

Stone Mad restaurant in Gordon Square getting menu help from Momocho's Eric Williams

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By **Joe Crea, The Plain Dealer**

Big changes are in the wind for one of the West Side's most remarkable spots. Stone Mad, the beautifully appointed restored house in Cleveland's Gordon Square neighborhood, will have two new chefs at the helm -- including **Eric Williams**, maestro behind mod-Mex **Momocho**.

"Actually, I'll just be a hired hand for a couple of months," says Williams, who's being brought in by Stone Madd co-owner **Eileen Sammon** to tune up the operation. Together, Williams and Sammon worked to pinpoint problems and changes they thought necessary.

"We're tweaking the menu to make it pub style -- much smaller, showing a wider variety of ethnic pubs, not just Irish, but English, Italian, different styles," Williams says. The new menu will include six appetizers, three sandwiches, three french-bread pizzas and four entrees, but there'll be eight, scratch-made side dishes. So a guest can get curried corn succotash, brussels sprouts with cider vinegar and bacon, or green beans with browned butter and pine nuts, too.

"This way, the customer can pick and choose his plate," Williams adds. Stone Mad's popular handmade burgers will stay on the menu.

Mike Wyant is the other new chef in the equation. Former sous chef at **Cabin Club** in Westlake, he'll work with Williams in making the transition then take over the new kitchen.

Expect Stone Mad to be closed Tuesday, Feb. 15. An army of chefs will descend on the restaurant, "and



Gus Chan, The Plain Dealer

The Mad Stone, a bar/restaurant near Cleveland Public Theatre, on Cleveland's West Side.

we're going to do a 24-hour-marathon, kicking the dishes out and trying and retrying everything," Williams says. After a soft opening, the public will be welcomed back on Friday, Feb. 18.

Stone Madd: 1306 West 65th St., Cleveland; 216-281-6500.

CHOCOLATE LOVERS AT THE PIER . . .

As if anyone needed another reason to indulge in chef **Regan Reik's** top-notch fare and **Pier W's** great atmosphere and tantalizing view. But now there's an even sweeter reason to book a table. Thursday through Valentine's Day, check out Pier W's splashy new chocolate bar.

From 4 p.m. to closing, guests are beckoned to the buffet. (On Saturday, Feb. 12, and Monday, Feb. 14, selections will be plated in the kitchen and served tableside, in anticipation of big holiday crowds.) Guests can select from 12 feet worth of goodies, including fudges, barks, a variety of truffles and other charmers. Pastry chef **Bethany Paterson** will produce surprises like mini mascarpone pies, lavish chocolate pots de creme and even house-made Milano cookies. Dunk them -- along with lemon pound cake, pineapple and long-stemmed strawberries -- into the fountain filled with Swiss milk chocolate.

"We wanted to get chocolate in all its varieties onto the buffet -- different forms, textures, nuts, fruits, spices, all the intricacies, hot and cold," Paterson says. Reik adds that a short list of companionable port wines will be available for separate purchase.

The buffet will be set up on the back wall of Pier W's popular lounge area. If you and your special someone are chocolate lovers, it's a nice way to plan an indulgent date for two for \$24.

Pier W: 12700 Lake Ave. (at Winton Place), Lakewood; 216-228-2250.

PROFESSIONAL, PROFESSOR . . .

While **Menu6** owners **Danielle Ruppert** and **Said Ouaddaadaa** shift gears at their popular Larchmere Avenue spot and retool the menu to include more beef and vegetarian offerings, the restaurant's former executive chef **Michael Herschman** finds himself back in the classroom

This time he's on the other side of the podium. Herschman says he's teaching classes at the **International Culinary Arts and Sciences Institute** in Chesterland. "I'm working with **Jon Kish**, who I've known for ages, and **Tim McCoy** in food-service management and business-plan development," Herschman says. "It's cool being in the classroom, and it's a fantastic program here, helping to teach future food-service workers."

International Culinary Arts and Sciences Institute: 8700 Mayfield Road, Chesterland; 440-729-1110.

Menu6: 121718 Larchmere Blvd., Cleveland; 216-791-6649

BYOB TO BRUELL SPOTS . . .

Restaurateur **Zack Bruell** likes the idea of a bit of conviviality among strangers. That's why he's instituting a run of bring-your-own-bottle nights at his restaurants. Book a table on Monday at **Chinato** and show up with a bottle of wine. The \$35-per-guest prix fixe will feature a special menu created by the chef, plus glasses for pouring. There is no corkage charge for the event.

"The idea is to sit with a stranger and share a bottle -- give people a taste," says Bruell. "It doesn't have to be a collector's bottle, but I'm assuming everyone will bring something decent."

Bruell's communal event moves to **L'Albatros Brasserie & Bar** on Monday, Feb. 21.

Chinato: 2077 East Fourth St., Cleveland; 216-298-9080.

L'Albatros Brasserie and Bar: 11401 Bellflower Road, Cleveland; 216-791-7880.

JACK'S BACK . . .

Speaking of L'Albatros, there's a new co-chef at the helm. Bruell has hired **Jack Ahern**, who long served as sous chef at Pier W. Ahern returned to Northeast Ohio after an extended sojourn working, studying (and, of course, eating) in France -- plus a short stint at **Thomas Keller's** renowned **French Laundry** in Yountville, Calif. You may recall that Ahern won "top sous chef" honors in a multiphased juried competition leading up to the 2009 Fabulous Food Show. "It's a great environment, a living, breathing thing -- and I'm surprised at how busy it's been throughout January," Ahern says of the popular L'Albatros in University Circle. As for Bruell, his expectations are being more than exceeded by his recent hire. "He's good, he's level-headed -- and he 'gets' it," says the chef. High praise from the exacting chef.