

VIE
MAGAZINE

TRAVEL FEATURE
**CHARLOTTE,
NORTH CAROLINA**
UP CLOSE & PERSONAL



**SOUTHERN
COMFORT**
CUISINE FROM THE
SOUTH'S FINEST CHEFS

THE BREAD OF LIFE
**BLACK
BEAR
BREAD CO.**
UPS THE
GAME
FROM
BROOKLYN
TO GRAYTON BEACH,
FLORIDA

THE FOODIE COUPLE
at PEAT & PEARLS in PENSACOLA, FLORIDA

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SUCCESS

**CULINARY
ISSUE**

April 2018

GATHERING ROUND THE TABLE

A Recipe for Good Food and Conversation

Everyone loves a great meal, especially when it's shared with others. Lively conversation, laughter, and camaraderie are essential ingredients (a good Malbec doesn't hurt, either) when breaking bread with friends and family. February 15, 2013 was one such night that I remember fondly. All the stars aligned for *VIE's* Sea + Farm + Table dinner. It was a magical evening that I still reminisce about, and it is just one example of how lasting memories and bonds are formed when extensive preparation and effort are given to the celebration of life.

The theme was a rustic Southern family harvest-style dinner. With impassioned ingenuity and determined effort, the unassuming equestrian building at Arnett's Gulfside Farm and Stables in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, was transformed into a space with a magical ambience and a beautifully appointed harvest table set for forty.



Chef Phil McDonald prepared the exquisite menu from a pop-up kitchen. The Dread Clampitt trio serenaded guests who delighted in French 75 cocktails served with Apalachicola oysters, sweet potato puree on toast, and Alligator Point clams. Among the lively and enjoyable people that evening were many from the food and wine industries, including celebrity chef Emeril Lagasse and his wife, Alden, and Bryan and Cindy Krutz, owners of Napa Valley-based Krutz Family Cellars, who donated the wine that night.

Food is hot. I mean ... our society has an insatiable hunger for everything food related. And our quest for it seems to grow exponentially. There is always an abundance of



gorgeous coffee-table cookbooks on store bookshelves and online. Amazing new restaurants pepper the country, which, as of 2016, is a direct correlation to America spending more money on eating out than on eating in. And if traveling to Italy, France, Greece, and Spain for a little cultural awakening wasn't enough, the latest craze for destination travel with culinary school vacations has definitely upped the ante. So it comes as no surprise to me that our annual Culinary Issue is one of *VIE's* most popular every year. In this issue, we have a number of stories on the best-of-the-best restaurants and chefs around the Southeast. It seems no one appreciates good food more than a real Southerner.

Create memories and celebrate life absolutely every chance you get. Even with all its challenges, life is precious, so taking time to stop and enjoy all the goodness that it brings is a blessing!

To Life!

Lisa Marie

—Lisa Marie
Founder/Editor-In-Chief



Above left:
(Back row) Jim Accola,
Gerald Burwell,
Mike Ragsdale,
and Bryan and
Cindy Krutz.
(Front row)
Suzy Accola,
Lisa Burwell, and
Angela Ragsdale

Above right:
Chef Phil McDonald
and celebrity chef
Emeril Lagasse
both celebrated new
restaurant openings
in 2017—Black Bear
Bread Co. and
Emeril's Coastal
Italian, respectively.

Left:
Sea + Farm + Table
event guests enjoying a
feast prepared by Phil
McDonald and team

Photos by Carlo
Pieroni



Sandwich Special
 Broccoli, ricotta, Calabrian chili,
 Mint, Pickled Red Onion
 Focaccia \$11
 Salad
 Roasted Candied Beets, creme Fraiche,
 Apple, Fennel, Hazelnut \$10

BLACK BEAR
 BREAD CO.
 GRAYTON BEACH, FLORIDA
 EST. MMXVI

With interiors by Libby Baker inspired by the cafés of Brooklyn, New York, and modern branding created by I Will Design for Food, Inc., Black Bear feels like an urban oasis just a half mile from the beach.
 Photo by Jack Gardner

Breaking BREAD

By COLLEEN SACHS

Bread is elemental. Little more than flour, yeast, and water are combined to create a food that has been a staple for tens of thousands of years. Over time, methods and ingredients have been developed to help make bread faster and to make it last longer. But the best bread still comes from good-quality, simple ingredients using time-tested methods.

That is precisely the bread found at Black Bear Bread Co., the brainchild of business partners chef Phillip McDonald and restaurateur Dave Rauschkolb. The all-day café is located in a tiny cottage in Grayton Beach, Florida, with the wholesale bakery production facility just a few steps away.

