

# THE DENVER POST

## Restaurateurs shelve their Master of culinary arts

Mel's Bistro on East Sixth Avenue shut down Saturday, ending an era of Denver dining with **Mel** and **Janie Master**.

Mel's Bar and Grill is still open in Greenwood Village, but Mel sold that outfit to chef **Chad Clevenger**. The Masters are history in Denver — and Mel says that's just fine.

"For us, it was the greatest adventure of our lives," says Mel of more than 30 years in the Denver eating scene. "I wouldn't want to change anything. Well, maybe."

I tried to trace the Masters' restaurant history with Mel on the phone Monday. He and Janie are now living in a cottage in Rye, N.H., near their ailing daughter, **Amy**.

First came Fleurie's, Janie's first try at Denver dining. "It went fine until her partner wanted to put in giant football screens and dancing girls," says Mel.

Then in 1978, they opened Dud-



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ley's, in its day a legendary and extravagant restaurant with **Blair Taylor**. Always antsy, the Masters sold their share and left for California to help open Jordan Winery — then returned for Janie to help Taylor open Barolo in 1992.

A few years later, they opened Mel's in Cherry Creek — followed in no particular order by Top Hat, Starfish and Bruno's. Mel's was the only keeper, however, until they lost their lease last year.

That's when Mel thinks he should have packed it in. But no, he went on a restaurant field trip, opening Montecito in the former Dudley's space on East Sixth Avenue, Montecito

South and Annabel's in Greenwood Village, then changed Montecito to Mel's Bistro and Montecito South to Mel's South, and changed Annabel's to Agave. Now they're all gone — except for the previously mentioned Mel's Bar and Grill in Greenwood Village that Clevenger owns.

"All those terrible nightmares," says Mel. "We let our emotions get the best of us. We were really doing too many things all at once again. And we got into a lot of financial trouble doing it. It's basically a sad ending." Yet he loved the good times, the people, the chefs he helped along the way.

Now Mel is 65 and Janie is 64 — and he's happy they don't have a restaurant and have no plans to do one again, anywhere. "We're just having a lovely time with each other," he says.

**Lauren's line.** Former Denver kid

**Lauren Bush** (super model daughter of **Neil** and **Sharon Bush**) is coming out with a clothing line called Lauren Pierce, after grandma — and former first lady — Barbara's maiden name. "It's not about downplaying my last name as much as it is about loving Pierce," she told W.

**City spirit.** Opera star **Placido Domingo** is coming to the mall for the opening party of **Richard Sandov-al's** La Sandia at the Vistas at Park Meadows on Oct. 29.

Seems they're business partners, so he'll just be partying, not singing ... Barons, sitting in the former

Brix Anti-Bistro space, is shuttered with tax liens on the door ... **Desmond Tutu** is due in town Wednesday as part of the Insight Speakers Series. Mayor **John Hickenlooper** will introduce him — and he should wish him a happy birthday. Tutu turned 77 on Oct. 7 ... Spotted: Chelsea Handler dining Saturday night at Elway's downtown ... Sez who: "It was such a lovely day I thought it a pity to get up." **W. Somerset Maugham**

Bill Husted's column appears Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Husted also appears Tuesdays and Fridays on "Good Day Colorado" on Fox 31. You can reach him at 303-954-1486 or at [bhusted@denverpost.com](mailto:bhusted@denverpost.com). Take a peek at Husted's next column at [blogs.denverpost.com/husted](http://blogs.denverpost.com/husted).

**Placido Domingo** will be at the Vistas at Park Meadows on Oct. 29.

Stuart Ramson, Associated Press

