



Learning in an Italian kitchen is a perfect gift for a globe-trotting gourmet

Foodie Gifts

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creations, but some of the items are so beautiful, you might find them hanging on the wall rather than sitting on a table covered with food.

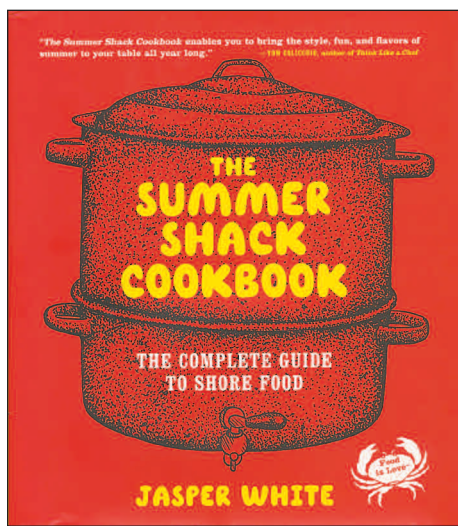
A Cooking Vacation

If you're looking for the ultimate gift for a foodie, how about a trip that includes cooking classes with top executive chefs in Italy? Imagine milking a cow in the morning and making cheese in the afternoon. How about going on an exotic truffle hunt at the foot of the Maritime Alps or an afternoon cooking in a 300-year-old kitchen? Located at 304 Newbury Street in the Back Bay, this is just a sampling of what's on tap with Cooking Vacations' culinary tour programs.

Sugar Rush

On January 10, the one and only Boston Chocolate Tour restarts every Saturday through April 25. The fully narrated, three-hour journey of decadent desserts and fun

facts features visits to the Top of the Hub, the historic Omni Parker House Hotel and The Langham, Boston. Presented by Old Town Trolley Tours of Boston, the Boston Chocolate Tour departs from the Trolley Stop Store at the corner of Boylston and South Charles Streets every Saturday at 11 am and 12:15 pm. If desserts are high on your foodie's list, this sugar-rush marathon would be an amazing treat.



A gift idea for seafood lovers

Pizza Plan

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sandwiches, baked goods, salads and other options in addition to pizza.

"Sal's isn't just a pizza place," Leary said. She stressed the establishment would not be a fast food restaurant, however, she said that about 90 percent of the business would probably be takeout.

Residents at 151 Tremont Street have long opposed bringing additional fast food restaurants into their neighborhood. Residents have an agreement with the developer of their building that none of that ground-floor retail space can be used for fast food.

At the meeting last week, about 60 neighbors reaffirmed this desire and strongly urged Suffolk to reconsider its decision. Concerns about trash, noise, the type of patrons and the hours of the restaurant were raised.

"We all know if you have a fast food place around you it collects an element that's not conducive to a neighborhood," said George Coorsen, a member of the 151 Tremont board of trustees.

Suffolk first presented Lupoli's proposal to the board in late August.

"The result of the meeting was very strenuous and strong opposition to the entire proposition," said Coorsen. "We sent a formal letter after we talked about it, outlining exactly what our opposition was."

Leary said she believes residents would feel differently if they heard from Lupoli about his plans for the space.

"Sal is a business man, and he knows how to run a good business," she said.

Residents said other types of stores are needed in the area, such as a gift shop, bakery, toy shop or florist. Leary said at the meeting that Suffolk had received a proposal from a bakery in Maine that was interested in the space, but she said she has not been able to contact the owner since. Residents at the meeting, however, disputed this claim. One resident presented e-mails in which the bakery owner said he had been unable to reach Suffolk regarding his proposal. The owner could not be reached for comment.

"The goal of [the] meeting was to really give residents a seat at the table and a voice in the process that frankly they should have had a long time ago," said Jon Romano, a spokesperson for Flaherty. "[The meeting] should be an indicator that the community doesn't want this establishment here."

Another concern that was raised was that the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) was "pushing" Lupoli as a tenant on Suffolk. Jessica Shumaker, a BRA spokesperson, and Leary deny those claims. Shumaker said a BRA retail manager works to connect possible tenants with landlords, but they have nothing to do with the actual leases.

"We hook people up, and that's pretty much it," Shumaker said.

Although Leary said Suffolk was "very close" to signing a lease with Lupoli, she agreed to hold off at the request of Flaherty, who offered to organize another meeting in the coming weeks.

"I think what's unfortunate is that Suffolk and the BRA have not consulted more with the community," Romano said. "Michael Flaherty shouldn't have to tell them how to do community outreach. We're going to see if we can find a compromise here."

Air Rights

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cast a cloud of uncertainty over various air rights proposals, observers said.

"It really is difficult for developers to negotiate with a shadow and hope it shows up at the table," said George Fantini, chairman and principal of Fantini & Gorga, which brokers commercial real estate financing deals. "You really don't know who is making the decisions and you don't know if you can rely upon the decisions."