Black Bear's genesis took a circuitous route. After years of working in restaurants along the Northwest Florida coast and operating Table Five Private Chef + Catering, McDonald found he wanted more. He

traveled to San Francisco and New York, where he learned from Gary Danko and Jean-Georges Vongerichten. He stayed in New York for a year "working with amazing professionals," he says. "The fast pace taught me to cook with intuition."

It was in Florida that Rauschkolb first got to know McDonald. Both men are from the Florida Panhandle, and both love surfing. In addition to surfing together, Rauschkolb and McDonald got to know each other when Table Five was hired for an event at Seaside. Rauschkolb was



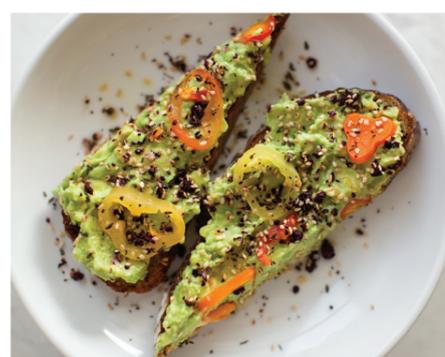


Left: Black Bear Bread Co. is located in the Shops of Grayton in Grayton Beach, Florida.

Photo by Jack Gardner

Below: The avocado tartine is a favorite menu staple.

Photo by Alissa Aryn Photography



impressed with what he saw and tasted, saying “when you see someone with that talent you gravitate toward them.”

Rauschkolb was building on his successful Seaside restaurant, Bud & Alley’s. Recognizing a desire in the area for high-quality Mexican food, he opened Taco Bar in 2001. That was followed by Pizza Bar in 2006. He asked McDonald to move back to Florida from New York to “work with me at Pizza Bar, and maybe open a restaurant together.”

McDonald accepted the offer, where he started to experiment with bread making. “I wanted to make bread the right way, naturally leavened,” McDonald explains. He made his own yeast starter and began making bread for the restaurant. “I made fifty to sixty loaves that were horrible—but they kept getting better.” Breads at Black Bear are made with the starter (affectionately named Blob) that was born at Pizza Bar three years ago.

Rauschkolb was winding up Bud & Alley’s Catering in what is now the Black Bear production location. He and McDonald started planning the bakery, and head baker Debbie Swenerton became part of the team, lending techniques she developed in her more than thirty years of baking. Selling the bread at a farmer’s market was a big success, and the Black Bear Bread Co. started taking shape.

The original plan was to open the café in the same building as the wholesale bakery, but Rauschkolb recognized that they wouldn’t have much more seating than the current location. While buying milk and eggs at a nearby shop, he noticed that a building was newly available right beside the production location, and moved quickly to procure the space. “Talk about planets aligning,” Rauschkolb says with a laugh, “did you know we opened the day of the eclipse?”

The name was inspired by local black bears—yes, actual bears in Northwest Florida—diving into the waste bins outside the building, looking for the portion of yeast starter that was dumped at the end of each day and leaving their footprints behind. Jake Meyer of I Will Design for Food, Inc., featured a lone black bear in the company’s logo and other branding. Rauschkolb found the building for the

Each loaf of bread is simple perfection: a deep brown crusty exterior and a soft yet chewy center that has the tangy taste and aroma that only comes through a three-day fermentation.

café in the same neighborhood as the wholesale bakery. McDonald started shaping the menu, inspired by places such as Tartine Manufactory in San Francisco and the all-day cafés he found in New York. McDonald says, “Nothing is left to chance; I even curate the music.”

From the gold lettering on the door to the honeycomb tile accents and the weathered wood floor, Black Bear looks as if it has been around for decades, even though it is less than a year old. Its heavy marble-top tables have iron bases with feet that look like bear paws. The cozy seating area is graced by a large photo of a bear on a sofa taken by Lee Crum. The interior design by Libby Baker of Baker Design Co. in Santa Rosa Beach evokes a comforting and old-fashioned feel, making the café a gathering place where people can catch up with friends, have a meeting, or just relax. Tony Vallee helped with the interior architecture, and McDonald’s wife, Madra, handles the public relations for the business.

Both Rauschkolb and McDonald felt strongly that Black Bear should be a place where people can get good bread. Early in the day, shelves behind the counter are piled with rustic loaves. By the end of the day, those loaves are gone. Each loaf of bread is simple perfection: a deep brown crusty exterior and a soft yet chewy center that has the tangy taste and aroma that only comes through a three-day fermentation. On any given day, you may find country sourdough, multigrain sourdough, fruit-and-nut sourdough, olive sourdough, miche, and baguette.

The café menu is centered around the bread. McDonald’s philosophy is “to make simple, clean, fun food from scratch, using seasonal offerings.” Jams, aiolis, and crème fraîche are made in-house. The roast beef for sandwiches is locally raised and grass fed.



