

# DENVER LIFE™

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2009

CULTURE | ADVENTURE | STYLE



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## CENTER PLATE

*Charcuterie  
at Olivea*

Stemming from the mid-19th century French term, *obsolete char cuite*, meaning "cooked flesh," a charcuterie is cold-cooked, cured or processed meat.

OLIVEA, from the creators of the Highlands' Duo, showcases this culinary classic in all its grandeur on the Spanish- Italian- and Southern French-inspired menu. "Charcuteries have become our signature," says co-owner Stephanie Bowden. "And a good one is made entirely by hand." Try the restaurant's carefully crafted duck liver mousse with fig compote or its boudin blanc (chicken sausage) with mustard. Can't choose just one? Not to worry. Order a tasting of *trois* for just \$16.

719 E. 17th Ave.  
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[olivearestaurant.com](http://olivearestaurant.com)

*Tid Bite*PRIME TIME  
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CHEF YOU SHOULD KNOW  
*Peggy Markel: The Curious Cook*

After three weeks of cooking for only herself, after 41 carefully made, one-dish meals, Peggy Markel sat alone, looking at a beautiful golden sweet potato in a blue bowl: her 42<sup>nd</sup> meal. *Today my life is given fruit.*

You see, Chef Markel doesn't normally cook alone. For 17 years, she has led Peggy Markel's Culinary Adventures through Italy, Morocco and now India (a recent 11-page *Food and Wine* spread featured her Indian recipes). And she creates these programs around international friendships: with the Italian, opera-singing bread baker; the French herb grower; the passionate cheese maker; the biodynamic wine producer; and "the crazy, crazy, self-taught, amazing, unpretentious restaurant owners and chefs who just love what they do."

But after weeks at a retreat meditating and practicing yoga during the days and cooking at night, Chef Markel sat alone, truly appreciating her skill.

Her understanding of food started early, cooking and gardening in the South. "I couldn't believe I planted a seed in the ground and it became this amazing, beautiful plant," she says. "It was like a perfect work of art, and it was delicious, something that you could actually eat." A startlingly psychedelic pink radish would ultimately be the foundation of her culinary tours. "My big purpose, what I created, was to reconnect to what comes from the field, grows and what then comes to the table."

Later, through travel, she saw the influence of culture and place on food. "You see how food is presented in its culture wherever you go: in the restaurants or people's homes," she says. "It has a repetition to it that's very specific, which is different from America."

There was spitzle and wienerschnitzel in Germany, real pizza in Napoli, and a Picasso-esque creation—sea bass served with a truffle cream sauce—in Liguria, where Chef Markel would later run her Ligurian School of Poetic Cooking, inspired by poets like Lawrence and Shelly who had lived on the Ligurian coast. Food, she realized, moved miles with one ingredient. "If a tomato sauce has garlic, basil and fresh tomatoes, and you add raisins and pine nuts, it becomes Sicilian. Why does it have raisins and pine nuts? Because of the North African influence."

Chef Markel was becoming fluent in Italy's culinary language; at 35, she learned the country's official language and began working with a villa to set up her first culinary tour. "I do cook, I love to cook, I love teaching, but when I'm in the perspective country I'd rather



be a bridge and let the culture speak for itself through the locals."

While recent American movements—from international foods to sustainability—have helped us explore food, there's much more to learn from other cultures, she says. "We all as human beings have a lot on our plate. But if you go away, it's usually because you have a curiosity and want to learn something other than what you've been doing." You can take the understanding home simply by savoring a dinner with friends. Slowing down, if just for one meal.

As for Chef Markel, she brings it home in recipes. From a seemingly endless archive of people, places and experiences, she creates modest masterpieces, each ingredient symbolizing a country—from Thailand to Italy—and a rare understanding of food. "I might make a soup puree of zucchini that has freshly grated ginger, a bit of cumin, put a dollop of yogurt in there. I might add a little bit of preserved lemon on top, another dash of cumin...and a drizzle of olive oil."

**PEGGY MARKEL'S CULINARY ADVENTURES**  
[peggymarkel.com](http://peggymarkel.com)

**UPCOMING TRIPS**  
TUSCANY SEPTEMBER 27-OCTOBER 3, 2009  
INDIA OCTOBER 10-22, 2009  
MOROCCO OCTOBER 31-NOVEMBER 9, 2009



MARC PISCOTTY



## WHAT'S COOKING

# *Red Hot Catering*

MARC PISCOTTY

If “catering company” conjures up memories of sub-par weddings and dreaded corporate gatherings, Denver’s new SANDOVAL’S KITCHEN from Modern Mexican restaurants will make you forget tasteless flanks, shanks and patties of years past. “Imagine being in your home, the smells of the menu permeating the home in a good way, the doors open, and you walk in,” says Sandoval’s Kitchen Chef, Culinary Institute of America-trained Rob Corey. “It’s an immediate sensory experience that sets the stage. It’s fresh. It’s made right there. You can hear it.” With 12

restaurants from New York and Denver to Mexico and Dubai, it’s no surprise Modern Mexican is spicing up the local catering scene. And its exotic, elevated cuisine isn’t a plane—or even car—ride away. Chef Corey prepares it in your home (or any venue you’d like). “It’s your event, not ours where you have to pick from choice A, B or C,” says Managing Partner Amanda Burk, who has eight years event-planning experience. “We really want it to be customized and all about you.” You’ll work with Burk and Chef Corey to create your menu. You may want to

combine your favorite dishes from Modern Mexican’s Denver restaurants—like Tamayo’s seared beef tenderloin carpaccio with pickled jalapeño and Zengo’s wonton tacos or lobster pot stickers—with other international elements and timeless family additions. “It’s about the guests absolutely talking about it for a day, a week, a month afterwards—and they owned that,” says Chef Corey. “If we can achieve that, then we have superseded everyone’s expectations of what an event really is.” [modernmexican.com/kitchen](http://modernmexican.com/kitchen)

