun.

"I wouldn't change anything," Brogan declares. "It's pretty darn great!" **(crw)**

Melissa Hanson is a small-town girl at heart who dreams of answering her own calling to a simpler, homespun way of living.

Top left: During the design process, the owners were conscious of the impact their home would have on their neighbors' views. The result is a distinctive home that complements the rural landscape.

Top right: Architect Geoffrey Warner designed the light fixtures made from insect screens and suspended them using operable rope-and-pulley systems. "Why?" he muses. "Because it's fun!"

Bottom left: With sliding barn doors, a hinged window and rustic slats that sift vertical beams of light, the porch creates a tranquil view from inside the house as well.

Bottom right: Architect Geoffrey Warner says his inspiration for the Blair Barn House was a childhood memory of light streaming through barn walls. At night, light flitting through the porch slats creates a fanciful display that pays homage to the barns of yesteryear.



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A BACKYARD GARDEN

With a little preparation, you can grow your own food in your own backyard.

BY LEAH CALL

Photos courtesy of Seed Savers Exchange

As we wave good-bye to chilly winter winds and snow, our thoughts turn to outdoor activities. For many in the Coulee Region, gardening is a favorite. Though spring may be several weeks away, now is the perfect time to plan your backyard vegetable or herb garden. First-time gardeners especially need to do a little research and planning before putting shovel to dirt.

Once you've selected a sunny location, away from trees, a good place to start planning your garden is with the dirt. "You really want to start with the basics of a soil test," says Steve Huntzicker, horticulture expert and UW-Extension agriculture agent for La Crosse County. "Determine what nutrients are there and what you need to add prior to starting to grow plants."

To test your soil, collect about two cups of dirt from your garden plot and take it to your county Extension office. "We can help with the paperwork and sending the sample in to be tested," says Huntzicker.

"We usually see a two-week turnaround for the results to come back from either our Madison or Marshfield labs. So you want to think about that ahead of time after the snow starts to come off and the frost is out of the ground."

If you are working with soil that has been treated with lawn chemicals, you may need to give special consideration to both soil care and crop choice. Huntzicker suggests that you may need to add compost or mulches and organic matter back into the soil. Again, a soil test can reveal information to help you determine what needs to be added. Raised-bed gardens may be an option for those questioning the quality of their soil.

To kill existing sod and prepare a small backyard garden plot, cover the area with newspaper topped with compost or leaves and leave for several weeks. Another method is to simply dig with a spade and turn the sod over at least four weeks before you work up the soil.

After doing a soil test, add necessary nutrients to the soil. Local farms often will provide manure free of charge, as long as you scoop and haul. Ideal garden soil should contain organic matter, be loose and easy to work with and have adequate drainage.

Ready to plant

When considering what to grow in your garden, Diane Ott Whealy, founder of Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah, Iowa, offers this simple suggestion: "Plant what you want to eat."

If your kids love carrots, plant carrots. If tomatoes are a staple in your summer recipes, be sure to plant at least one of the many varieties of tomatoes. Do you love fresh salsa? You can grow everything you need in your backyard garden.

You can direct-seed most vegetables and herbs. Seedling transplants are recommended for some vegetables, including tomatoes, peppers, cabbage and eggplant. These can be started from seed indoors or purchased as seedlings. If starting from seed, plant inside at least six weeks before planting in the garden.

For tastier veggies, Whealy suggests trying heirloom varieties. Heirloom tomatoes are especially flavorful. "They are thin skinned and juicy and haven't been bred for any reason other than to grow and enjoy, and to go from your garden to your table," says Whealy, who champions heirloom varieties for more than just flavor. "You can save the seed from an heirloom, which is a nice feature, too. It is being part of that whole family of seed savers that's important."

Saving seeds: a new old tradition

Seed saving is nothing new. Our ancestors saved seeds. Many brought them over from other countries when they settled in America. Seed Savers Exchange began in 1974 after Whealy's grandfather gave her seeds from a tomato his father had grown in Bavaria. "He passed away, and we realized that if my grandfather hadn't given us that seed, it would be lost. We wondered how often that happens," says Whealy, who then put an ad in *Mother Earth News* magazine seeking others interested in preserving heirloom seeds.

Whealy's recently published book, *Gathering: Memoir of a Seed Saver*, tells the



Seed Savers Exchange founder Diane Ott Whealy



Lemon Drop tomatoes



Amish Paste tomatoes

story of Seed Savers Exchange and how it became the largest nongovernmental seed bank in North America.

Tomatoes are a favorite among first-time and old-time gardeners. Whealy recommends the following heirloom varieties, sold through Seed Savers:

Amish Paste: Good for canning and cooking, very productive.

