

Throwdown with Bobby Flay and Teddy Folkman

ARTICLE BY JEN DEMAYO



Celebrity chef prepares mussels for a throwdown with Granville Moore's chef Teddy Folkman. Photo credit Shaaren Pine.



A little patron enjoys the pampering at the new kid's boutique and spa Spoiled and Rotten. Photo credit Khadijah Bronson.

H Street area residents, along with the local business owners and their employees and patrons, need to be careful. There is the danger we will begin to believe our own press and let the recent attention from Fox Television, Travel Channel, USA Today, The New York Times, HDTV, Elle Décor, oh then the Times AGAIN, and now the Food Network go to our heads. When once our friends and family gave us the worry-face after learning of our new digs, we are now congratulated for being so pre-scient. We must beware not to become insufferable about our universally acknowledged hip 'hood and must greet each camera crew and national news correspondent with the same humility and surprise each time.

So far so good. When the Food Network approached Chef Teddy Folkman of the Belgian-themed gastropub Dr. Granville Moore's for a new show called "America Eats," locals were taken aback and excited. Of course no one had every heard of such a program, which stoked the rumor mills that the name was merely a cover for the cooking challenge "Throwdown with Bobby Flay," but all were in agreement that any Food Network recognition would be great for both Granville's and the neighborhood.

The television crew filmed Teddy during the entire day of March 17, beginning with an early morning trip to the fish market. They shot footage of the small staff prepping in the pub's infinitesimal kitchen and later as the crowds of regulars showed up for the irresistible moules frites.

The following morning a crowd of 40 or so guests showed up at the Argonaut for more taping. The Argonaut was chosen as a substitute for Granville's because the gastropub was too small to accommodate both the revelers and the cameras. This reporter was lucky enough to be among the exuberant crowd indulging in the Food Network's hospitality. Chimay and bloody mary's at 11:30 a.m. on a Tuesday were quite a departure for me, but I felt it my duty as both a reporter and professional H Street cheerleader to partake in the experience fully. I call it Method Reporting.

The prevailing vibe at the Argo that day was raucous and cheerful. Did I mention the drinks were on the Food Network? As the crew and Teddy readied the room and the ingredients, occasional chants of "Teddy, Teddy" would erupt. Other business owners, such as Cliff Humphries of the H Street Martini Lounge and Frank Hankins of Sova Espresso and Wine, were on hand to show solidarity for H Street.

Teddy began a cooking demonstration of his blue cheese and bacon mussels, easily exuding the charm and confidence necessary for food TV these days. He extolled the virtues of sea salt, shallots and bacon like a pro. Teddy has proven to be a fantastic ambassador for the neighborhood; he repeatedly referred to Granville's as being located "in the heart of the Atlas District." It was during this segment when through the crowd strolled the sharply dressed Bobby Flay who challenged Teddy to a mussels and fries throwdown.

Bobby Flay is a Food Network celebrity who appears on several programs. He is best known for his spicy Tex-Mex style. He is a one of the Iron Chefs on the silly yet addictive "Iron Chef America" and teaches barbecue skills from a New York roof deck on "Boy Meets Grill." The

concept behind Throwdown is that he travels the country challenging local chefs in a cook-off of the local's signature dish. The crowd is served both dishes and gives their opinions to the cameras, and local food writers are brought in to judge the winner.

The local chef is always the crowd favorite, and the moules frites episode was no exception – although there were occasional chants of “Bobby, Bobby” thrown in among the shout outs for Teddy. As both dishes were served, the crowd discussed the virtues of each preparation amongst themselves and for the cameras. Bobby Flay’s mussels were prepared in a coconut milk curry with fresh chilis. His fries were long, skinny and crispy with a spicy dipping sauce. How would the judges choose?

The judges were Jason and Amy Storch, writers for the blog DCFoodies.com. They were given both dishes but were not told which chef prepared which dish. The decision was difficult, but after careful deliberation, they announced that the winner was ...

Oooh, sorry. I can't say. We were told not to reveal the outcome until the episode airs sometime in May or June. The Argonaut plans to host a Throwdown watching party that evening to cheer on the hometown chef.

How did Chef Teddy feel about his experience? “Surreal, totally surreal.”

Spoiled and Rotten

While H Street now has eating drinking and entertainment options, the retail pickings are relatively slim. We do have Stella Bleu (1208 H St. NE), a fantastic women's boutique featuring well-priced, super-cute clothes, and there are a few longstanding menswear options, but for children's clothes, we have been out of luck.

Enter Spoiled and Rotten (1204 H St. NE), a children's boutique featuring clothing for children aged newborn through 8. Philadelphia native Khadijah Bronson, who owns H Street's Philadelphia Water Ice, noticed that there were not many children's boutiques in the DC area and decided to fill that niche. Her

boutique has an additional one-of-a-kind twist. At the back of the store is a miniature spa where little girls can get manicures and pedicures. The afternoon I was there, a preschooler sat patiently as her teensy little toes and fingernails were painted pink with a pink crystal gracing the big toe.

My companions, 5- and 7-year-olds of the male persuasion, were not impressed by the mini-spa, but they did enjoy the library of books available for kids to read while their grown-ups shop. There are also kid-sized leather couches and chairs where they can relax.

Bronson's inventory includes some adorable outfits that any toddler would be proud to wear. She carries an organic cotton newborn line of onsies, tees and leggings that are soft and cuddly.

Like most boutiques, the cute girly togs far outshine the boy-wear. Oh the polka dot jumpers nearly killed me ... (We, moms of boys, are used to this, and that is why we look so good; someone must wear the cute clothes.) But Bronson does not want to leave the boys out of the fun, so she is considering adding a face-painting spa option for those kids who don't go in for gloss and sparkle.

Bronson has been receptive to her customer's needs and desires. She will be adding more accessories and gear as the business grows.

The boutique is open seven days a week Monday through Thursday, 11:30 a.m.-7 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 11:30 a.m.-8 p.m., and Sunday noon-6 p.m.

Now Open

Pap and Petey's. Live music blues and jazz club at 421 H St. NE. www.papandpeteys.com.

XII (1123 H St. NE). Twelve is a new restaurant featuring American classics. As of the writing, the restaurant has not received its liquor license. www.twelvedc.com.

See you on H Street!

Jen DeMayo is the director of communications for the Atlas Performing Arts Center and a co-founder of Moms on the Hill. ■

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