Opposite: Stop in daily for a hearty grain bowl with poached eggs (breakfast only), a banana or smoked salmon tartine, and homemade biscuits or croissants.

Previous page: Head baker Debbie Swenerton and chef Phil McDonald work daily to create a menu of delicious homemade breads, pastries, lunch items, and more.

Photos by Alissa Aryn Photography



He says the banana tartine was “an experiment that tasted great.”



One of the most basic menu items (also McDonald's favorite) is the sardine lunch. The meal, served on a board, is a tin of sardines, a pickled egg, sea salt butter, lemon, Calabrian chili, and slices of sourdough bread. What makes the dish unique is that each of its components is good enough to stand alone, and they are a delight when enjoyed together.

A lunch that has been a wonderful choice over the chilly winter is the braised field peas. Cooked into a hearty soup flavored with Parmesan rinds, the peas are accented with lemon confit and topped with sourdough croutons and a perfectly poached egg.

Tartines are among the most popular fare at Black Bear. These beautiful open-faced sandwiches make a filling breakfast or lunch. The avocado tartine is spread thick with ripe avocado and studded with house-made pickles (cauliflower one afternoon, carrots on another). Za'atar is sprinkled on top. McDonald smiles as he explains, “The sumac in the za'atar is what gives you the mouthwatering feel.”

He says the banana tartine was “an experiment that tasted great.” It includes whipped ricotta, local honey, sea salt, mint, chili, and pecans on sourdough. A smoked salmon tartine served on multigrain bread features radishes and preserved lemon. It is bright, fresh, and colorful.

A sandwich of Italian cured meats is served on soft homemade focaccia. With mortadella and coppa, a green olive salsa verde, Provolone, and radicchio, this sandwich balances salt and unctuousness into something crave-worthy.

Be sure to check the specials board before ordering. Frequently there are salads made from what is in season. On weekends, you are likely to find shakshouka seasoned with spicy harissa and topped with feta, fresh herbs, and eggs. Of course, sourdough is served alongside for dipping into the brilliant red sauce.

Steel-cut oatmeal and granola are classic breakfast options, each accompanied by fresh fruit and complementary toppings. Breakfast sandwiches start with biscuits or croissants and can be enjoyed with butter and house-made jam, or add cheese, eggs, bacon, or ham.

Available pastries du jour are in full view at the Black Bear counter. They go quickly (particularly on weekends). The cheese Danish are tender and buttery, with just a bit of sweetness to go with the tangy cheese filling. The kouigns amann are made of laminated dough that creates the texture of a croissant and have a crackly exterior of caramelized sugar. They are chewy and tender at once, and so very buttery and sweet. Flaky croissants, enormous cinnamon rolls, scones, and bagels all make appearances. And, of course, sweet, cream-filled bear claw pastries are offered.

The best accompaniment to one of Black Bear's pastries is a cup of coffee from Portland-based Stumptown Coffee Roasters. A simple Americano is wonderful, while the mocha has a bold chocolate flavor from Woodblock Chocolate, without the cloying sweetness found in many mochas. Other options include cold brew from Stumptown, along with bottled water, kombucha tea, and Mexican Coke. Beer and wine are also offered.



Black Bear has been a great success, so much so that Rauschkolb has purchased the building next door, and it is being readied for expansion of the café. Asked about the phenomenal popularity of Black Bear, Rauschkolb describes it as thrilling. McDonald says, “It's been humbling and overwhelming.” He goes on to say, “The time I spent in New York hardened me so that I was no longer scared to go out on my own, and my time at Pizza Bar with Dave gave me the tools to do the high volume we are doing.”

Rauschkolb says, “Phil has a talent for flavors and is constantly studying. He has an amazing capacity for food and the world of food. It was a no-brainer to open a place with him.”

They make a synergistic team. A respected restaurateur, Rauschkolb deals with the creative aspect of the café, while McDonald creates the menus and is the principal operations manager. It is fortunate for Grayton Beach that Rauschkolb and McDonald took the routes they did. ▣

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Colleen Sachs loves food and traveling around the world, and has been writing about both for twenty-five years. She lives with her spouse and a multitude of pets in Santa Rosa Beach and Pensacola, Florida.



Above: The banana tartine includes whipped ricotta, local honey, sea salt, mint, chili, and pecans on fresh homemade sourdough toast.

Right: Black Bear proudly serves coffee from Stumptown Coffee Roasters, a Portland-based brand that's packed with flavor.

Opposite: Dave Rauschkolb, Debbie Swenerton, and Phil McDonald with one of the café's central art pieces, a photo of a real bear on a sofa taken by Lee Crum.

Photos by Alissa Aryn Photography