Lemon Drop: Small, yellow, productive and easy to grow; won a tomato tasting in 2010.

German Pink: Large, red (despite the name); originated in Bavaria; the seed that started Seed Savers Exchange.

Simple things

Start with a basic garden, and if you have more space, add vine crops such as cucumbers, cantaloupe and squash, suggests Whealy. "Nothing is particularly difficult to grow if you are willing to do a little homework and tend to it. Mainly, gardening is planting, weeding and enjoying. The weeding part is the hard part."

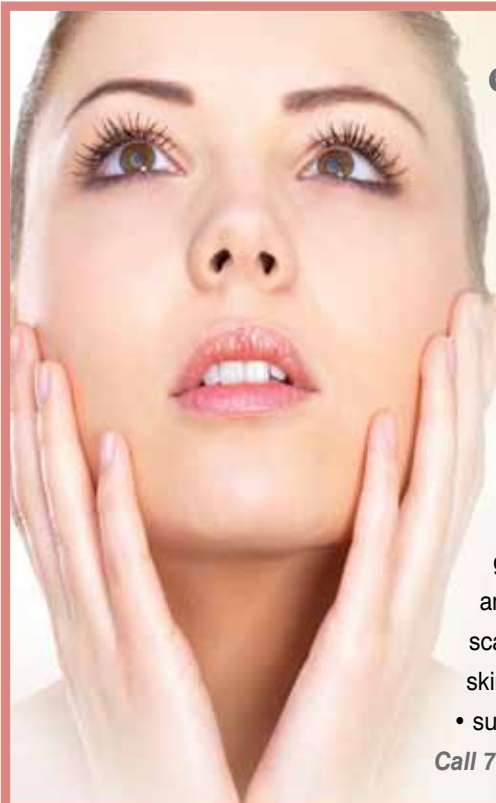
Whealy says she has seen a resurgence in both seed saving and gardening. "People are looking for the simple things again, because life is getting complicated. And growing your own food and knowing where your food comes from is something you can have some control over."

Need a little help?

Gardening books are available at garden centers, bookstores, online and at your local library. The county Extension also has a number of educational publications and resources available online. In addition to soil testing, your county Extension office can help with insect identification and diagnosis of plant disease and problems that occur in your garden.

Seed Savers Exchange carries a number of books and gardening tips on its website: www.seedsavers.org. You can also request a catalog or order online. Seed Saver's heirloom seeds are sold at the People's Food Co-op in La Crosse and at the Viroqua Food Co-op.

Freelance writer Leah Call lives, writes and gardens with her family in Westby.



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The event benefits the Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse, which exists to enrich the lives of women and girls so they can do the same for others.

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Cupcakes

Take the Cake

Fine ingredients and
an artist's eye create a
bite-sized taste of heaven.

BY LINDSAY BONNAR
Photos by Shannon Porter Photography



“It’s an ongoing joke among friends and customers that I am the dietitian who traffics cupcakes,” says Jennifer Rogers, owner of Mon Petit Cupcake in Winona, Minn.

Rogers (pictured above left), a registered dietitian with a master’s degree in nutrition, worked in clinical nutrition and diabetes education for many years. Following the birth of her first child, she continued working as a dietitian, but she was beginning to think about a change in careers, and what she wanted to do full time when her children reached school age.

“It was then that I realized how my love of food had brought me to dietetics, and specifically that I had such a great love of baking and culinary arts,” Rogers says. “So honestly, it was just logical to me to combine food with a job that would enable me to have a significant creative outlet, and from there I envisioned Mon Petit Cupcake.”

The French paradox

Her knowledge of nutrition and her love for baking inspired her to put a different twist on the business idea. She combined her firm belief in the “French paradox” of eating smaller portions of rich food and enjoying it more, with local, organic, preservative-free ingredients. And in 2008, Mon Petit Cupcake was launched.

“I continue to maintain my registration as a dietitian and would never rule out practicing with patients again, as I loved that chapter of my life, but for now we are in the chapter titled ‘cupcakes!’” Rogers says.

Rogers creates her sweet treats with the best ingredients she can find, which people can feel good about eating. She believes that the use of organic ingredients significantly raises the quality of her creations. She understands the importance of knowing where food comes from, and she also wants her customers to be aware of this.



"It's the psychology of food," Rogers explains. "If you let yourself have something that is kind of a comfort food, and it comes from good ingredients, it's a comfort food you can feel good about eating."

The art and science of cupcakes

Rogers started with a basic scratch cake recipe. Through ongoing testing, adding and subtracting ingredients, she has created cupcakes in a wide variety of flavors. She works closely with her full-time pastry chef, Ashley Paetzel (pictured at right on page 33), and spends many hours using technology to seek new ideas and inspiration. She also finds this through her customers.

