

SUSHI outside the box

Ed Metcalfe keeps the spirit of Shiso alive without the brick and mortar.



ED METCALFE mixes fresh miso soup at left. His 14-inch yanagiba sashimi knife is at left and above, with piles of raw fish ready for further carving.

“I was washing dishes by hand, silverware, glasses, just getting my ass kicked every weekend.”

PHOTOS STEVEN KRAUSE

Thanks to Ronald Reagan, Ed Metcalfe can teach you how to construct a perfect spicy tuna roll, whip together a pot of miso soup, slice sashimi like a pro, or layer succulent layers of maguro, sake, and Hamachi over a tube of rice for a multicolored rainbow roll.

The 40th president probably didn't know sashimi from shinola—Reagan's tastes ran more toward meatloaf, mac and cheese and, of course, jelly beans—and he never met Ed. But on August 3, 1981, 13,000 air traffic controllers went on strike for better pay and shorter hours, and two days later Reagan fired the 11,000 who didn't immediately return to work, then banned them forever from government employ.

That included Ed's father, and thus began a culinary odyssey that culminated with world-class sushi in Sonoma.

“My dad was a little devastated when he lost his job. We had just moved into a brand-new home. I was getting ready to start my freshman year of high school.

He was also a flight instructor, had been in aviation pretty much from his early 20s, he had every rating you could get, but he couldn't make enough money being a flight instructor. So out of the blue he decided he was going to buy a restaurant, and he looked in the paper and found one (in the Sacramento area) recently up for sale. The concept was breakfast and lunch, everything made from scratch in the morning, fresh biscuits, homemade gravy, big slabs of ham off the bone.”

Two weeks later the Metcalfes were in business. “My mom was the front of the house, my dad was the cook, and there was one dishwasher. It was a seven-days-a-week operation, and my freshman year I started washing dishes every Saturday and Sunday.”

The restaurant, called simply “Ham and Eggs,” was a raging success, “There was a line of contractors that would line up at 6 a.m. to get inside. I was washing dishes by hand, silverware, glasses, just getting my ass kicked every weekend.



LAYERING STICKY SUSHI RICE on nori (toasted seaweed) sheet is an acquired skill.



So I quickly figured out I didn't want to do that. Let me try and cook."

Ed started cooking in his sophomore year. At 16, he was arriving at 5 a.m., opening the restaurant, and cooking breakfast. "It taught me a lot of work ethic at a very young age. I had an opportunity to help grow the business, so we ended up in four locations in a matter of five years. All breakfast and lunch, all the same concept, all the same name."

Ham and Eggs did well enough that Ed stayed for 16 years, "until I realized I didn't want to be flipping flapjacks and making gravy anymore. So at 29, I left the family business and went to culinary school in San Francisco at CCA."

The California Culinary Academy, which closed in 2015, was part of the prestigious Le Cordon Bleu franchise and taught Metcalfe a variety of cooking techniques and styles, along with a bigger vision that quickly transcended ham and eggs. He went on to work in a variety of restaurants in diverse places, like Hawaii, Lake Tahoe, and Denmark, and along the way discovered an affinity for Asian food.

"It involved ingredients I hadn't seen

before, it was exotic, and after tasting them and experimenting with them, I was just intrigued and attracted to the flavor profiles. Asia's obviously a large area, so I had to decide, what type of Asian food do I want to do? And throughout my experiences, I was always exposed to Japanese cuisine, no matter where I went it was there."

Ultimately, it was a job in Copenhagen that set Ed on his path.

"I spent a year there. It was my first exposure to sushi and really where I developed as a chef, working in a very popular, Michelin-starred restaurant, called "Sushitarian," in downtown Copenhagen. I would watch the Japanese chef work behind the bar and was just astounded by what was happening, especially after being in a hot kitchen for so many years."

Metcalfe landed in Sonoma—a place he had never seen despite Sacramento-area roots—after a friend prodded him to come.