## *Tid Bite*

### UDI'S LAUNCHES GLUTEN-FREE LINE

Denver-based Udi’s launched its line of gluten-free baked goods, including white and whole grain breads, pizza crust and blueberry and lemon streusel muffins, in time for October, Celiac Disease Awareness Month. [udisfoods.com](http://udisfoods.com)

## Celebrate a World of Local Harvest

Want to call yourself Colorado proud? Earn bragging rights at any DENVER INDEPENDENT NETWORK OF RESTAURANTS (DINR) location between September 12 and September 18. During Denver’s second HARVEST WEEK, 45 restaurants will create dishes or drinks based around Colorado’s best ingredients. The featured menus will be bursting with diverse cuisines, including Italian, Latin American and Vietnamese, and a mix of local products, says chair Matt Selby. “We’re really trying to think outside the box with preparation,” he says. Local cherries, goat cheese, nuts and chocolate will all have a strong presence, in addition to some of



last year’s stand-outs like Colorado-grown peaches. For more information, go to [eatdenver.com](http://eatdenver.com)



LAURIE SMITH

## ROOT FOR BLACK CAT AT NEW YORK'S BEARD HOUSE

Eric Skokan, chef and owner of Boulder's **BLACK CAT** restaurant, will bring his distinctly Colorado cuisine to Manhattan's exclusive Beard House on October 23, where he will cook a six-course menu using Black Cat Farm ingredients.

1964 13th St. Boulder  
303.444.5500

[blackcatboulder.com](http://blackcatboulder.com)

## BEHIND THE BAR

If you've indulged in a margarita, you're no stranger to the Mexican agave plant used to make tequila. But try agave's naturally sweet nectar—with a splash of heat from Tabasco or jalapeños—in these complex, irresistibly spicy/sweet alternatives found at local restaurants.

### FUEGO VERDE AT LOLA

[loladepv.com](http://loladepv.com)

Milagro silver tequila, fresh muddled cilantro, jalapeño, lime and agave nectar

### PALOMA CON FUEGO AT AVENUE GRILL

[avenuegrill.com](http://avenuegrill.com)

Proximus tequila, grapefruit juice, muddled cilantro and cucumber, green Tabasco and agave nectar

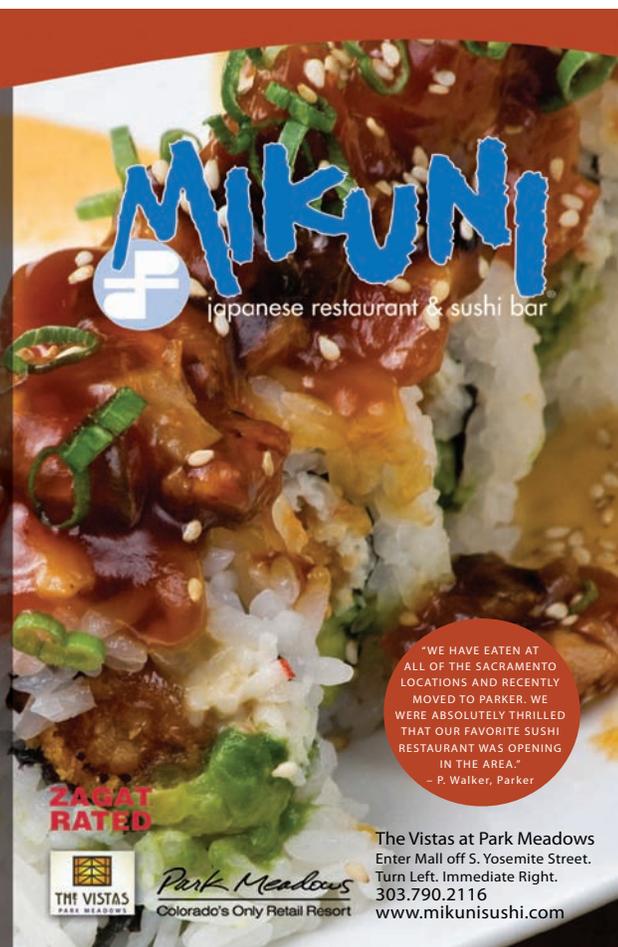
### DEVIL'S MOJO AT HAPPY NOODLE HOUSE

[happynoodlehouse.com](http://happynoodlehouse.com)

Chamucos Reposado, fresh ginger and pineapple, fresh-squeezed lime and organic agave nectar

## PEOPLE ARE TALKING

An award-winning and Zagat rated restaurant, Mikuni is all the buzz in South Denver. Paintings of samurai warriors and Japanese beauties adorn the walls, sharing the space with several large screen TVs. The dining experience, true to Mikuni's commitment to quality and adventure, is unparalleled perfection. Guests are invited to linger in our ultra hip bar, lounge and outside patio.



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