"Our customers are so inspiring; they ask for something specific that you never dreamed could be turned into a cupcake," Rogers says.

Rogers' knowledge of science allows her to create specially requested flavors if a customer wants something not offered on the menu. Aside from some college classes and labs on chemical reactions in baking, food science and principles, Rogers is self-taught in both baking and decorating her creations.

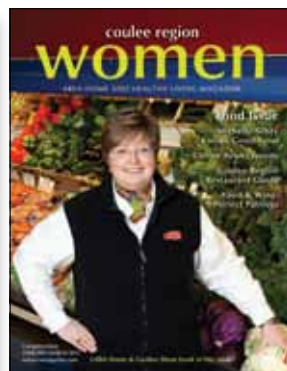
"I believe that people are born with a certain skill set, and I think that I am very lucky to have an affinity for creativity with food," says Rogers.

Mon Petit Cupcake treats are available in Winona at the Bluff County Co-op and the Winona Sandwich Company, and in Rochester, Minn., at the Chocolaterie Stam. More information on ordering and delivery in the Coulee Region can be found at www.monpetitcupcake.com. (crw)

Lindsay Bonnar spends a lot of her free time in the kitchen, cooking. Baking, however, is not her specialty, and she is now redoing her budget to include cupcakes.

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Weight Watchers Works

Sustainable lifestyle changes and peer support are the keys to successful weight loss.

BY JESSIE FOSS
Contributed photos



Diet. The word alone can strike fear in the hearts of many. Along with fear come other negative feelings like deprivation, hunger, rigid rules and unfulfilled promises. Oftentimes, those looking to diet are overweight, a state that can bring its own negative feelings and attitudes.

Ronda Casper was there a few years ago. She says she tried several different things and nothing seemed to work. When she became serious about losing weight, she knew she needed to do a lifestyle change, not a diet. She turned to Weight Watchers to help achieve her goals.

Weight Watchers began in the early 1960s, when founder Jean Nidetch began inviting friends over to her home in Queens, N.Y., to talk about the best ways to lose weight. Those meetings have grown to millions of men and women meeting around the world to help one another reach weight-loss goals.

Not just a diet

Becky Brockman, a meeting leader at a La Crosse-area Weight Watchers group, says Weight Watchers is different from unhealthy restrictive diets; it's about lifestyle changes.

"A diet implies that you have restricted food or food groups, and because diets are so hard to stay on, they are short-term fixes to losing weight," she says. "Weight Watchers promotes a change in habits; the healthy habits that we learn are designed to maintain the weight loss for the long haul."

Part of Weight Watchers' philosophy is not telling its members what they can or can't eat. Instead, according to its website, Weight Watchers provides information, knowledge, tools and motivation to help members make healthier decisions about nutrition and exercise.

Brockman believes what really sets Weight Watchers apart from other weight-loss strategies is the support provided to members

through meetings. It's an idea that hasn't been lost on Casper.

"The support and ideas that you get at meetings is a wonderful thing," she says. Casper would know what works. Since joining Weight Watchers in 2003, she has lost more than 90 pounds.

Casper describes herself as a jock, growing up. She played volleyball, basketball and softball, including two years of basketball and volleyball at Western Technical College. It was after college, Casper says, when she began to gain weight. She was no longer playing ball or conditioning, and then came a knee surgery. She married in 2001 and was constantly running to and from her stepson's sporting events. The weight kept piling on.

"Finally, I made a decision that I needed to lose weight. I tried several different things, and nothing seemed to work," Casper says. "I started to think about Weight Watchers and checked into it. I finally decided I was going to do it."

Initially, attending meetings wasn't easy, Casper says, especially when she didn't know anyone. But she continued to attend and sat with the same group of people, taking the opportunity to share information and have a great time.

"I felt wonderful and never felt hungry," she says. "I started cooking a lot healthier foods for my family and continue to do so today."

As she learned how to cook healthier, the weight began coming off, and Casper found herself 65 pounds lighter.

Food becomes secondary

Casper was able to keep most of the weight off, but she did gain a little back. She started attending meetings again about a year ago, this time with her friend and coworker Sorrel Wunderlin.

Wunderlin leads an active life through camping, hiking and horseback riding, has always been a bit "obsessed" with her weight and says she can usually "wear my weight well" on her 5-foot, 8-inch frame.

Despite this, she found herself eating more, and her clothes were no longer fitting. "I ate with wild abandon," she says. "I'm a Wisconsin girl. I live in the Dairy State and firmly support that industry. My weight attests to that fact." Wunderlin knew she needed some help and turned to Casper.

