

BY KAREN LYON

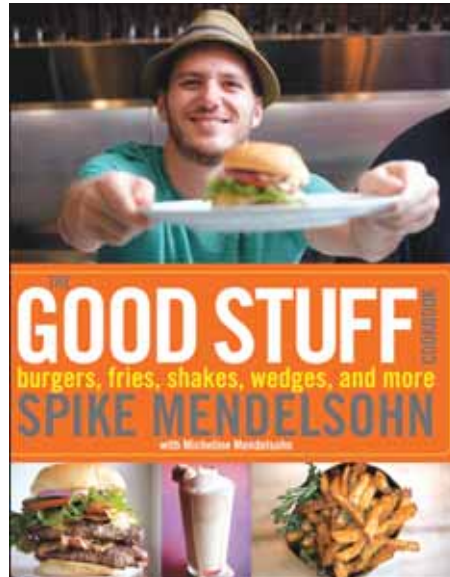
Stuffed With Goodness

Full disclosure: I have never eaten a Good Stuff burger. They look great, mind you: juicy and meaty and dripping with fabulous homemade sauces. In fact, based on the photos in the new “Good Stuff Cookbook,” they’re downright irresistible – to anybody, that is, who hasn’t been a vegetarian for 40 years. So what is a tofu-eater doing reviewing a cookbook that devotes two chapters to carnivorous creations? Well, as anyone who has set foot in the place knows by now, Good Stuff Eatery is about much more than piling meat on a bun.

It was Chef Spike Mendelsohn’s sister Micheline who got the ball rolling. Living in DC at the time, she was walking by the former site of Pulp on Pennsylvania Avenue and saw that the space was for rent. Her first impulse was to envision a restaurant there; her second was to start calling relatives. This is not as much of a leap as it sounds. As Spike explains in the book’s acknowledgments, “The restaurant business is the epitome of family.”

The senior Mendelsohns began opening restaurants in Montreal 1989 with their cousins, and eventually expanded to 32 eateries across the country. At the 1992 World Exposition in Seville, Spain, they owned and operated 12 restaurants, where 11-year-old Spike was “overworked and underpaid and loving every single minute of it.” So much so that he made a career of it.

Mendelsohn went on to graduate from the Culinary Institute of America and to train under some of the finest chefs in the world. His resume includes stints at Bouchon in the Napa Valley, Les Crayeres in France, and Le Cirque in New York City. He is also a media celebrity, claiming runner-up status (and fan



The name says it all: fresh ingredients + simple, flavorful preparations = Good Stuff!

favorite) on the TV reality show “Top Chef” (as he relates, “one of the most exhausting, grueling and best experiences I’ve ever had”).

So when he decided to open Good Stuff Eatery in 2008, Mendelsohn had a wealth of resources among family and friends in the restaurant business, many of whom converged on DC to help. From the moment it opened, the eatery was hot as a jalapeno, attracting long lines of salivating customers every day. While you no longer have to spend your lunch hour waiting in line (thank goodness), the restaurant is still hugely popular.

Now the “Good Stuff Cookbook,” written with Micheline Mendelsohn and with photography by Joe Shymanski, promises to keep the sizzle going. The book lays it all out for you. Start with Spike’s philosophy: “Give people simple, delicious, fresh American comfort food using local, fresh, farm-grown ingredients.” Throw in some sensible advice: “Don’t overthink!” Assemble your ingredients, follow the clear, no-frills recipes, and now you’re cooking. Above all, follow the book’s motto: “Good times and

good friends.”

In addition to burgers every-which-way, you’ll find recipes for a variety of wedge salads, fries (including batter-dipped Vidalia onion petals), beans, slaw and other sides. There’s a Vegetarians Are People Too ‘Shroom Burger (thanks, Spike!), as well as tributes to both Obamas – a Prez Obama Burger that won the restaurant’s “Countdown to Election” challenge and Michelle’s Melt in honor of her famous lunchtime visit. And don’t forget those shakes.

Shymanski’s photographs linger on every glistening morsel of the burgers and fries, but he really shines on the ice cream concoctions. His shakes, malts and floats ooze down the sides of the glass with gooey abandon. And Spike’s lively, anecdotal narrative adds just the right touch, as if he’s standing at your shoulder reassuring you that you, too, can duplicate what you’re seeing in that perfect picture next to the recipe. Or, if not, you’ll still have a darn good time trying.

