

a e TRAVEL

Savour the Flavours of Ontario

BY MERLE EXIT

Spring is the air ... I think. That means it's time to plan a trip to Canada's Province of Ontario, the locale of not just the Shaw and Stratford theatre festivals, but a culinary vacation of wineries and cooking classes.

The Shaw Festival will, once again, take place at Niagara-On-The-Lake, a very scenic wine country area about 15 minutes from Niagara Falls. So, let's start with the wine. Hillebrand Winery is purported to be Canada's leading producer of premium Vintner's Quality Alliance wines such as Chardonnay, Riesling, Cabernet, Gamay Noir and Icewine.

Icewine? It's a dessert wine that is produced from the juice of grapes naturally frozen on the vine and making it intensely sweet with concentrated flavors and a rich amber color. Now wouldn't that make for a great Passover wine! Four glasses of that and I'd be both drunk and wired, and screaming out the window, "Hey Miriam (feminist seder), time to get your ass in here for the traditional wine sip!"

Antonio de Luca is the Chef de Cuisine at Hillebrand, where I had the opportunity to sample the fare. We did a wine-tasting paired with each course that included fish, poultry and beef. There is an emphasis on using locally-grown fruits, herbs, and vegetables, all freshly picked.

Riverbend Inn & Vineyards is a restored country inn surrounded by its own 17-acre vineyard. Klaus Reif, of Reif Estate Winery, manages the vineyards and makes the wine for the Inn that John and Jill Wien are in charge of. You can expect chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon, merlot, sauvignon blanc and vidal (Icewine). This year marks the first vintage of Riverbend Inn & Vineyard wine to be released.

Dinner was another "savouring" experience. They call it "Southern style" cooking. Appetizers such as: young watercress with green figs, toasted walnuts, and a creamed chevre and riesling vinaigrette and crawfish and sweet basil ravioli with kaffir lime butter. I had a special of rack of lamb in a bourbon sauce, but other entrée choices include: pan-fried pickerel with salsify and Yukon Gold potato pancakes with green chili-infused sauce and gribiche, seared breast of Mus-

kovy Duck with butter fried garlic mashed turnips, and a bourbon, cinnamon and dried cherry reduction.

Wine Country Cooking School at Strewn is home to a chef's cream kitchen and a chance to learn with hands-on experience.

The owner, chef Jane

cream of asparagus and salmon bisque).

A typical culinary vacation at Strewn features hands-on cooking classes in the mornings, wine-paired lunches each day, light breakfasts and either a foraging expedition or wine-tasting led by Strewn's winemaker Joe Will, who is Langdon's husband. If you're really into it, there is a five-day "summer camp for foodies".

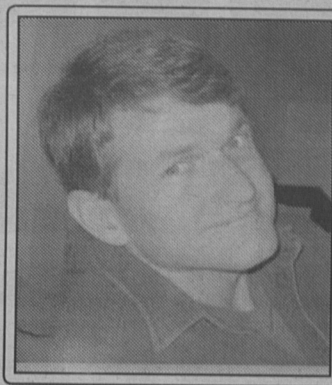
Situated on two hundred acres of lawns, gardens and woodlands, Langdon Hall Country House Hotel and Spa is considered to be a premier country inn for relaxation; and the Spa at Langdon Hall is one of Ontario's finest full-service spas. It was here in Cambridge that I "paused" on my way to the Stratford Festival.

With all of that exercise I got in, constantly having to lift the fork, spoon and knife, I thought that a spa treatment was in order. What better way to celebrate food than getting the Chocolate Fondue Wrap with Raspberry Scrub; a full-body Raspberry Sugar Scrub followed by a warm Chocolate Clay Wrap that detoxifies, firms and balances the body. It was finished with an also non-edible application of conditioning lotion.

Since I was only able to indulge my nasal senses, a gourmet lunch was necessary, commencing with a gazpacho soup that had a lump of crabmeat salad in the middle. It was then on to a seafood salad sampler platter of three different seafoods, each in a unique culinary style. Ice cream sampler for dessert, one of which had chocolate.

There are other areas of Ontario catering to the Savour Ontario vacations. For further information on the above locations, and other participants, go to the website of www.savou-rontario.ca. ▼

Langdon, has her own herb garden and shops at a local farmer's market for the delicious supplies. That day we prepared a grilled vegetable salad grilling English cucumbers, yellow peppers, tomatoes and green onions. The dressing consisted of: chopped basil, oregano, olive oil and lemon juice. Olives and crumpled feta cheese were added to the salad. We then lunched by doing a wine- and soup-tasting (vichyssoise,



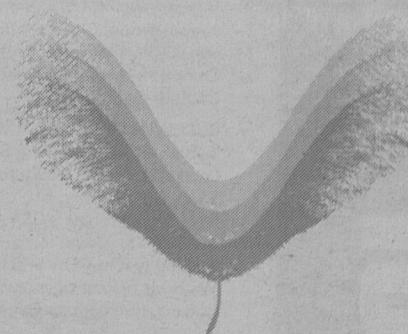
Daniel Patrick Healy

Our friend and brother, Daniel Patrick Healy, 43, died March 8th, 2006. Dan was originally from Groton, Connecticut but remained in

the Burlington area, settling in Williston, after graduating from St. Michael's College in 1984 with a B.A. in Elementary Education. At the time of his death, he was working at the Mary Hogan Middle School in Middlebury as a guidance counselor and at the Pine Ridge School as a co-director of summer school and a social-emotional educator. Through his vocation as an educator, Dan touched innumerable lives; far more than anyone will ever know.

Dan had circles of friends that overlapped at significant events in his life; such as his graduation party from Trinity College with a M.S. in Community Mental Health in 2000, and his birthday parties at which he celebrated us as much as we celebrated him. Dan was kind, sweet and generous which made us want to be the same.

There will be a Memorial Service at the St. Michael's Chapel on Saturday, April 8th with a Reception following at the Green Mountain Dining Hall on St. Michael's College Campus.



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Supporting the Vermont
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➔ Check out Merle Exit's website at www.merleswhirls.com. Merle is now appearing on WFN internet radio with two shows that include Broadway music and some great interviews.