

Culinary Creativity from Chef Tell

Sharing his tastes of the Tropics



Internationally known Chef Tell Erhardt keeps his creations healthful.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHEF TELL

Master chef, entrepreneur, author, entertainer, restaurateur—it's hard to find the designation that best describes Chef Friedman Paul "Tell" Erhardt. Widely known for his culinary panache, which gained him national celebrity through his television show, *In the Kitchen with Chef Tell*, he trained in the classic European manner through years of apprenticeship at some of the finest hotels and restaurants in France, Germany, and Sweden.

In 1986, Erhardt opened his establishment on the Grand Cayman Islands, Chef Tell's Grand Old House, acclaimed by patrons and press. Today, at age 58, he operates a historic inn located in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Chef Tell's

Manor House on the Delaware, also home of Chef Tell's Cooking School.

He also manufactures and sells his own line of stainless-steel knives, made in Germany, along with a new line of Chef Tell Cookware. In addition, he serves as spokesperson for Llorénte Bakeware, a European company that makes the flexible, indestructible bakeware. His latest venture is a new line of award-winning specialty sauces with zesty names like Chef Tell's Caribbean Ketch-Me.

Erhardt now spends the majority of his time in Bucks County. In addition to running the Manor House, he donates his time visiting schools and giving cooking demonstrations for area children. 🍴

Snapper Cayman Style

- 2 snapper fillets (4 to 6 ounces each)
- 1/2 cup diced onion
- 1/2 cup diced green and/or red pepper
- 1/2 cup tomato concasse (peeled and seeded tomato), diced
- 1/4 cup fish stock or clam juice
- 1/2 teaspoon cornstarch, dissolved in water
- Pepper, to taste (You can use some Scotch bonnet pepper, which is typically used in Cayman. It's extremely hot, so use only a little.)
- A few drops of Tabasco
- 1 tablespoon oil for sautéing
- Flour for dredging

Heat oil in sauté pan. Dredge the fish in flour to prevent sticking. Pepper and sauté each side approximately 4-5 minutes. Remove fish fillets and keep warm. Add remaining ingredients except cornstarch solution, fish stock or clam juice, and Tabasco, and sauté lightly. Add the fish stock or clam juice. Season with Tabasco and cook for 2-3 minutes. Thicken with the cornstarch liquid. When mixture returns to a boil, pour over the fish and serve immediately.

Cold Fruit Soup

- 4 cups water
- Piece of cinnamon stick
- Rind of 1 lemon
- 1 cup white wine
- 3 cups fruit (blueberries, plums, peaches, pears, apples, etc. Dice apples, pears, or peaches.)
- 2 packets Sweet & Low (if needed; some fruit, if very ripe, is sweet enough)
- 2 cloves (or a dash of ground cloves)
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch, dissolved in 1/4 cup cold water

Bring the four cups of water, Sweet & Low, cloves, lemon rind, and cinnamon stick to a boil. Simmer about 30 minutes. Strain. Thicken the soup with the dissolved cornstarch and cook for a few more minutes. Add the fruits to the soup and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and chill. At serving time, stir in wine. Serve cold with mint or a slice of lime for garnish.

Chef Tell: The Lighter Side

Do you know why the Swiss invented Rösti? So they have an excuse to eat half a pound of butter for lunch!

But this backfired about six years ago, when a regular checkup showed my cholesterol was 635 and my triglyceride level was 723. I also was diagnosed with type-two diabetes.

My doctor said, "If I tell you all the things you shouldn't do, you would probably die of withdrawal symptoms."

I had to do something. First, I cut back on drinking alcohol. Scotch, martinis, gin, all went by the wayside. I still drink wine—red mostly, sometimes Riesling—and hard liquor once in a while. (If you deny yourself everything, you get crazy. Just do it in moderation.)

I dropped my weight from 300 pounds (I'm six feet, four inches) to 240. Also, I began to read up on subjects related to eating more healthfully.

Now, I cook with garlic every other night. I also slice some ginger root, put it in water, let it soak overnight, and drink it the next morning. Ginger in Germany is called *alles heilt*, which means, "It heals everything." Also, six days out of the month, I drink ginseng extract two times a day.

Guess what? My cholesterol dropped to 218 and my triglycerides to 264. No more Glucophage for diabetes, or any other medications. The food and a little discipline will do it. I will not promise it will work for everyone, but it sure worked for me!