“So turn on the Beatles,” he writes, “throw on some cheeseburgers, and top them with some ruby red tomatoes and a lovin’ spoonful of Good Stuff Sauce. Make a batch of Sunny’s fries and Sriracha Mayo for dipping, spin some Toasted Marshmallow Milkshakes, and bring out the brownies you made on Sunday. Now you just made the Good Stuff!”

Signed copies of the “Good Stuff Cookbook” are available at Good Stuff Eatery, 303 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, or at Hill’s Kitchen, 713 D St. SE.

Gene Tooney

Readers of the “Washington Post” comics pages may have noticed that “The Amazing Spider-Man” has a new upstairs neighbor. On June 7, a strip about an unlikely friendship between a billionaire and a homeless man debuted in that slot with the byline Weingartens and Clark. “Barney and Clyde” comes, of course, from the fertile but demented mind of Capitol Hill’s own Gene Weingarten, author of the weekly “Below the Beltway” column in the Sunday “Post.” Actually, the original idea came from his son, Dan Weingarten, who is part of that triple byline; cartoonist David Clark is the third member of the trio.

As Gene recounts in his “Chato-logical Humor” online site, it all start-



“Old dog” Gene Weingarten learns a new trick by launching a comic strip in the “Washington Post.” Photo by Michael S. Williamson

ed when a cartoonist he knew solicited his opinion of a new strip. Gene didn’t like it – but Dan liked it even less and wasn’t shy about saying so. His father chastised him for his harsh critique, saying that it was very difficult to come up with a new idea for a comic strip. “Five minutes later, Dan returned and said, ‘You know what would be a good idea? A comic strip about a friendship between a billionaire and a bum.’”

“Barney and Clyde’s” inaugural week began with a chance meeting



The DC Public Library urges kids to "Make a Splash!" in the 2010 Summer Reading Program.

where the homeless man turns the tables on J.B. Pillsbury, a pharmaceutical tycoon, by giving him a buck. By week's end, Pillsbury's ruminations have led him back to the park bench. You can see where this is going – but getting there is going to be more than half the fun.

It's clear that one recurring theme will be the hypocrisy of clueless corporate culture (it took only four days to get to the strip where a new product results in "three percent fewer kitten eyeballs exploded!"). As the "Post" noted, the strip is a "trenchant sociological satire" that would probably win a Nobel Prize "if it weren't for all the underpants jokes." That's our Gene.

"Barney and Clyde" runs daily and Sundays and now has its own Facebook page. You can chat with Gene on one Tuesday of each month at www.washingtonpost.com.

Everybody Into the Pool!

The DC Public Library 2010 summer reading program is in full sail. This year's aquatic theme encourages infants to 14-year-olds to "Make a Splash!" and urges teens ages 12 to 17 to "Make Waves" with their summer reading. As always, the libraries will award prizes to the most prodigious readers and is offering a series of educational and entertaining events through the summer. Full reading lists for both age groups as well as program schedules and information about performers are on the DCPL website (www.dclibrary.org).

The Southeast Neighborhood Library (403 Seventh St. SE) will hold Splish/Splash Water Days for all ages every Friday at 11 a.m. The "Make a Splash" set can enjoy Janice the Griot, a storyteller who spins tales of lighthouses, mermaids and talking rivers in and around the Chesapeake Bay (July 15, 1:30 p.m.), as well as Living Classrooms (July 6, 6:30 p.m.) and Splash the Water Dude (July 13, 10:30 a.m.). Teens can make Musical Waves of Poetry (July 8, 7 p.m.), learn about Wetland Creatures (July 17, 10:30 a.m.), or achieve A Perfect Balance (July 20, 7 p.m.). For more information, call 202-698-3377. ★

a space inside

Poetry Reading

Wednesday,
July 28
at
7 p.m.

Mark
Fitzgerald

author most recently of
*By Way of Dust
and Rain from
Cinnamon Press*

A Space Inside is just that—a place where developing writers, lesser known voices, and the work writers create between books can be heard. It alternates monthly between poetry and prose.

For more information email [Monica F. Jacobe](mailto:Monica.F.Jacobe@usa.net) at monicafjacobe@usa.net



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