"So I came up, I literally walked the Plaza, read every menu, and they were all the same, all Wine Country cuisine, Mediterranean Italian."

It seemed like a good place to plant some sushi, so Metcalfe negotiated a lease for an empty space just below the Sonoma Plaza on Broadway, and opened Shiso Sonoma.

"My market study was walking the Plaza and reading menus. I think I was just turning 39 at that point, and when I came here, driving through the vineyards, I was in heaven."

Shiso lasted four years on Broadway, built a solid fan base, but Metcalfe ultimately concluded, "I didn't need to pay

premium rent because, of course, you weren't going to attract people down Broadway (from the tourism-centric Plaza), at least not back then. Even today it would be difficult."

So, eventually, he opened a new Shiso in the Maxwell Village shopping center, right next to the miniature golf course, with acres of parking and a gar-

“The Japanese ... eat based on seasons and it's all about the portions ...”



den in back. He stayed there eight years and built a dedicated following.

If you've eaten his food you know Ed Metcalfe is a purist and an artist, very much at home in the kitchen. There's a focus on detail, a precision of movement as he shapes pieces of nigiri and sashimi, wielding a 14-inch yanagiba, drawing the blade through a filet of salmon, carving out precise pieces with a steady rhythm. His commitment to the discipline of the craft as he learned it is almost reverent, a meditation of sorts. And it is instructive when he explains how the traditions of preparing and eating sushi are far different in Japan than here.

"There are so many misconceptions about what sushi really can be and what it is," says Metcalfe. "And it's two really different things between Japan and America. We're so used to this kind of Americanized sushi that when people have a real sushi experience in Japan, it's nothing like what we see here. I had an opportunity to learn sushi from a Japanese chef, and I honor that out of respect."

The differences, he suggests, are both gustatory and cultural. "When you go

to a real Omakase experience in Japan, you're not going to get ginger and wasabi. You're going to order from the chef, and the chef is going to make one piece of nigiri at a time and put it in front of you, and there's no dipping. The chefs literally put their own special touch to each piece in the nigiri, whether it's with some smoked salt or a fresh herb, or just a glaze that they've created, and it's very light. It's never going to be like mayonnaise or something that we're used to having. It's really about the focus of that one piece in front of you, and to experience it in your mouth and really take it in."

Unlike Americans, says Metcalfe, "the Japanese are very seasonally driven. They eat based on seasons and it's all about the portions, like in the bento box, which is one of the healthiest food creations because it's portion control, all very small portions and also usually very seasonal, with a piece of protein, some rice, your carbs from fresh fruits. It was one of the things I learned when I started studying sushi; it's actually brilliant. The Japanese eat very healthy and they eat very portion control. They

A BOWL OF PERFECTLY-SEASONED EDAMAMI is part of the sushi class menu.

have a saying in Japan that they only eat until they're 80 percent full."

Much as he loved his kitchen time, Metcalfe found himself beginning to confront a couple of cold, brick-and-mortar realities. "If you're going to be in this business, obviously you have to be passionate about restaurants. But the flip side of that for any owner/operator—especially if you want to be in the kitchen most of the time—is that you have your strengths and you have your weaknesses. And my weaknesses were always management. And I knew that. So, in a time when it is extremely difficult to find employees, and then to manage and build a team, and keep a team, it's even more difficult."

And, adds Metcalf, the net profit margin on most restaurants is 3 to 6 percent, which doesn't put that much in an owner's pocket. "When I sold Shiso," he says, "my employees were making more money than I was."



And then there's the issue of age. Metcalfe is only 53, but he's been in the kitchen since he was 15.

"I just can't imagine having to go back and do it all over again when there are so many other opportunities out there today in this industry, and they're not related to brick and mortar, they're opposite of brick and mortar."

And, of course, the food industry in general was changing before Ed's eyes. "The last two years I really started to see the writing on the wall with all the food delivery companies—Grubhub, DoorDash, the convenience of online groceries, boxed meals coming to your door—I saw the trend of how dining was changing. We all know that going out to dinner or lunch is not cheap. And it continues to go up."

