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LIVING

Enjoy classic Burgh food with a twist

BY RACHEL WEAVER

Chef Dave Racicot hopes a new menu featuring classic Pittsburgh comfort food served with contemporary culinary twists will show diners upscale doesn't have to mean high stress.

"More than anything, it's about doing something fun," Racicot, of Notion in East Liberty, says.

Racicot is paying tribute to quintessential Pittsburgh fare with a special six-course tasting menu Sept. 17 to 20.

The menu reflects the region's multicultural heritage made up of European immigrants who brought Slavic, Dutch, Italian and other traditions to the city in the early 20th century.

Featured dishes will include pierogies, cabbage rolls, chipped ham, city chicken, haluski, kielbasa, Clark Bars and Klondike Bars.

"I wanted to have foods that people really recognize and manipulate them slightly, whether through a different technique or a more precise plating style, or by adding or subtracting elements to make things a little different," Racicot says.

Many traditional Pittsburgh dishes are ripe for refinement, Racicot says. While the menu is still being devel-

oped, he knows at least one course will feature pierogies, though shaped differently from what Pittsburghers might expect and served with caviar. Successful dishes could become staples on Notion's menu, he says.

"It's food that was inexpensive and filled people up," Racicot says. "I grew up an hour-and-a-half away, so my take on things that are really traditional to Pittsburgh is going to be totally different than someone who's 70 and lived here their entire life.

"They obviously know it a lot better than I do, so I'm going to do the best that I can to do a nice representation of at least those flavors."

While Racicot's cooking style tends to be "very detail-oriented, very precision-oriented," he wants diners to feel comfortable in his 26-seat space. He hopes bringing in familiar

Pittsburgh favorites will expose both regulars and new guests to his food philosophy.

"We try to be very technical in what we do, as well, but it's not necessarily important that if you eat here, you notice that everything is perfect," he says. "As long as they're happy, that's really the only thing that matters. I don't care if everybody notices that everything is sliced to the exact thickness or diced to the exact same size.

"It's nice whenever people do, but that can very quickly turn into the food feeling cold, and that's not what we want to do. We want the food to be easy to eat. We want you to enjoy yourself and relax."

Rachel Weaver is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. She can be reached at 412-320-7948 or rweaver@tribweb.com.



Racicot

Notion Celebrates Classic Pittsburgh Eats

When: Sept. 17 to 20
Cost: \$85, or \$121 with wine pairings
Where: Notion, 128 S. Highland Ave., East Liberty
Details: 412-361-1188 or www.notionrestaurant.com

