

Trying a Taste at Toulouse

Toulouse Owner
George Tice offers a
guest a taste of wine.



Besting the competition is a tremendous challenge for every restaurant in a crowded urban market. **George Tice**, owner of **Toulouse**, an upscale bistro in Atlanta, has developed a one-of-a-kind wine program that accomplishes this goal. "Because we are a 'neighborhood' restaurant, our competition isn't the 'best' restaurant in town," explains Tice. "We have to compete with others of similar profiles." Winning this battle every day starts with choosing wines by committee and includes offering a "try a taste" wine flight of three or more wines to every customer before he or she selects.

Tice's committee of local wine-writer "authorities," collectors, and wine-loving customers scores each wine in blind flights before the wines are reviewed with respect to the price. Explains Tice, "I use the committee not to select best and better but to select for the broadness of appeal to the Atlanta market. I look for a consensus rather than trying to select which wines got the most 'firsts' in the flight."

The bistro's "try a taste" program leads to high sales of more expensive wines. Tice estimates that 85 percent of the bistro's guests order wine, and 31 percent of the guest check is attributable to wine. Tice also recommends a wine with each entrée. "There is no question that the suggested wines on the menu outsell the other wines in their classification," notes Tice. "I don't try and put the more expensive wines on the menu, but I do focus on the wines that are generating the most dollars, as long as I feel that they offer the customer the right marriage between wine and food."

Toulouse can be contacted by calling 404-351-9533.

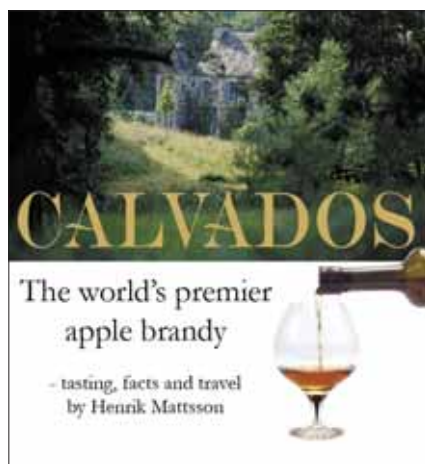
Normandy's Secret

Swedish wine writer **Henrik Mattsson**, in collaboration with his father, **Olle Mattsson**, has released the only English-language book on Calvados, *Calvados: The World's Premier Apple Brandy: Tasting, Facts, and Travel* (Calvadosbook.com; \$52.95). The book's initial release in 2004 received Edouard Cointreau's Gourmand Award for Best Spirits Book in the World.

Dedicated to the increasing interest in the nongrape fruit spirit, the book explores Calvados's home of Normandy, France, its fascinating history, and its *apple-ations* and *terroir*. Pomoculture, cider production, distillation, and maturation are discussed, and the authors include 'an exhaustive list of producers, producer profiles, tasting notes, food pairings, recipes, and a touring guide to the region. For the bartender, there is an extensive offering of Calvados cocktails ranging from the traditional, like the Calvados Sour, to the more modern, such as the Calvarinha.

This is essential reading for the drinks pro and a curious addition to the library of spirits enthusiasts everywhere. For more information about the authors and the book, visit calvadosbook.com.

—David Furer



Restaurantramblings

BOSTON—**Legal Seafood** will soon launch two new restaurants in the Boston area: **Legal Test Kitchen** and **Legal C Bar and Grille**, which will be more affordable additions to the Legal chain. • Pastry chef **Tania Schnapp** and her creative dessert menu will be joining **Bricco** in Boston. • **Jer-Ne**, in the Ritz-Carlton, Boston Commons, welcomed Chef **Scott Gambone**. • **Michael Schlow**, executive chef at **Radius**, recently announced the promotion of **Patrick Connolly** from sous chef to chef de cuisine. • **KingFish Hall** welcomed new Head Chef **Katherine DeWitt See**, whom the National Fisheries Institute has awarded the title of Future Leader in the Seafood Industry.

NEW YORK CITY—**Alex Ureña** recently opened **Ureña**, a modern Spanish restaurant inspired by his European travels. • **Room 4 Dessert** is a new dessert bar tended by renowned Pastry Chef **Will Goldfarb**. • **Industria Argentina** serves up a variety of South American brick-oven baked meats, as well as some Italian dishes, in **TriBeCa**. • Two new eateries have opened up in **Bloomington**: the **Burke Bar Café** and its more casual counterpart **Burke in the Box**, both run by **David Burke**. • Top toque **Micah Maughn** has recently left the kitchen at **Loft** to pursue other interests. • **David Rowe**, former kitchen manager at **Paradou**, has recently taken over at **Partage**, a French restaurant in the West Village. • A new restaurant, **Dona**, will be opening this spring in the location where **Bellini** now stands. **Dona** comes from **Donatella Arpaia**, the restaurateur behind **Ama** and **Davidburke & Donatella**. • **Alfama**, featuring fine Portuguese cuisine, hired two new chefs to begin 2006: **Luis Caseiro** as executive chef and **Dan Obusan** as chef de cuisine. **WASHINGTON DC**—**Duane Keller** has been recently appointed executive chef at **Dupont Grille Restaurant**, where he will maintain the modern American menu.