



**Clark Frasier
and Mark Gaier,
Executive Chefs/Co-Owners,
Arrows and
MC Perkins Cove,
Ogunquit, Maine**

**"We went back home, packed up our bags and drove across country.
It wasn't until the drive that we asked ourselves, 'What have we done?'"**

Forging Their Own Path

After working for years together in San Francisco at Jeremiah Tower's legendary restaurant Stars, Clark Frasier and Mark Gaier set their sites on opening a restaurant they could call their own. The pair initially looked for a place in Frasier's native California, but soon grew discouraged with the state's exorbitant real estate prices. On an especially dismal evening, the chefs received a serendipitous call from friends that would alter the course of the chef's lives.

Frasier, who represented both himself and his partner Gaier during this interview, explains, "Friends of Mark lived in the Ogunquit area and had two restaurants that he knew really well. They called us out of the blue one day and said, 'We have this restaurant and it's really too much for us. We're in over our heads. Would you guys be interested in buying it?' We said, 'Sure. We've got about 35 cents.' And they said, 'Why don't you lease it with the option to buy, and if doesn't work out, what have you lost?' We thought that was a good point. When we flew out, it was the dead of winter and there was snow halfway up the windows and the place was closed down and cold. We walked through and thought, 'This is a really cool place.' We went back home, packed up our bags and drove cross country. It wasn't until the drive that we asked ourselves, 'What have we done?'"

Despite their initial anxiety Gaier and Frasier persevered, transforming a neglected, butlerly cold place into a warm and inviting destination restaurant called Arrows. The elegant 18th century Colonial building that houses Arrows is tucked into the lush woods of coastal Maine. It is surrounded by rolling grounds speckled with flower gardens that spill into a two-acre vegetable garden bordered by greenhouses from which the kitchen sources most of its produce needs. Arrows is a textbook model of self-sufficiency. The impossibly fresh ingredients plucked from just outside the restaurant's doors are lovingly prepared by an impeccable team led by two chefs who have dedicated their cooking lives to providing their guests with nothing short of a sublime experience.

"We believe our customers are honored guests and we want them to feel like they are guests in our home. Service doesn't end until they are in the car driving away. That's our vision for this restaurant. The food should be impeccable. It should be unique; it should be a reflection of Mark and myself and our Executive Chef Justin Walker's background and travels. It shouldn't be about what everyone is doing in New York or L.A. We don't really care about what everyone is doing. We're up here doing our own thing. I think another thing that is difficult for people to wrap their minds around is that our goal is to be essentially as self-sufficient as we possibly can. We forage all our own mushrooms, we have cranberry bogs, we have apple trees, we have the garden, a windmill is planned for the future. That's always been the goal. It's a real antique way of looking at cooking and it's been a real mission statement for us."

For the casual observer it would seem that the Arrows' location, its great success and the partnership that forged it is something straight from any chef's fairy tale. But after decades in partnership, one has to wonder if cracks exist in this idyllic alliance. "We both bring great strengths to the business. We have different areas that we work in and, having said that, we have always had a very clear vision of what we want to achieve. There is some give and take, but primarily it tends to be that we come to the same conclusion on things. Having a similar commitment to making sure the restaurant gets better year after year ensures that the business generally runs pretty smoothly."

One thing that inevitably strengthens their partnership is the months the chefs spend traveling when the restaurant is closed, from January through April. Frasier spent a year studying Chinese in Beijing in the early 80s. This experience sparked the flame of wanderlust that both chefs share, and it benefits their restaurants in countless ways. "Travel opens your mind to new things. You see things that you



Fresh Peas Four

Ways

(Serves 4)

recipe on page 18

Sauvignon Blanc, Greenleaf
No. 136
Stellenbosch, South Africa 2003

Fresh Peas Four Ways

continued from page 17

For the couscous salad:

1/4 cup olive oil
2 ounces finely chopped onion
2 ounces finely chopped celery
1 pint water
8 ounces Israeli couscous
4 ounces shelled peas, blanched
2 sprigs mint, chopped
Salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste

For the basil granité:

4 ounces basil, blanched
1 pint water
1/2 cup simple syrup
1/2 cup Sauvignon Blanc
1/2 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
Salt to taste

For the pea purée:

1 leek, thinly sliced and blanched
12 ounces shelled peas, blanched
1/2 cup olive oil
2 sprigs thyme
Salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste

For the pea tendrils salad:

10 sprigs parsley
3 sprigs tarragon
1/2 cup red wine vinegar
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon whole-grain mustard
1/2 cup olive oil
4 ounces pea tendrils
1 ounce chive tips
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