Under the governor's plan, the Massachusetts Port Authority would assume the MTA's operations inside Route 128, while the state highway department would oversee the Turnpike outside the greater Boston area. While the governor's proposal is still being hammered out, it is a "fair assumption" that Massport would also inherit Turnpike air rights projects, said Clark Jessen, a spokesperson for the state's Executive Office of Transportation.

At stake are more than \$1 billion in potential air rights projects for condos, hotel rooms and retail shops for parcels in the Back Bay and Fenway.

The Boston-based Beal Cos. and New York-based Related Cos. are exploring the feasibility of proceeding with the \$800 million Columbus Center project, which lost its financial backing and was forced to halt construction in recent months. A report is due early next month.

Walz

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fessional interactions that [you are] performing the work of an elected official," said Walz, a representative from the Back Bay serving her second term.

In January, the Legislature will likely support the anticipated recommendations from Governor Deval Patrick's Public Integrity Task Force (PITF), Walz said. These should include increased penalties for violations such as bribery and clarification of overlapping regulatory authorities.

The problem is not the clarity of laws surrounding violations like bribery, Walz said. Rather it is the strength of these laws, and the need to clarify which investigating body has jurisdiction over which cases.

AIDS Day

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less than an hour, Shankle said.

South End restaurants Toro and DaVinci will help raise money for World AIDS Day by identifying special fundraising menu items.

It is too easy to say HIV/AIDS affects only "those people," Shankle said, when that is not the case at all.

"We need to stand up and say, 'We care about them,'" Shankle said. World AIDS Day is one such opportunity. Those with HIV/AIDS, he said "are [part of] our com-

Chief executive of Suffolk Construction John Fish and real estate investor Steve Weiner, among others, are gearing up to bid on air rights parcels 12-15 near the Hynes Convention Center and Massachusetts Avenue. Responses to the Turnpike's request for proposals for these key parcels are due Friday, December 5.

Meanwhile, developer John Rosenthal is preparing to negotiate a lease next year with the MTA for his proposed \$450-million Fenway Center air rights development.

Rosenthal said he still expects to negotiate a lease with the Turnpike, but it may be signed with another state agency.

"I don't think it will be a problem, as both agencies are a part of the state and a lease with either will be financeable," Rosenthal said.

However, not everyone is as sanguine.

"Right now we are sitting in a solid era of uncertainty with this recession," said David Begelfer, head of the local chapter of the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties. "Getting financing today is not easy. You would rather finish off the deal with the people you are working with."

State Rep. Marty Walz, is also concerned the MTA proposal could have long-term ramifications.

"My expectation is that the uncertainty about the future of the Turnpike authority will not impact the Turnpike air rights at Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Streets in the coming months, although there may be a long-term impact after the Turnpike authority is abolished," Walz said.

Walz suggested the PITF would recommend increasing penalties for ethics violations and attempt to sort out the jurisdictions of the various agencies that investigate alleged misconduct.

"We know we're going to get a bill [from the PITF]," she said. Most legislators would agree with these recommendations, she said.

Recently, the Senate prepared to take action against state Senator Dianne Wilkerson, the subject of an FBI bribery investigation. Wilkerson pre-empted any vote by resigning. The Senate's move to consider penalizing a member in the face of substantial evidence is the proper use of the Legislature's ethical watchdog mechanism, Walz said.

"The members of the public need to be confident that people are obeying the law. ... Voters must have this confidence."

munity, our brothers and our sisters, our mothers and our fathers."

According to the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, since its discovery in 1981, 11,000 Massachusetts residents have died from AIDS. In 2006, nearly 9,000 individuals were living with HIV/AIDS in Massachusetts.

"It's still an important issue in our society today," said Dr. Nancy Norman, medical director for the Boston Public Health Commission. Among certain populations, particularly black gay and bisexual men and black women, "the numbers are staggering."

Norman said she hopes for a coordinated citywide effort for future World AIDS Days.

Area Theaters

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Suffolk University.

Following a \$31 million redevelopment, the Opera House was reopened in 2004 under the ownership of Clear Channel Entertainment. The Paramount is undergoing restoration as part of Emerson College's project to create new dorm, restaurant, theater and classroom spaces.

In July of 2007, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to redevelop the historic Modern Theatre, which was built in 1876. Greg Gatlin, spokesperson for Suffolk University, said the university's

curiosity in the project was two-fold.

"Suffolk's interest in the Modern came as a result of the adjacent 10 West Street dorm project, and the city's interest in redeveloping the Modern," Gatlin said.

Suffolk University plans to spend roughly \$42 million on the project, which will include the restoration of the buildings façade. The university will also build a 184-seat black box theater and gallery space, in addition to a new 12-story, 197-bed dorm. The project will create roughly 120 jobs, according to a statement from the BRA. The project is scheduled to be completed by fall of 2010.

"[The Modern is] the final piece in our effort to save all three [theaters]," said Jessica Shumaker, BRA spokesperson.