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## My Dinner with Andre. Err...Alton.

By Chris Chamberlain in [Events](#)

Tuesday, Aug. 11 2009 @ 9:11AM



One of the highlights of last week's Food Network Southern Wine and Food Festival at the Gaylord Opryland Resort was "An Evening with Alton Brown" featuring a menu of Tennessee tomatoes and corn prepared by Opryland executive chef Seth Kondor. Alton's fourth annual visit to the resort was held at the Old Hickory Steakhouse deep within the environs of the megaplex and sold out long before the event was even widely publicized.

The crowd of about a hundred diners gathered for predinner conversation and Desert Rose wine from Arrington Estates. Alton arrived directly and worked the room wearing a preppy blue blazer and ultra hip Chinese Nikes. The assembled crowd was abuzz with anticipation for dinner with America's favorite Home-Ec instructor. The fanatical foodies resembled a Star Trek convention crowd with Hawaiian shirts replacing Enterprise ensign uniforms. Bowl cuts abounded.



With no set program, the evening flowed at the speed of the kitchen, as it should have. The food was the focus with the occasional interruption of our host to silence the crowd with a playful curmudgeonly rant to introduce Chef Kondor. An amiable foil to Brown's cantankerousness, Kondor described each course and how it contributed to the glorification of the tomato and maize.

Constrained by the limited offering of Arrington's wine catalog, the staff worked hard to complement the meal and wine pairings. A salad of salty heirloom tomatoes and exotic yellow watermelon was served with a dry honey-citrus `07 Viognier. The pleasantly low acidity level of the wine worked very nicely with the sweetness of the yellow watermelon. Chef Kondor said that they were especially difficult to source this year, so at \$40 apiece I doubt many of us will be enjoying the *citrullus lanatus* any time again soon.

The second course was a yellow corn soup with chantrelles, Peekytoe crab and a "Croque Monsieur" Tennessee Ham sandwich. Because what's not improved by the addition of Tennessee Ham? The accompanying `08 Chardonnay was unnecessary but appreciated. The strong flavors of the chowder and the richness of the baddest grilled cheese ever pretty much overpowered the delicate flavors of the wine. No matter. Bring on the next!

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