

ARGUS-COURIER
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PETALUMA COMMUNITY

ABOVE THE BRIM

Good travels, good eats and the best news

This week started off with the best meal of my life and ended with exciting news that I just passed the California Bar Exam.

My current trip to Europe started with an incredible meal at Dublin's Michelin

Star rated restaurant l'Ecrivain, followed by a week in the Basque Country. Home to the best cuisine on earth, Donostia (San Sebastian) sits at the border of Spain and France, on the Atlantic's Bay of Biscay. The people, culture and food are so incredible that I won't make a trip to Europe anymore unless it in-

cludes at least a one week stay in Donostia.

The highlight, among many, many highlights, was a meal at Arzak. I will write more about this meal and the chefs in the near future. In brief, Arzak is the best of the best. Even though it received its third Michelin Star way back in 1989, father and daughter combo Juan Mari Arzak and Elena Arzak Espina have continued to innovate and offer a truly once-in-a-lifetime experience. But for me the best part was getting to meet two of my food heroes. It would be like meeting your two favorite baseball players,

and getting to play catch with them. The week ended with my passing the California Bar Exam. After my father's death and my devastating motorcycle accident, I decided a few years ago that it was finally time to attend law school.

Ever since I was a child I wanted to be a judge, which requires being a lawyer first. Even though I like to joke that I judge people on a daily, if not hourly basis, the California State Bar Association, in all its infinite wisdom, has a few other requirements, including a law school degree, Bar Exam passage and 10 years of practice (Go figure!). This was not an easy row to hoe and I owe many thanks to many people, not the least of which is my mother, who has been my number one fan and biggest supporter throughout this process.

World Food Championships

A huge congrats to Eric Lafranchi (owner) and Abe Assay (chef) of TAPS for their win at this year's Great Petaluma Chili Cook-off, Salsa and Beer Tasting event. Along with winning the top honors as Grand Champion, they received a Golden Ticket, which entitles them entry into the Food World Championships, which will be held in Florida this year.

Sonoma County Resource Conversation District

On a mission to help rural landowners

protect, conserve and restore natural resources, Sonoma RCD buys agriculture easements from farmers looking to continue their current operations, or start new ones. This helps guarantee that the land will never be developed. Many of the farms that you know and love, like Pacheco Ranch (Achadinha Cheese), Stemple Creek Ranch and Tara Firma Farms wouldn't exist without organizations like the Sonoma RCD. Because of these relationships with our local farmers, the RCD offers periodic tours of local lands that we might not get to visit otherwise. Christine Kuehn, a local country girl herself, expertly hosts these tours and makes us all proud to live in a community where even our youth have a passion for and appreciation of our rural and agricultural heritage.

I highly recommend getting on RCD's mailing list (sonomarcid.org) so you too can take advantage of these once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to visit our hallowed lands. The next tour is on Saturday, June 6 and will be held at Seth and Sarah James' Open Field Farm in West Petaluma. This is a great opportunity to meet some of the people that help give Petaluma its rich culture.

(I look forward to your feedback, as well as hearing about any Petaluma food news that you choose to share with me at "Above the Brim" on Facebook or abovethebrim@houstonporter.com.)



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