"Ronda was never pushy, just supportive and informative and let me know she'd come with me any time I wanted," Wunderlin says.



Since joining Weight Watchers, Ronda Casper has lost more than 90 pounds.



Sorrel Wunderlin weighs in at a local Weight Watchers meeting.



Ronda Casper (left) and Sorrel Wunderlin prove that the buddy system is a key to success through Weight Watchers.

"I was tired of struggling into tight jeans, and I knew it was time. I was ready to face the reality that yes, I do need help, and I cannot do this by myself."

Casper and Wunderlin began attending Tuesday meetings together, and just like Casper before, Wunderlin began to learn to eat healthier and track what she put in her mouth.

"Food became secondary, and enjoying life and all the good things became more in focus," Wunderlin says. "I became more grateful. I became more realistic. I became more accountable."

As Wunderlin's attitudes and outlook on life changed, so did her body. The weight began coming off. Wunderlin says it wasn't huge amounts at once, and it wasn't easy, but by October she reached her goal weight.

Right beside Wunderlin the entire time was Casper, and she was back to losing weight, too. Since attending meetings again, she has lost 29 pounds—15 pounds more than the goal she originally set for herself.

In it together

Both women attribute much of their success to the bonds they have formed by attending Tuesday evening meetings.

"The support of Sorrel this time was wonderful" Casper says. "The buddy system always works better."

"The ladies I sit with are all sisters with shared goals, shared victories—both scale and nonscale—and yes, shared frustrations," Wunderlin says.

Moving forward, Casper and Wunderlin plan to keep attending meetings and working at keeping the weight off. For Casper, the accountability of meetings is part of her plan.

"I feel going to the meetings and weighing in are a major factor," she says. "That way, if you start to gain a little, you can get on top of it right away and not let it get out of control."

Wunderlin agrees. "The group reinforces my determination, and my team leader Becky [does] always," she says. "That kind of positive attitude and faith keeps me on track."

More detailed information on Weight Watchers, including local groups and meeting times, can be found at www.weightwatchers.com. 

Jessie Foss attended a Weight Watchers meeting for this article and had the opportunity to hold five pounds of fat. Never again will she look at losing "just" five pounds as a small feat.

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The Perfect Pair

Local experts offer tips for forging a delicious marriage between food and wine.

BY CHARISH BADZINSKI

Photos by Olive Juice Studios for The Waterfront Restaurant and Tavern





A good-quality port complements the complex flavors of blue cheese, and pairs with dessert just as well.



Match your reds—it's true that full-bodied red wines best complement beef and other robust meats.

Weber suggests the following websites as resources on food and wine pairings for the home entertainer.

- www.foodandwinepairing.org—offers general pairing guidelines and descriptions
- www.winedin.com—offers a more detailed look at food and wine pairing
- www.winespectator.com—offers a wealth of information about food and wine (membership is required)

Upcoming wine-pairing events at The Waterfront

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March 8

Chef's Best: A different TWF chef highlights their skills in a different course

April 3

All Things French: A wine and culinary exploration into the different regions of France

May 8

150 Radius: Highlighting ingredients within a 150-mile radius

June 5

Fan's Choice: A selected Facebook winner will choose this month's theme

Your heartbeat quickens. Your palms sweat. You feel slightly weak in the knees. The aisle of wine bottles stretches before you, long and foreboding. No longer is it just a matter of choosing red or white to go with dinner; the varietals, their characteristics and the seemingly limitless food-pairing possibilities can be intimidating even to the accomplished cook. But never fear; with the help of local restaurateurs, *Coulee Region Women* has assembled helpful hints for simplifying the food- and wine-pairing process and ensuring your next party is a success.

Sip and study

When planning to entertain friends and serve wine, just getting started can seem intimidating. You can simplify the process, and make it more enjoyable, by doing research. Namely: start sipping.

"Get three bottles of wine and see what you like with what foods," explains Nell Hull, proprietor of Nell's City Grill in La Crosse. Hull explains that while there used to be a lot of rules assigned to drinking wine, the culture has shifted. "Do what you like," she says. "You don't have to follow anybody else's rules."

"The best way to get yourself acquainted with wines is to go out there and start tasting," agrees Kathy Wilhelm, of 4 Sisters Wine Bar and Tapas in La Crosse. "You find out in a hurry what you like." To allow your palate to savor the flavors, Wilhelm recommends you start your tasting with lighter wines and work your way toward the more robust wines.

"I always like to take advantage of retail discounts. If you buy six bottles, you can get 10 to 20 percent off," explains Libby Weber, managing director and operating partner of The Waterfront Restaurant and Tavern. "I'll pick three bottles I have had in the past, and then try three I've never had before." Over time, sampling different wines allows you to get an idea of the body style and flavor profiles of the wines. "If you can get some of those notes, you might have more confidence in buying that bottle of wine," Weber says.