So at the end of 2018, Ed sold Shiso Modern Asian Kitchen to the perfect buyers—Tokyo-born Shige and Toki

Mori—who seamlessly took over the space, and named it Shige Sushi and Isakaya (which means "bar").

Meanwhile, Metcalfe minus brick-and-mortar built on his existing catering service to add sushi educational classes, team-building events, Airbnb sushi experiences, farm-to-table dinners, winery events, pickup parties, and in-home private dinners for 6 to 100 people.



"... the sushi classes may be the stars of the show."

He calls the business "Sushimoto," after one of his earlier restaurants (he's owned four), and a visit to his Facebook page or website makes your mouth water. Food selections aren't limited to sushi, and available menu items include Kobe beef medallions with shitake mushroom sauce, garlic and ginger-marinated tri-tip and Korean short ribs.

But the sushi classes may be the stars of the show. Ed can set them up anywhere, but he has a go-to site at the Seamus Winery tasting room in Kenwood, where classes of four to 10 people learn sushi A to Z, while tasting flights of Seamus wines paired for each course.

Metcalf's lessons cover making miso soup from scratch with dashi stock (vastly superior to most restaurant offerings), preparing sushi rice, where and how to obtain top-quality fish (He has a list, and don't be fooled by designations like "sushi grade," he warns. They're bogus.), and how to shape and cut nigiri rolls or slice sashimi into perfect strips. It's all hands-on and into the mouth. "We will make more food than you can eat," he warns. And he's right.

Metcalf will also tell you which fish are sustainably sourced and healthiest to eat, which are farmed, and why that is increasingly necessary. "That's one of the things about being a sushi chef. You are always conscious about what you're purchasing and is it right for the environment. So yellowfin and albacore are the most sustainable. Albacore is one of my favorite tunas. It's lean, but if you get into the albacore belly, it's actually very fatty and amazing."

Ed says he still gets in his kitchen time while catering, but now there's much less overhead burden, and just as much fun. "There's a lot of joy when you're teaching something that you've been passionate about for years—that's definitely a part of the fun in my job." ☾

Ed Metcalf and Sushimoto can be found at sushimotos.com, or at 650.862.6633.

SEAMUS & SUSHI

BETTER
FOR YOU
FOOD



Laid-back tasting lounge features gold-medal wines and a touch of the Dead.

When Jim Foley Jr. was growing up on the Jersey Shore his grandmother called him Seamus, which is the Irish equivalent of James, and he carried the name forward when he started a wine label and opened a tasting lounge in Kenwood with his father, Jim Foley Sr.

Along the way, he also owned and operated a variety of restaurants and became a certified Dead Head. “Certified,” because on the wall of his tasting lounge, above the bar, there is a 10-foot-long, panoramic photo of a 1982 Grateful Dead concert, the first of 14 gigs the band played at Stanford University’s Frost Auditorium.

“I’ve always loved music,” says Foley, whose father was and is a huge Willie Nelson fan. That love is evident in the upright piano occupying prime space in the tasting room, and in the laid-back atmosphere of comfortable furniture, casual outdoor access, and the open invitation for visitors to come and browse, buy a glass or a bottle, sit around and chat, go online, play a game of corn-hole, or jam with other musicians.

Foley also hosts Ed Metcalfe’s sushi-making classes, held in the lounge on a

long custom-made table constructed of oak barrel staves, during which Seamus wines are available in flights paired with the sushi.

Another outside-the-box tasting experience occurs on Thursday nights when Seamus hosts “Paint Night,” during which patrons get painting lessons from a professional artist, complete with canvas, brush, paints and, of course, wine. The paint nights often double as date nights or family nights, sometimes with upward of 20 participants.

In the future, he says, he’s hoping to host tie-dye nights, and any other kind of activity he thinks his guests might enjoy.