I still eat beef, some sweets, pasta, but in moderation. There's that word again!

So please enjoy creating the delicious recipes shown here, with my compliments. And here is one more tip: Forget the salt and butter. Use a good olive oil instead. You'll only miss the salt at the first bite, so experiment with spices—fresh herbs and hot peppers. Try to confuse your taste buds. You will like it, and it works!

— Chef Tell

Treat Your Taste Buds

Here is a sampling of what Southwest Florida is serving up. An expanded bill of fare is available under Epicurious, page 82.



PHOTO BY KATHLEEN BLASE

Owners Amy and Doug Horton welcome diners at Amy's Over Easy Café.

AMY'S OVER EASY CAFÉ: *Sunnyside Wake-Up Call.* It has been said that all breakfast joints should be measured by their Eggs Benedict. I don't know by whom, but if that is the case then this place deserves high marks both for its exceptional traditional Benny and a next-level presentation featuring—get this—gulf shrimp. Only on Sanibel. But, hey, it works, as does everything else in this quaint, cozy eye-opener, from the oversized glazed cinnamon roll to the eggs fixed in more ways than you'd dream, and even the fruit-yogurt and granola parfait for those who would rather not blow their diets on breakfast. Strong coffee, fresh juice, and beer and wine are available, because when you're on vacation, it's never too early. Oh, by the way, an equally good lunch menu rolls out at 11 a.m. daily. 630-1 Tarpon Bay Road, Sanibel, 239/472-2625

TOUCAN GRILLE: *Island Hoppin' Colorful.* Bold and colorful are the best ways to describe this slice of the Tropics. A bright, festive room with perpetually cheerful staff and a welcome array of pastel-colored froufrou drinks go a long way toward relaxing the most hardened of diners. The menu is a global journey with roots in the spices, fruits, and seafood of the Caribbean islands. Start with golden fried coconut shrimp with a sweet-and-sour sauce or a well-lumped crab cake paired with mango salsa and a zippy Dijon-horseradish sauce. Any of the fresh-fish offerings work for the main course, although a special fondness is sure to be developed for the Chile Rum Glazed Salmon. Jerk chicken or barbecued ribs are solid choices for those preferring land fare. And dare not leave without a taste of the coconut rum ice cream, topped decadently with macadamias, toasted coconut, and fried banana. Tasty. 4480 Bonita Beach Road, Bonita Springs, 239/495-9464

— DG

Requiem for Real Beers

True brews are losing the good fight

We are gathered here today to mourn the impending death of beer. What was once an honored and revered beverage has now been reduced to an endless stream of bland liquids discernable only by their ad campaigns. The beverage shelves have become overrun with low-calorie, light golden fluids void of any real personality or taste. How could something like this happen? How could something that once stood for so much be reduced to nothing more than a sporting-event enhancement?

The end of beer began with a lie delivered in a shroud of sheer marketing brilliance. And thus begins the story:

The mid-1990s were heady times for lovers of beer. A microbrewery boom had started in the West and swept across the country with a force that had never been seen. Throughout the land, a beer revolution was at hand. Lagers and ales and pilsners were introduced with each passing day. Full-bodied stouts and pungent bitters were being bottled and poured next to marzens and bocks and porters and IPAs. Home brewing became a recognized hobby and local brewpubs were opening in every town. Beer lovers—and there were many—were suddenly awash in suds of all shapes, sizes, and colors. They couldn't have been happier.

But all were not happy. For in the Midwest there lurked a mighty king—a king who, along with two others, had controlled the majority of the beer in the land. And this king was not the least bit giddy about his sudden loss of market share. So a plan was hatched. A plan that would set out to quash the tiny microbrews once and for all.

By David Grant



ILLUSTRATION BY KELLY MADDEN

The king knew that in the world of advertising he had the loudest voice. He would use that voice to discredit the little microbrews and turn the world against them. And he would use his own weakness to do it.

For the king's beers, you see, were made in many different factories throughout the land and it was of paramount importance that the beer taste exactly the same, no matter where it was

made. To do that, the factories had to filter the beer many times. The resulting liquid was bland and flavorless. It also had a very short shelf life and had to be sold quickly before it would turn bad. Therefore, a date was needed for each bottle, so it would be sold only while still good.