Not everyone likes the same wines, Wilhelm explains, so take the pressure off yourself. "We do tastings at 4 Sisters, and there is always an eclectic mix of reactions. At the end of the day, it's about what your palate desires."

Planning your pairing

Now that you've done your homework, it's time to plan your event menu. When planning a food and wine pairing, all of our experts suggest you start with the food. "I like to come up with a themed menu, so there is some kind of focus. Otherwise the possibilities are endless," says Weber. "Once I know what I would like to offer from a culinary perspective, then I move

on to the wine. Think about the flavor profiles in the food, and the ingredients; that's your key to pairing the wine."

What you're striving for is balance, say our experts. The wine shouldn't overpower the food, and the food shouldn't overpower the wine. Classic pairings that work are white wines with fish or other light meats such as chicken or turkey, and red wines with red meats or dishes with more flavor. Weber suggests looking for flavors represented in both the wine and the food.

Hull agrees, and adds that, while selecting wine in the store, it is helpful to imagine the flavors. "You really have to let your imagination run wild. If the label says the wine has a deep cherry flavor, then imagine yourself eating a real cherry." From there, think about foods you would enjoy in conjunction with that flavor.

Tonight we recommend ...

Here are some food and wine pairings our experts suggest:

- Oysters / Champagne
- Fish, seafood / Non-oaky Chardonnay or Viognier
- Turkey / Sauvignon Blanc or Viognier
- Chicken or pork / Chardonnay or Viognier
- Barbeque chicken / Chenin Blanc
- Steak, grilled beef / Shiraz, Merlot or Cabernet
- Robust or pepper-crusted meat / Red Zinfandel
- Blue cheese, dessert / Port (select medium-priced varietals, as cheaper, high-sugar port can lead to hangovers)
- Chocolate / Cabernet

In addition, a number of resources are available to help you narrow down your final wine choices.

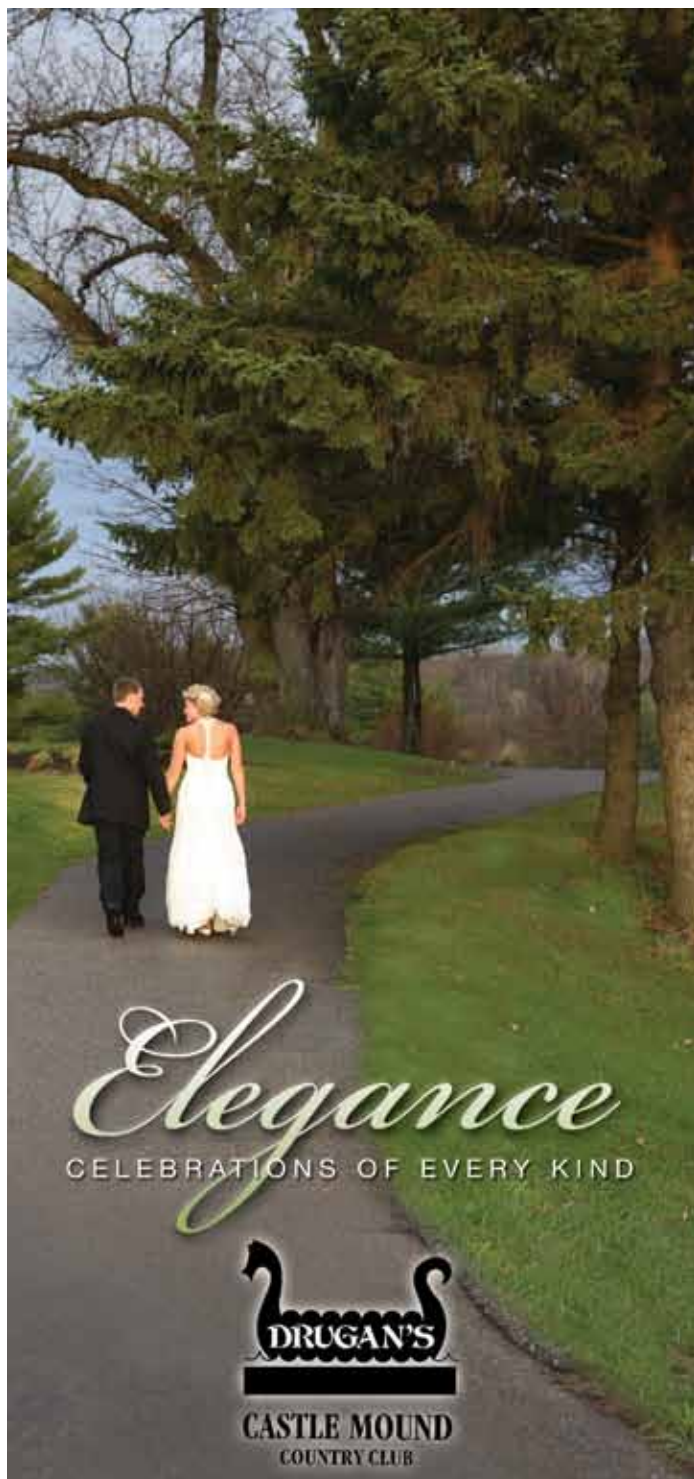
- Talk to the experts. Many local grocery stores, restaurants and wine bars have experts on hand who are knowledgeable about pairings. Tell them what you're serving, and they will help you find the right wine.
- Read the wine labels. Many labels now list flavor notes and even food suggestions, taking some of the guesswork out of pairing.
- Connect to the Internet. Visit wine label sites to learn more about the wines. Google the food you're serving and discover what wines might match well. Some websites even allow you to type in a dish you're serving and offer specific suggestions for pairings.
- Check with your guests. Ask them which wines they prefer. Consider offering a variety of wines to accommodate a variety of palates.