The wine itself is a strong attraction, including a prize-winning mix of cabernet, pinot, chardonnay, sauvignon blanc, rosé and a red blend cuvée. At the 2018 Sonoma County Harvest Fair, Foley’s 2015 Olde Sonoma cabernet won double gold and best of class, and in the 2019 competition the Seamus 2017 Buena Terra Chardonnay won double gold. ☾

Seamus Tasting Lounge is located at 8910 Sonoma Highway, in Kenwood. Go to seamustastinglounge.com, or call 707.573.7277 for tastings and more information.

SALUMERIA OVELLO

A very short trip to Italy.



CHEF ANDREA, with one of his very large, handmade salamis

If you've never been to Italy but have always wanted to go, you can save yourself some time, money, and, perhaps, some coronavirus exposure, by taking a shortcut to Ovello.

Ovello is *of* Italy, but not *in* Italy, which means it's a lot closer to you and whatever appetite you have for authentic Italian salumi. It's actually two blocks from the Sonoma Plaza on West Napa Street and, as Andrea Marino likes to say, "When you cross the door, you are in Italy."

Marino is the chef and (with his wife, Noreen) co-owner of Ovello, which opened last September after a three-year birthing period and the meticulous renovation of the property that had housed two previous bakeries. He is the real deal, and when he says you're in Italy when you're inside Ovello, he means it.

For 15 years he had a Michelin-starred restaurant in the Piemonte region of northern Italy, and before that he worked in 20 other restaurants around Europe, interspersed with teaching culinary classes in Japan and Holland.

“He is the real deal, and when he says you’re in Italy when you’re inside Ovello, he means it.”

“... you’re instantly in the embrace of scores of hanging torpedoes of meat, the scent of garlic and spices and fragrant seasonings crowding your senses.”

hand-powered, flywheel driven, red-line Berkel meat slicer in front, a precision instrument still beloved by artisans and aficionados willing to spend between 10 and 20 times the price of an electric slicer. The classic Berkel is also a retro piece of art that adds excitement and



THE GRAFFITI on Chef Andrea's arm runs all over his body, he says, while hoisting salami from the aging room.

His father owned a successful bakery, his grandfather raised and butchered pigs in the family yard, and Marino learned family recipes and cooking techniques from his grandmother, before going to culinary school.

All of which means that he knows his way around butchering, baking, and salumi making, which is not an art that comes easily. Making artisanal salumi, which include a variety of mostly-pork-based dried meats, involves a multigenerational learning curve and the knowledge of how to balance various cuts of meat and fat, combined with herbs and other seasonings, as well as wine and sometimes beer. And when you get all of that right, you still have to know how long to age it at what temperature.

The results of Marino's knowledge and experience hang in an aging room visible through a large window behind the front counter. Step into that room and you're instantly in the embrace of scores of hanging torpedoes of meat, the scent of garlic and spices and fragrant seasonings crowding your senses.

Proudly, Marino unties a salami the size of a football and carries it to the

drama to the shop as he stands before it, turning the flywheel that drives the machinery that slices the salami into paper-thin wafers of meat.

In addition to salamis, flavored a variety of ways to reflect the origins of their meat, Marino ties and roasts at least one porchetta every day. That, in case you're new to Italian delicacies, is roll of pork loin and pork belly, wrapped in skin and flavored typically with salt, pepper, rosemary, thyme, fennel, sage, and lots of garlic. The whole thing is spit-roasted and then served hot with crisp skin and dripping fat. Watching this drama unfold inside Ovello with running commentary from Marino, and then sitting at one of his small dining tables to taste it, is a special treat.

Ask Marino what the secret is to making really good salumi and he simply smiles and says, "It's in my DNA."

He sources the best meats he can find from a broker, all of it vegetarian-fed, antibiotic-free, heritage pork, plus wild boar and a little lamb.

He also makes a stunning chicken liver paté that may erase any residual longing for foie gras, at least in Califor-

nia. And you might want to try his pork tenderloin terrine, wrapped in a coat of porcini mushrooms.