Through clever advertising, the king had done a good job convincing the public that the taste was less important

than the image of his beer. And nothing was ever mentioned about the date on the beer.

As long as his ads were clever and cute, all was well. Until, that is, the microbrews came. For once the beer lovers tasted the little brews, they realized what they had been missing, and microbrews began to flourish.

That is, until the king unleashed the “born on” campaign. Suddenly, people began to believe that fresh beer was very important. They asked the little microbreweries, “Why do you not have a date on your beers?” And before the little beers could answer, the people would say, “Your beer must be very old, and therefore very bad because that is what the television tells us and it would never lie.”

The little beers tried to explain. They told of how many of their brews were full of life and actually improved with age, just as wine does. They spoke of how they had no need to filter and filter their beers. They tried to explain that it was their beers that were special, made from craftsmen as had been the beers of yore. But their voices were tiny, and the people could not hear them over the persistent bellowing of the king.

And so, one by one, the little beers faded away, never to be heard from again. And as each day passed, the king introduced a new “microbrew”—yet another colored, flavorless substitute for the great little beers of before. And as each day passed, the memories grew more faint for those who loved beer. They forgot the aromas, the flavors, the artistry that once was.

And as each day passes, the mighty king rejoices as his market share continues to grow.

And as each day passes, yet another brewer walks away from his craft and begins making cheese or wine—anything that earns respect for what a true craftsman can make.

And as each day passes, I ask myself, how can we make this all end? 🍷

Times of the Islands *food editor David Grant, an admitted wine geek, is just as particular about his beers.*

The much-anticipated Rumrunners opened at Cape Harbour Marina in November.



COURTESY OF REALMARK GROUP

Rumrunners Blazes the Trail in Cape Coral

Residents of Southwest Cape Coral have long wondered when a waterfront restaurant would join the abundance of rooftops recently springing up throughout that section of the city.

Well, wait no more. Rumrunners has arrived. Will Stout and his development team at Cape Harbour are bringing to life Meta, a complex with homes and businesses. Rumrunners, which opened in November, promises to be an integral part of the dining scene.

The four owners of the new establishment are no strangers to the restaurant business. Jeff Gately and his partner, David Long, will handle the front end of the operation, while Todd Johnson and Ralph Centalanza will take care of business in the kitchen. A few years ago, they worked together to create Bistro 41 in the Bell Tower Shops.

“We call it ‘Caribbean casual cuisine,’” notes Gately of the Rumrunners menu. “All of our fish is fresh, plus we have a raw bar. We also feature innovative pasta dishes and steaks.” Rumrunners offers one hundred and fifty outdoor seats for true dockside dining, and the same number of indoor seats. A full bar is also part of the ambience.

Rumrunners is accessible by boat via the channel leading into Cape Harbour from near the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River, or—for you landlubbers—by following Chiquita Parkway south until it ends at Cape Harbour.

No matter how they get there, patrons will appreciate the arrival of a waterfront restaurant in Southwest Cape Coral, a landscape long void of such a venue. A tall, cool drink, tasty fresh seafood, and a view of the passing boats....Bon appétit! *The Marina at Cape Harbour; Cape Coral, 239/542-0200*

Belly Up to the Bar with Doc Ford

Straight from the pages of local author Randy Wayne White’s popular books comes the inspiration for a new eatery on Sanibel—Doc Ford’s

Sanibel Rum Bar & Grille. The new establishment has opened on Rabbit Road at the site of the former Island House. It serves lunch and dinner and features such enticing menu items as fish tacos, pulled-pork sandwiches, and shrimp-and-sausage quesadillas.

The restaurant’s theme capitalizes on the main character and tropical local surroundings White has made famous in his many novels. There is even a retail store where his books, zesty hot sauces, Doc Ford clothing, and other items can be purchased.

Sports fanatics on the island will appreciate the 86-by-48-inch big-screen television, supplemented by sixteen other TVs carrying sporting events of all varieties. If exotic rum drinks are your thing, Doc Ford himself might recommend the Mojito or one of its other specialty rum concoctions.

Doc Ford’s Sanibel Rum Bar & Grille promises a lively and entertaining dining experience with an island flair. Keep alert—you might even see Randy Wayne White at the bar! *975 Rabbit Road, Sanibel, 239/472-8311*

— Kelly Madden