Some final tips: Don't be swayed entirely by ratings. Some wonderful wines are never rated, explains Weber. And remember that wine can be an affordable luxury. "I can like a \$12 bottle of wine just as much as one that costs \$150," she says.

Hull suggests, "Make sure you have a corkscrew, and know how to open a bottle of wine." She also says screw-top caps are becoming more popular, but don't let that discourage you from trying them. The caps are no longer an indicator of poor wine quality.

"For me, there truly is no right or wrong answer. But I like to get just enough information to be dangerous in those aisles," says Wilhelm. "Just enjoy the time with the people you're with, and that wine is going to taste so much better. That's what it's all about." **(crw)**

Charish Badzinski believes wine is best paired with a few fine women and a long night of shared wit and wisdom. She likes her wine like she likes her men: full-bodied, indulgent and imported.



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Downtown merchants present eye candy that's almost good enough to eat.



On tonight's menu

POACHED SALMON WITH HOLLANDAISE
(scarf by Blue, \$65, Touch of Class; freshwater pearl cuff bracelet, \$79, Satori Arts; necklace, \$25, Organic Glasswork)

GARDEN GREEN PEAS, WILD RICE PILAF AND LIGHTLY STEAMED BRUSSELS SPROUTS
(green onyx necklace, \$84, Satori Arts; recycled glass necklace, \$30, Organic Glasswork; jade necklace, \$767, Satori Arts)

BIBB LETTUCE WITH RED WINE VINAIGRETTE
(Sevya cotton scarf, \$22, LARK; glass key fobs and Emma's Boutique hair pins, Organic Glasswork)

SPARKLING CHAMPAGNE AND PINOT NOIR
(freshwater pearl strand, \$388, Satori Arts; Starr Jewels gold multi chain, \$56, and Colin Houlder hand-dyed silk scarf, \$48, LARK)

YOUR CHOICE OF HANDCRAFTED CUPCAKES OR PETIT FOURS
(Lavender Tree pincushions, \$10-\$12, LARK)

A PERFECT ESPRESSO
(freshwater pearl necklace, \$49, Satori Arts)

Tablecloth: Love Quotes pashmina, \$76, Touch of Class.
China: Wedgewood India, Macy's, Valley View Mall.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

2nd Sat. of each month (Sept.-May), 9:30 a.m., 608-788-7439, www.aauw-wi.org.

Business Over Breakfast La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce

4th Wed. every month, 7:30-8:45 a.m.

Preregister 608-784-4807, www.lacrossechamber.com.

Children's Museum of La Crosse weekly programming: Save-On-Sundays

\$1.00 off admission every Sun., noon to 5 p.m.

Mt. LeKid Climbing Wall open every Sat. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. and Sun. 12-4 p.m.

Wee Move for ages 1-4 with parent, every Fri., 10:30 a.m.

Little Learners for ages 1-4 with parent, every Thurs., 10:30 a.m.

Coulee Region Autism Society for family members, friends and professionals who care for someone on the autism spectrum. 3rd Wed. of each month, Chileda Habilitation Institute, 1825 Victory St., La Crosse. 6:30-8:30 p.m. Child care available, call 608-519-0883. lax-autismgroup@centurytel.net or autismfyi-lacrosse@yahoogroups.com.

Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW) meets the 4th Tues. of each month, Nell's City Grill, 1111 3rd St. S., La Crosse, 5:30 p.m. Madalene Buelow, 608-791-5282.