There are specials every day, charcuterie boards, handmade, organic focaccia, salads, whole cuts of coppa, lonzino, and even duck breast prosciutto. Meals are

CHEF ANDREA and wife Noreen with some of his best work.



served five days a week to go, or at the small tables in front.

Marino made it to Sonoma because he met an American woman in a Piemonte café and quickly fell in love. That was Doreen, an internal medicine doctor with a home in Petaluma. When he followed her to California, he built a test kitchen in their Petaluma garage to refine his recipes, some of which are specific to Sonoma.

When you visit, you may notice a lengthy tattoo of what look like Italian words running up the inside of his right arm and disappearing into his shirt. Ask him about it and he'll tell you it runs the length of his body, he got it when he turned 40, and he would have to be drunk before he would tell you what it means.

The name of the salumeria—Ovello—comes from a very small wine-growing region (or DOC), where his family has a winery making Barbaresco from Nebbiolo grapes. Marino hopes to be able to sell some Barbaresco wine once he has an ABC license.

There is a missionary zeal to Andrea Marino in any conversation about Ital-

ian food. “We are using some things special, we are teaching people to change what they eat,” he says. “We are trying to educate people in Sonoma to original recipes,”

It's an enticing place to learn, especially since, once you step through that door, you're in Italy. ☾

Salumeria Ovello is open from 11 to 6, Thursday through Monday. Find it at 248 West Napa Street, Sonom., Call 707.721.1478 for more information and to order in advance, or go to ovellosonoma.com.

“Ask Marino what the secret is to making really good salumi and he simply smiles and says, ‘It’s in my DNA.’”

DANNY FAY & THE HILL OF TARA

New winery honors a rich Irish past.



HILL OF TARA team is Katie Fay, brother-in-law Matt Simpson (center), and Danny Fay. Corks are inked with lucky shamrocks on one end. You never know what end it's on until you pull off the foil.

Twenty-seven miles northwest of Dublin, a few shouts east of Kilmessan, and not too far from Skryne, sits a raised platform of earth with a peak altitude of 509 feet above sea level, a commanding view over the distant lands of County Meath, and a mythic standing in the history of Ireland. It is called the Hill of Tara, and there may be no place else in that Emerald Isle as hallowed, history-rich and virtually sacred as Tara.

Spread across its crown are storied monuments, prehistoric ruins, and legends deep as time. Among the visible remnants of its long history—documented at least to 3,500 B.C.—are the Mound of the Hostages, the Stone of Destiny, and Mound of the Cow. The words themselves seem draped in brogue, and the legends they represent address the full sweep of Ireland's storied past.

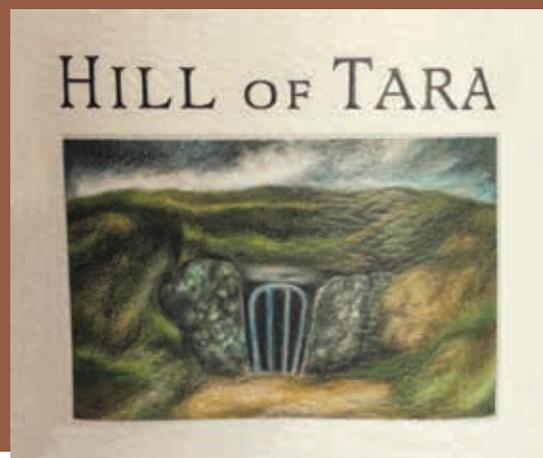
The Stone of Destiny (Lia Fail) is said to be the coronation stone for Irish kings, one of whom, Nial of the Nine Hostages, is said to have held protective hostages there, from Britain and all the provinces of Ireland.

So significant is Tara that its reach extends across the Atlantic. Margaret Mitchell, author of *Gone With The Wind*, was related to an Irish immigrant named Phillip Fitzgerald and the name she gave the fictional plantation in her epic novel was Tara. But it doesn't stop there.

