

Biltmore
CORAL GABLES ~ MIAMI

PRESS ROOM

CULINARY DREAM TEAM TO WHIP UP THE 2002 BILTMORE GREAT SOUTH FLORIDA WINE FESTIVAL

Coral Gables, FL (February 11, 2002) - The 2002 Biltmore Great South Florida Wine Festival, which will take place at the historic Biltmore Hotel April 12-14 to benefit Baptist and South Miami Hospital Foundations and United Way of Miami-Dade, will feature an impressive lineup of some of the nation's most distinguished chefs. Along with the team of chefs from the Biltmore Hotel, including Geoffrey Cousineau and Philippe Ruiz, the three-day charity festival will feature the following culinary stars:

Chef Rocco DiSpirito, Union Pacific, Manhattan, New York. Chef Rocco DiSpirito has been busy the past few years. He has galvanized the gastronomic world with innovative culinary creations at his Manhattan restaurant, Union Pacific, while garnering a three-star review from The New York Times. Also, he was named Food & Wine's Best New Chef 1999 and nominated for a 1999 James Beard Foundation Award. DiSpirito has also been popular on numerous televised cooking programs. DiSpirito followed a long apprenticeship, entering The Culinary Institute of America at age 16. After graduation, he continued his studies at Jardin de Cygne in Paris, where he began to see French structure as the essential building block for any dish. When he returned to New York, he worked in several French restaurants before earning a business degree from Boston University. Today he is home on the range at Union Pacific, where he continues to dazzle diners with his compelling creativity and signature penchant for developing surprising combinations of ingredients. Chef Dean Fearing, The Mansion on Turtle Creek, Dallas, Texas. As famous for his signature Lucchese cowboy boots as his exceptional cooking, Dean Fearing is one of America's most inventive and respected chefs.

Trained at The Culinary Institute of America, he is considered the "Father of Southwestern Cuisine" since he began his inventive exploits at The Restaurant at The Mansion on Turtle Creek in the 1980s. He continues to develop this cuisine that focuses on local ingredients like peppers, dried chilies, jicama, cilantro, avocado and tomatillos, which he assembles with classic techniques.

Chef Wayne Nish, March, Manhattan, New York. Unlike many of New York's top chefs, Wayne Nish didn't always know he wanted to cook professionally. He inherited a love of cooking from his Maltese grandmother, mother, and aunt, and a fondness for the exotic from his Japanese-Norwegian father and New York upbringing. Yet, until 10 years ago, Nish had only dreamed of translating his passion for food into a career. After leaving the world of publishing to enter the world of food, he trained at The New York Restaurant School and then landed a first apprenticeship at The Quilted Giraffe that blossomed into a full-time position. Mentor Barry Wine's refusal to follow the rules infected his pupil with a creative irreverence toward food combinations that has remained with Nish ever since. In 1990, the publisher-turned-chef joined actor-turned-restaurateur Joseph Scalice to open March. The irreverent duo proved electric. In the kitchen, Nish prepares an Asian-accented American menu that incorporates his Japanese heritage, his more recent flight with Provençal cuisine, and his training at The Quilted Giraffe.

Charlie Trotter, Charlie Trotter's Restaurant, Chicago, Illinois. Charlie Trotter started cooking professionally in 1982, after graduating with a degree in political science from the University of Wisconsin. At that time, he embarked on an intense four-year period of work, study and travel, including stints with Norman Van Aken, Bradley Ogden and Gordon Sinclair.

He lived in Chicago, San Francisco, Florida and Europe, reading every cookbook he could get his hands on, working hard and eating out incessantly. To obtain the finest foodstuffs available, Trotter has formed a network of over 90 purveyors of the fresh, healthful ingredients that inspire him to create flavorful masterpieces. From the naturally raised meat to the line-caught seafood to the organic produce, every component of each dish is the purest available. Charlie Trotter's Restaurant

is recognized as one of the finest in the world, having earned a variety of prestigious national and international awards, including Relais & Chateaux: Relais Gourmand; Five Stars from Mobil Travel Guide and Five Diamonds from AAA. The restaurant has received the Grand Award from Wine Spectator, which named Charlie Trotter's as The Best Restaurant in the United States (2000).

Chef Norman Van Aken, Norman's, Coral Gables, Florida. One of South Florida's most visible and admired chefs, Norman Van Aken is credited with inventing the stylish South Florida nouvelle-tropical melting pot genre over a decade ago, first at his original Louie's Backyard in Key West and then at a Mano in Miami Beach. In 1995, following a two-year hiatus from the restaurant business during which he wrote a cookbook, Van Aken returned with his newest venture, Norman's. Since Norman's opened, Van Aken has become one of the nation's most highly regarded chefs. A frequent contributor to charitable efforts, a prolific author and consultant and a tireless innovator in his own kitchen, this self-taught chef has created his own version of the European apprentice system. Starting out in Key West as a short order cook, the Illinois native has been solidly identified with South Florida ever since.

In the late 1980s, he brought this signature cuisine to the rest of the nation with his first cookbook, Feast of Sunlight. The Great Exotic Fruit Book was published in 1995, followed shortly by his third book, Norman Van Aken's New World Cuisine. He has been featured live on Good Morning America and has appeared in Bon Appétit, USA Today, Food Arts, Food & Wine, The Wine News and Art Culinaire.

In 1997 he received the industry's highest award, The James Beard Foundation's Perrier-Jouët Great American Chef Award, Southeast.

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For more festival information, call (305) 913-3164 or go to the festival's web site, www.biltmorewinefestival.com.
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