La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce monthly breakfast meeting. 2nd Mon. of each month, 7 a.m., Radisson. Admission is \$5 and includes breakfast. www.lacrossechamber.com.

La Crosse Noon Wisconsin Women's Alliance meets the 2nd Thurs. of each month, noon. Heidi Blanke, hblanke@gmail.com.

MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) meets the 1st Monday of each month, Olivet Lutheran Church, 6:15 p.m. Holly Zeeb, wxyzeeb@centurytel.net, www.olivetlutheran.org/small-groups/mops.

Onalaska Rotary meets every Monday at 6 p.m., lower level of Blue Moon, Onalaska.

Valley View Kiddie Crew meets the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month, Valley View Mall Food Court, 10:30-11:30 a.m., with fun and education experiences for children and parents. www.myvalleyview.com.

WAFER Food Pantry, Mon.-Fri. 10 a.m.-12:45 p.m., Mon., Tues., Thurs. 4-8 p.m. 608-782-6003. www.waferlacrosse.org.

Women in Networking and Support (WINS) meets the 2nd Wed. of each month, Piggy's, noon-1 p.m. Kay Buck, 608-791-9253, kay.v.buck@wellsfargo.com.

Women of Worth (WOW) meets the last Wed. of each month, Boot Hill Pub, noon. Debbie Lee, 608-784-2775, debbie.lee@westlandinsurance.com.

CALENDAR EVENTS

Jan. 21-May 21, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz traveling exhibit, Children's Museum of La Crosse. www.funmuseum.org.

Jan. 27-Feb. 12, *The Glass Menagerie*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre. www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Feb. 3, Off the Page, Danza Espanola Dance, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Academy Theatre, Winona.

Feb. 5-14, Spread the Love! Free cheese board and spreader with any \$75 Valley View Mall purchase. Restrictions may apply. www.myvalleyview.com.

Feb. 9, *The Color Purple*, 7:30 p.m., Fine Arts Center, Main Theatre, Viterbo University.

Feb. 10, March 9, Night (out) at the Museum, 5:30-8 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse. For ages 3-11, \$10/ member child, \$15/non-member child. Pre-registration and pre-payment required. www.funmuseum.org.

Feb. 11, Ellis, 7:30 p.m., Pump House, La Crosse. www.thepumphouse.org.

Feb. 13, 20, 1-2-3 Magic parenting workshop, 9-11 a.m., Stein Counseling, Onalaska. \$45, 608-785-7000 or <https://effectivebehavior.com/workshops/>.

Feb. 17-18, Living Out Loud with Lisa Warsinske. 7:30 p.m., Pump House, La Crosse. www.thepumphouse.org.

Feb. 17-19, Chamber Opera Performance, "Trouble in Tahiti," 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Fine Arts Center, Viterbo University.

Feb. 18-19, Sports Card Show, Valley View Mall. www.myvalleyview.com.

Feb. 18, Snowshoe Scamper 5k, 10k, and Family Fun, 8 a.m.-12 p.m., Forest Hills Golf Course.

Feb. 19, Yes, Holmen, 11:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Holmen High School. Join Holmen Area Civic and Commerce Association for its annual business expo.

Feb. 23-26, *Guys and Dolls*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 3 p.m. Sun., Page Theatre, St. Mary's University, Winona.

Feb. 24-26, Arts & Crafts Show, Valley View Mall. www.myvalleyview.com.

Feb. 24-25, *The Secret Garden*, 7:30 p.m., Fine Arts Center, Viterbo University.

Feb. 24-26, March 1-4, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Toland Theatre, UW-La Crosse.

Feb. 25, Garnet Rogers, 7:30 p.m., Pump House, La Crosse. www.thepumphouse.org.

Feb. 29, *Duck for President and Other Stories*, 6:30 p.m., Page Theatre, St. Mary's University, Winona.

March 1, The Official Blues Brothers Revue, 7:30 p.m., Fine Arts Center, Viterbo University.

March 3, MVAC Artifact Show, Center Court, Valley View Mall. www.myvalleyview.com.

March 9-25, *Leading Ladies*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre. www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

March 13, 20, 1-2-3 Magic parenting workshop, 6-8 p.m., Stein Counseling, Onalaska. \$45, 608-785-7000 or <https://effectivebehavior.com/workshops/>.

March 15, Soweto Gospel Choir, 7:30 p.m., Fine Arts Center, Viterbo University.

March 16-17, 23-24, 30-31, *The Movie Game*, Pump House, La Crosse. www.thepumphouse.org.