There is now a wine label in the Sonoma Valley called Hill of Tara on which there is an artist's rendering of that very Mound of Hostages. And lest you of Irish descent (aren't most of us, at least emotionally) take umbrage at the misappropriation of so hallowed a name, you need to know that the label was founded by British-born, Sonoma-



DANNY FAY holds hand-drawn family tree proving historic family provenance over the iconic Irish site. The wine's label features a rendering of Mound of the Hostages.



raised winemaker Danny Fay whose not-so-distant family once held title to the actual Hill of Tara.

And the name is now attached to a very stout, deeply-punted Bordeaux bottle filled with, among other things, two successive vintages (2015 and 2016) of truly exceptional cabernet sauvignon from the prestigious MoonRidge Vineyard, 2,300 feet up Moon Mountain.

Production is still miniscule—only two French oak barrels of the 2015 cab were made, three barrels for 2016, which pencils out to about 70 cases.

Besides Moon Mountain, Fay is husbanding a quantity of cabernet franc from the Cabak vineyard, up the mountainside from Glen Ellen.

All Hill of Tara wines are organic with a good dose of biodynamic practices as well. And all the production is done by Fay and his two partners—his wife, Katie, and his brother in law, Matt Simpson, who married Danny's sister Colette. All three have day jobs with other wineries, so the vineyards they farm—and they do all the farm work—get attention early or late in the day, resulting in double shifts to get it all done.

Fay got his wine chops, following a viticulture degree from Cal Poly, working for biodynamic guru Mike Benziger in Glen Ellen, and subsequently did the

global winery tour while attending the Ecole de Management's Wine MBA program in Bordeaux.

He launched Envolve Winery with two childhood friends, sold it in 2015 when he and Katie decided to start the Hill of Tara.

Simpson is a Sonoma Valley native, has a business degree and priceless on-the-job training at Enterprise Vineyards, owned by the prince of organic growers, Phil Coturri.

Katie Fay grew up in Ojai, earned a B.S. in Wine Business Strategies at Sonoma State University, and has a day job at Lambert Ridge, after marketing stints at Kosta Browne, Chateau Montelena and Three Sticks. She and Danny have a trip planned to Ireland this year, prominently including Hill of Tara.

The historic landmark helped inspire Danny to continue his family's farming tradition and reconnect with the Tara mystique. He says the Hill of Tara relationship is a precious one, although one distant relative with Hill of Tara connections of her own challenged his claim to onetime family ownership. "She called me a fraud," he says with a laugh. "So I did the genealogical research and sketched a family tree that showed she was a more distant cousin

than I was. We're friendly now and she wants my wine in her pub."

The Hill of Tara team has a long-term vision involving slow and steady steps. Each wine is barrel-aged for at least 20 months, and then bottle-aged for at least 20 more months before release. "We believe," says Fay, "our patience will be rewarded."

The growth plan is intentionally flat, increasing production by just one barrel a year, always putting quality over quantity. "We're not trying to replicate the same good wine year-to-year, regardless of differences in climate and other variables. We want to allow the wine to reflect the vintage, the terroir, the unique characteristics of each year."

The next release of their Moon Mountain cab will be on March 17, which just happens to be St. Patrick's Day. That is not a coincidence.

You can taste Hill of Tara two ways: Have dinner at the Glen Ellen Star and order a bottle; or sign up online for an allocation. It may take you a year to get some, but as Danny Fay says, "Your patience will be rewarded." ☾

Hill of Tara wines can be reached at hilloftarawines.com.

COOKING & EATING

WITH ANCIENT WISDOM
FOR A MODERN LIFESTYLE

SEASON-ing Sonoma offers
ayurveda-inspired cooking classes



SEASON-ING TEAM Kara Adanalian (left) and Teri Adolfo outside Adanalian's home kitchen; sample Winter Soups menu; 6-tastes "spice lab" tray.



ANCIENT AYURVEDIC TEXTS
inscribed on palm leaf, c AD 800

Consider two things: First, that it's possible for 5,000-year-old knowledge, accumulated without the benefit of microchips, digital data and terabytes of information storage, to have relevance, credibility and useful application in the full-blown digital age.