For the creamy chervil vinaigrette:

8 ounces chervil, blanched
4 ounces parsley, blanched
1/2 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
6 white peppercorns
1/2 cup olive oil
4 ounces sour cream
Salt to taste

For the pickled peas:

1 cup water
1/4 cup white wine vinegar
4 ounces granulated sugar
2 sprigs mint, finely chopped
4 ounces shelled peas, blanched

To serve:

10 baby carrots, roasted

For the garnish:

Dill
Shelled peas, blanched
Thyme

For the couscous salad: In frying pan, heat one tablespoon oil and sauté onion and celery until onion is translucent. Season with salt. In saucepan, bring water and remaining oil to boil. Stir in couscous; remove from heat, cover and set aside until couscous has absorbed liquid, about eight minutes. Fluff with fork and season with salt and pepper. In bowl, toss together peas, onion mixture, couscous and mint. Refrigerate until chilled.

For the basil granité: In blender, combine basil and water and purée until smooth. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve. In bowl, whisk together basil mixture, simple syrup, Sauvignon Blanc and lemon juice. Season with salt. In container, place simple syrup mixture and freeze until solid, scraping with a fork throughout process to achieve granité consistency.

For the pea purée: In food processor fitted with a metal blade, place leek and peas and purée until smooth, adding oil in a steady stream during process. Blend in thyme. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve and season with salt and pepper.

For the pea tendrils salad: In food processor fitted with a metal blade, combine parsley, tarragon, vinegar and mustards and purée until smooth. Add oil in a steady stream to emulsify. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve. In bowl, toss together pea tendrils, chives and parsley mixture. Season with salt and pepper. Refrigerate until chilled.

For the creamy chervil vinaigrette: In food processor fitted with a metal blade combine chervil, parsley, lemon juice, mustard and peppercorns and purée until smooth. Add oil in a steady stream to emulsify. Blend in sour cream. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve. Season with salt.

For the pickled peas: In saucepan, whisk together water, vinegar and sugar over high heat until sugar dissolves. Stir in mint. In bowl, combine peas and sugar mixture. Cover and refrigerate 12 hours. Drain peas and discard remaining ingredients.

To serve: On rectangular-shaped plate, place couscous salad at one end. Place two bowls alongside. In one bowl, scoop basil granité and garnish with dill. In second bowl, pour creamy chervil vinaigrette. Spoon additional creamy chervil vinaigrette alongside and top with carrots and pickled peas. Place pea tendrils salad alongside. Spoon pea purée alongside and garnish with blanched peas and thyme.

Forging Their Own Path

continued from page 17

can think about incorporating into the restaurant. There are the physical things. For example, we regularly have ceramic and other things made for the restaurant. Celadon China, Japanese hand-thrown pieces, lacquerware from Vietnam, silver chopsticks from Bangkok. We designed and had the uniforms made. It's completely original. It goes back to that idea of being unique. It's a uniform you're not going to see anywhere else. You're never going to eat on our plates in any other restaurant. Everything is very special. That's what travel does for us . . . besides the fact that you discover new flavors. It gives you such a wealth of ideas."

Their intense travel schedule, coupled with the business of running not only Arrows, but their other, more casual Ogunquit-based restaurant, MC Perkins Cove, makes one think that Frasier and Gaier have little opportunity for anything else in their lives. Yet the pair also carves out time to host the annual East Meets West culinary festival on the grounds of Arrows. In addition, they recently penned a second cookbook that will focus on the classic recipes of Maine.

When Frasier explains the rules of conduct required of the restaurant staff, it illustrates why guests tend to feel so pampered and extraordinary throughout their dining experience at Arrows. "What's very important to Mark and myself are manners. Correct and proper behavior is essential. We don't wait on ladies and gentlemen and then go back in the kitchen and behave like savages. There are, of course, times in any kitchen when things are tense, but saying 'please' and 'thank you' is important. We strongly believe that the front and the back need to behave towards each other properly. We have no tolerance for any sort of back and front rivalry at all. A climate can easily become pervasive, and this adds absolutely nothing to the guest's experience."

For 20 years Gaier and Frasier have not only managed to run a self-sufficient restaurant that serves as an impeccable model of sustainability, but they have enriched the lives of the countless guests they have treated so graciously. Arrows is more than a place to find sustenance; it is a place to replenish the spirit. The warm, welcoming embrace guests are greeted with when they step through the restaurant door is inspired by two chefs who chose decades ago to forge their own unique path.

. . . a path that has led to extraordinary success and fulfillment.