March 18, *The Musical Tale of Peter Rabbit*, 3 p.m., Fine Arts Center, Viterbo University.

March 21, Page Series, Vishtèn, 7:30 p.m., Page Theatre, St. Mary's University, Winona.

March 23-25, Home and Builders Show, 5-9 p.m. Fri., 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sat., noon-5 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Center. www.lacrossecenter.com.

March 23-April 7, Easter Bunny Photos, Center Court, Valley View Mall. www.myvalleyview.com.

March 24, MVM Roller Derby vs. Des Moines, 6 p.m., Green Island Ice Arena, La Crosse.

March 24, Vox Audio, 7:30 p.m., Fine Arts Center, Viterbo University.

March 28-31, *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m. Wed.-Fri.; 11 a.m., 1 p.m. Sat., Toland Theatre Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse.

March 28-31, SMU Theatre & Dance, SPLaSH, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Academy Theatre, Winona.

March 31, Rich Little in "Jimmy Stewart: A Humorous Look at His Life," 7:30 p.m., Fine Arts Center, Viterbo University.

March 31, MVM Roller Derby vs. Thunder Bay, 6 p.m., Green Island Ice Arena, La Crosse.

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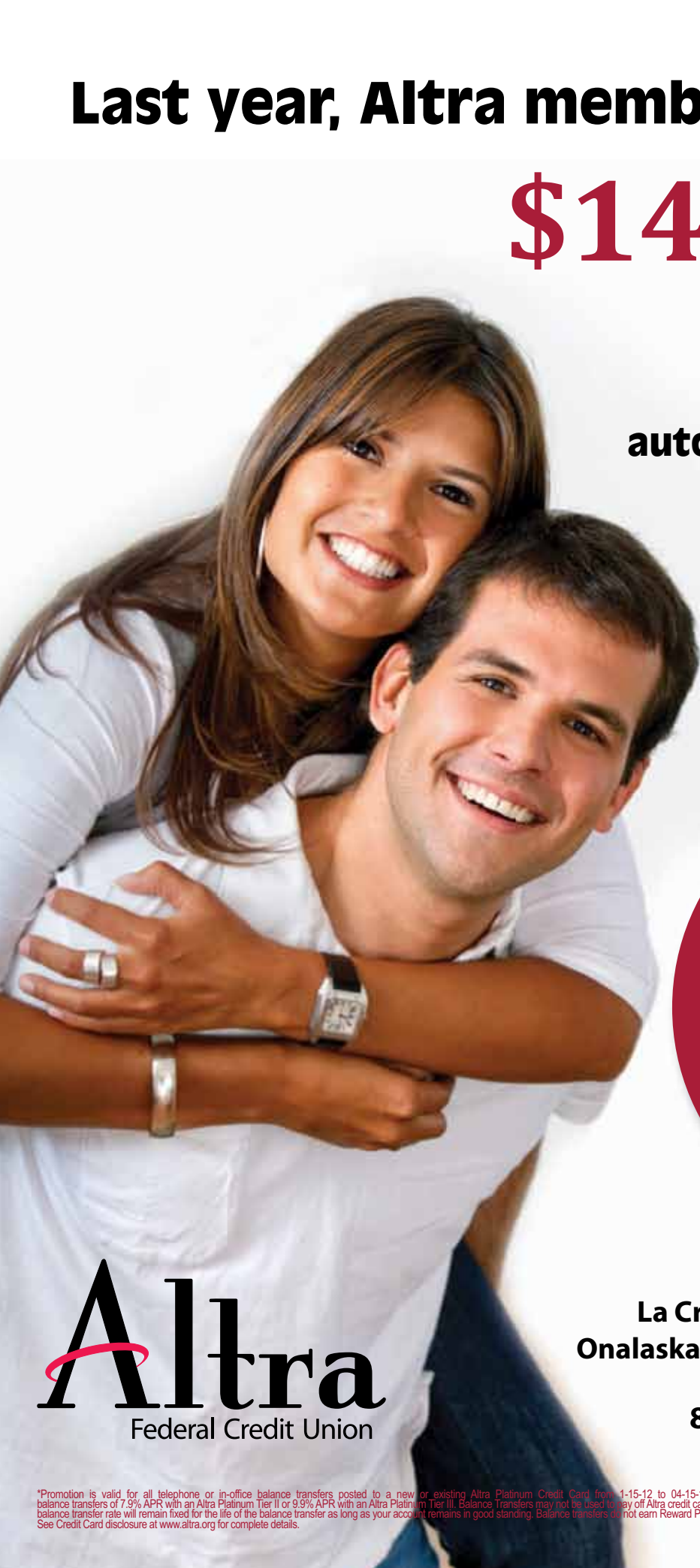
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