And second, that much of what we've learned about food and nutrition in the last 5,000 years—the ever-changing FDA nutrition pyramid, what foods to combine with other foods—could be just flat wrong. If you dip your toe in the ayurvedic pool, you're going to learn a lot about how much you don't know.

Ayurvedic teachers often shake their heads in wonder at the fact that, even after wave upon wave of Western food fads, many of them healthy ones, the American medical establishment spends little (and sometimes no) time on the subject of nutrition. Ask any medical school graduate how many hours they studied nutrition and the answer is usually slim to none.

Even more shocking to ayurvedic practitioners is the fact that Western medicine says almost nothing about digestion, about how the food you eat—whatever it may be—is broken down and assimilated.

In ayurvedic medicine, health starts with digestion, it's the base of the pyramid. And everyone's digestive universe is, to some extent, unique. Every season presents different choices for optimal eating, and every body has a different combination of the three constituent "doshas," or bio-elements, known in Sanskrit as Vata, Pitta and Kapha. One of those elements usually dominates, and it is useful to know which one. From there, the challenge is to balance that dosha with the other two in order to have greater physical and mental harmony.

Ayurveda is derived from the four Indian Vedas, perhaps the oldest religious texts on earth, composed in Vedic Sanskrit and communicating what are purported to be the words of Brahma, the Hindu god of creation.

Balancing those three characteristics takes us deep into the more esoteric depths of ayurvedic eating, and we're not going to go there now.

But Teri Adolfo and Kara Adanalian may give you a glimpse as they take you through the ayurvedic foothills in their kitchen classes, called "SEASON-ing." Adolfo is a certified ayurveda practitioner, and an East Asian nutrition and cooking instructor. She is also an acupuncture and massage practitioner. Adanalian, a graphic designer, is also a prize-winning contest

We're this fast food society." Which is not what ayurveda is about.

The complexity and density of Vedic texts is not light reading, and if you've ever tried to plow through an English translation of the Rig Veda you'll understand why it's not a casual pursuit.

On the other hand, the Vedas—and the Upanishads which inhabit them—have been studied intensely for centuries, and some who do so report astonishing parallels between Vedic knowledge and the modern science of theoretical physics.

SPICES AND HERBS flavor all of the foods in SEASON-ing classes, and are an important part of ayurvedic cooking.



cook, winner of countless regional and national cooking contests, and holds the title "America's Best Home Cook" from *Fine Cooking* magazine and *Sur La Table*. She's also a cancer survivor who has found healing and peace in the deep silence of meditation.

Together they lead classes through the ayurvedic maze, turning the complicated concepts into simple healthy steps.

Most people who see the word "ayurveda" for the first time can neither pronounce it nor explain it. It's a four syllable mystery. So Teri has simplified the message.

"Usually I will start a class by telling them it means, 'the science or knowledge of life.' And everyone goes, 'Oh,' because that's so simple. Then I explain, there's a lot of Sanskrit words, but what I want you to get out of it are the basic concepts of living through the seasons and the rhythms of the seasons in your physical and mental state. When you can do that, you will have better health, period. But we don't pay attention.

But that's not a subject Teri and Kara find appropriate in a casual class focused on cleanses and seasonal cooking, and is built on the mantra, "Temperature, Taste, Texture."

They do, however, introduce class members to the doshas because they're basic to eating and living an ayurvedic life.

"I might throw out the dosha terms by saying, 'This season we're in, you're in vata, or in you're in pitta, or you're in kapha.' I do a little discussion within that season, then we talk about what foods are best, regardless of your personal dosha, body constitution—whatever you want to call it—you can still eat with the seasons. You exercise, breathe, drink with the seasons. We talk about how it doesn't make sense to eat cold foods in winter, and why. How it doesn't make sense to have hot foods in summer, and why. Then we talk about the best times of day to eat."

