

FASHION • HOME • GARDEN • FOOD • TRAVEL • PEOPLE • ENTERTAINING

# STYLE

SMART LIVING IN BALTIMORE

**Inside the Mason Dixon Master Chef Competition**

**Dining Solo: Local Foodies On Their Guilty Pleasures**

**Barbecue Judging**

**7 Stylish Kitchens**

**Jackets at Dinner?**

**Adventures in Cooking Contests**

**A Dramatic Mansion on the Severn**

**Re-creating a Classic Maryland Dinner**

*Pasta and meatballs with sweet basil tomato sauce, page 40*

# Food'10

Our annual look at what's cooking

November 2010

\$3.95

www.baltimorestyle.com



\$3.95US

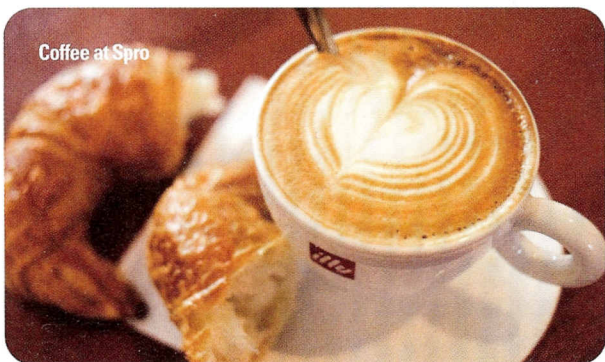
117447003172



THINGS WE LIKE

*at your service*

**Beatriz Ball** serving pieces go from freezer to oven to table with a stylish flair. Each piece is handmade to order in the United States. Noteworthy is that the aluminum is hammered, polished and maintenance free. The assortment of pieces range from spreaders (in various patterns) to magnificent service pieces. (Bonus tip: These make great wedding gifts.) Cook up a lamb, tenderloin or turkey (or even make a lowly casserole look pretty). \$30 and up, at Teresa B. Gift & Home. 10866 York Road, Cockeysville, 410-628-0773. —Sarah Gilbert Fox



ON THE SCENE

*freshly brewed*

For all those who haven't had the pleasure of tasting the distinctions between multiple types of coffee and different brewing methods, the new **Spro** in Hampden is a must-visit. Talk to the baristas and learn about the break, the brightness, the body of Yirgacheffe, Thiriku, Finca Kilimanjaro, etc., being brewed in a Pour Over, a Vacuum Pot, a French Press, the list goes on. These are coffees approached the way Robert Parker approaches wine. Notes of strawberries and red grapes, spiced apple cider and vanilla, buttery finishes and lingering cloves roll across the palate. Why did owner Jay Caragay decide to open in Hampden? "It's a different kind of approach," he says. "The focus is on enjoying the coffee and whomever is with you. If you bring your friends, you can engage in a discussion with them. If you come alone, you can engage with others, instead of everyone being engrossed in their Internet." That's right. This is a back-to-the-good-old-days approach— with a new twist— where coffee can be as exquisite as a Lafite Rothschild 1870 Pauillac. 851 W. 36th St, 410-243-1262, [sprocoffee.com](http://sprocoffee.com)

SIPPING IN STYLE

*outsmart the wine list*

As we enter November it seems there are so many reasons to meet up with friends and family for dinner. While for the most part dining out can be a fun and relaxing experience, ordering wine can sometimes be stressful. Here are some of the tips and secrets that wine professionals use to outsmart wine lists. They'll ensure you get the best value as well as a wine that will enhance your meal.

The first step can happen even before you arrive at the restaurant. I suggest doing a bit of homework to see if the restaurant has its **wine lists online**. If so, you can get an idea of what they offer and do a bit of research. If not, you may want to buy yourself a little time to digest the wine list and narrow down your choices. I suggest ordering sparkling wine to begin. Italian prosecco or Spanish cava are usually my choices since they are tasty, affordable and pair nicely with most appetizers.

Typical restaurant markup on wine is two to four times the wholesale cost of the bottle. However, lower-cost selections can be marked up much more, and many times the price per glass is close to the cost for the whole bottle. This is why Andrew Stover, sommelier at Oya and Sei restaurants in D.C., advises **against ordering the least expensive wine on the list or ordering by the glass**. Even if you don't expect to finish the bottle, by law in Maryland and D.C. you can now ask to have it corked and bring it home. Andrew adds, "I will tell people to look for the weird stuff. Try offbeat grape varietals or regions that you are not as familiar with. Since these are not as known, many times they are a better value."



Chris Coker, sommelier at Blue Grass in Federal Hill, shared another valuable tip. He says, "If the restaurant has a regional focus to their cuisine like say Italian or French, then **focus your selections on wines from that same region**. The restaurant has most likely spent more time cultivating a good mix of quality and affordability with those wines." Pairing wines from the same region of the cuisine can also be a great strategy for finding a great match. Coker also suggests putting yourself in the hands of those that know the list best— ask the sommelier or waiter for assistance.

Sometimes the list is full of wineries and producers you may not be familiar with. When this happens, Lucien Walsh, director of wine at The Wine Market in Locust Point, shared this tip: "When you've narrowed down a few options, ask to take a look at the bottles themselves to see **who the importer is**. There are some high-quality importers that I can rely on such as Kermit Lynch, Eric Solomon and Thierry Theise, to name a few."

Now, next time you are handed the wine list, instead of breaking out in a sweat, you can sit back and smile. Armed with these tips, you're likely to outsmart that list and be sipping something fabulous! —Laurie Forster

*Laurie Forster, The Wine Coach®, is a wine educator who creates corporate events, group tastings and team-building seminars. She is the author of "The Sipping Point: A Crash Course in Wine," and can be heard each week on WBAL Radio 1090AM. Visit [thewinecoach.com](http://thewinecoach.com).*