But there's a bass layer to this song that is foundational. "Throughout all of this discussion is digestion. We just keep

“ Together they lead classes through the ayurvedic maze, turning complicated concepts into simple, healthy steps.”



coming back to digestion, what herbs, what spices, how you cook something can help you have the best digestion. Your health will be better because you're absorbing all the nutrients in food."

Kara adds that not all participants are deeply interested in ayurveda. "Sometimes they just want something a bit lighter so we did a class on Winter Soups. Everyone relates to the seasons,

and from there you get an understanding of the tastes, textures and temperature. You don't even need to know anything about ayurveda."

So, when people leave a SEASON-ing class, what do they walk away with?

"They understand," says Teri, "that their digestion is the most important thing to their overall health, that they can have their own impact by knowing that. They also walk away with skill sets on how to season based on health aspects, not only flavors. I'll discuss health components, and then

"Everyone relates to the seasons ... you don't even need to know anything about Ayurveda."

Yogurt-Barley Soup (Tanabour) | nourishing and soothing

- 1 Tbsp. ghee
- 1/2 cup onion, chopped fine or minced
- 4 cups broth (your choice)
- 1/2 cup barley (or brown rice)
- 1-1/2 cups whole milk yogurt
- 1 egg, optional
- 2 Tbsp. fresh mint, finely chopped
- 3 Tbsp. fresh flat leaf parsley, finely chopped
- Salt and fresh ground pepper to taste
- Garnishes: more fresh parsley, toasted pine nuts, crispy fried onions

Melt ghee in a soup pot. Sauté onions until soft and translucent. Just as they start to brown and caramelize, remove from the pan and set aside. Add water/stock to same pot along with barley. Bring to a boil then reduce to a simmer, cover and cook until barley is tender (30-40 minutes). While barley is cooking, beat one egg well (if using) and mix with yogurt. When barley is cooked and tender add a tablespoon or two of stock/barley to yogurt mixture to temper. Slowly incorporate together. Stir in fresh herbs and serve warm or room temperature.

HEALTH TIPS | an ancient medicinal

A tradition Armenian remedy, usually given to quicken the recovery process from ailments. Yogurt provides a healthy amount of "good" bacteria in the digestive tract, a dose of animal protein plus calcium, vitamin B-2, B-12 and potassium. Helps the immune system fight infections as well as promote bone formation. Barley contains the highest amounts of Beta-Glucan and Tocotrienol (a special quasi form of Vitamin E) that claims to cure many infectious diseases.

PANTRY TIPS 'n TECHNIQUES

- Substitute brown rice if gluten intolerant.
- Egg is optional, adds flavor and protein but when omitted is much lighter in taste.
- This soup is a great starter, refreshing in warm weather, soothing when its cold. Can be served hot, cold or room temp.
- Experiment with the balance of taste and texture. Most likely it's a new flavor, so it can even be used as a side dish to a hearty meat or topping to a vegetable dish.

 SEASONing TEMPERATURE | TASTE | TEXTURE



SEASON-ING RECIPE CARDS with a sampling of commonly-used seasonings.

Kara will offer a pantry tip, for example, an easy way to do something that you can store in a freezer."

People seem to really love that. In fact, they love it so much that a few clients have asked for custom classes. So Teri and Kara came up with a theme of Mediterranean small plates ... again, ayurveda-inspired but creative takes on classic recipes.

There's also a calming health element to every class. "When we cleanse," explains Teri, "we tell them to be in a quiet place, to really be mindful, put your food away, have a flower, don't turn on the news, really breathe, and give thanks."

Teri recommends that clients eat out of a dedicated bowl during their one-week cleanse. "It could be something you get at Goodwill, it could be your grandma's old bowl, something that has some meaning to you. And you're going to eat every meal out of that vessel and you're going to be very mindful. And if emotions come up, think of digestion. Digest those feelings, eliminate them and move on, be in the moment. The past doesn't matter. Be right here, right now." ☾

For more information or to sign up for Season-ing's cooking classes, go to seasoning-sonoma.com.