

JOE FAMULARO: WHY HE LOVES TOMATOES

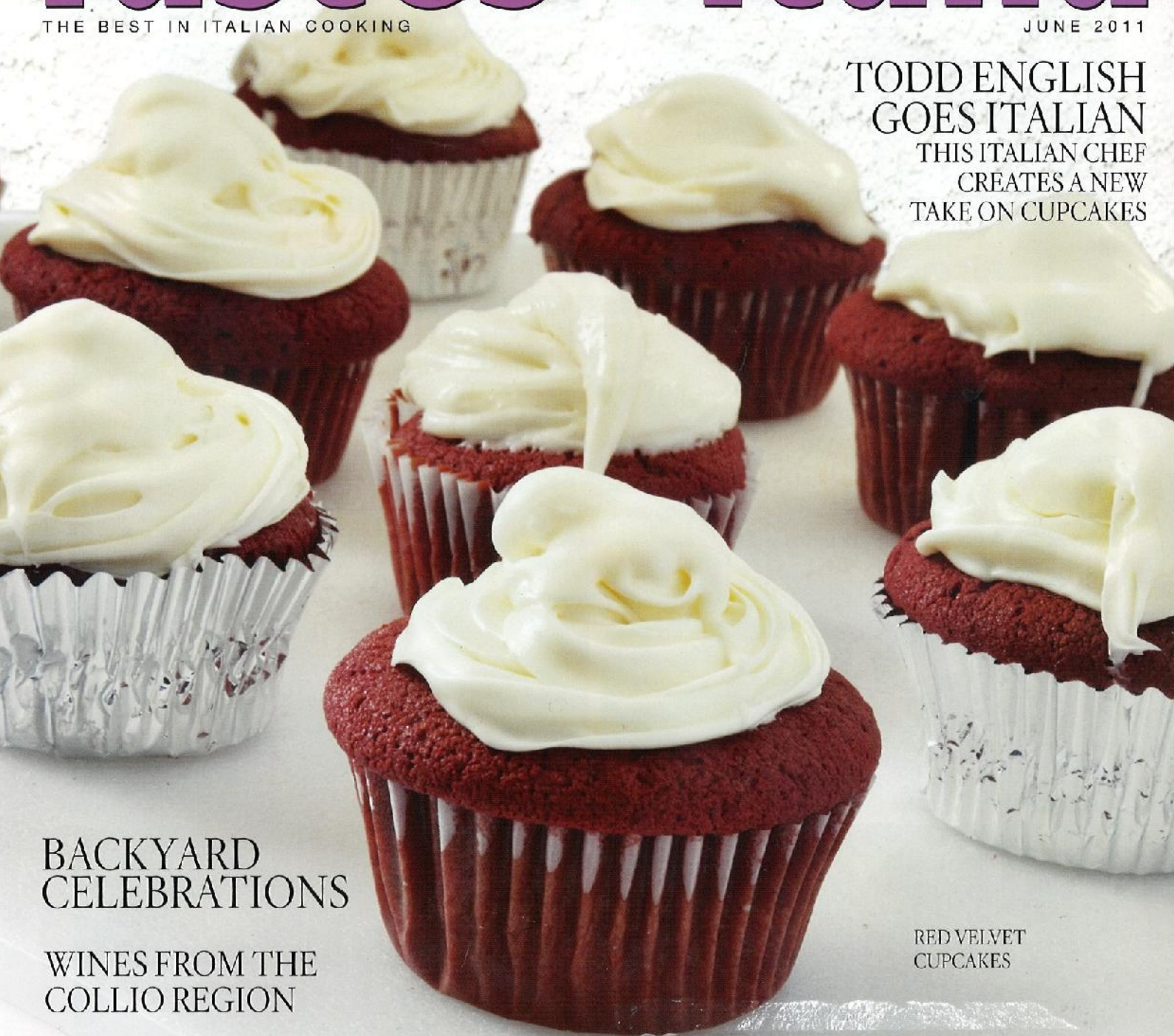
# Tastes of Italia

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GOES ITALIAN

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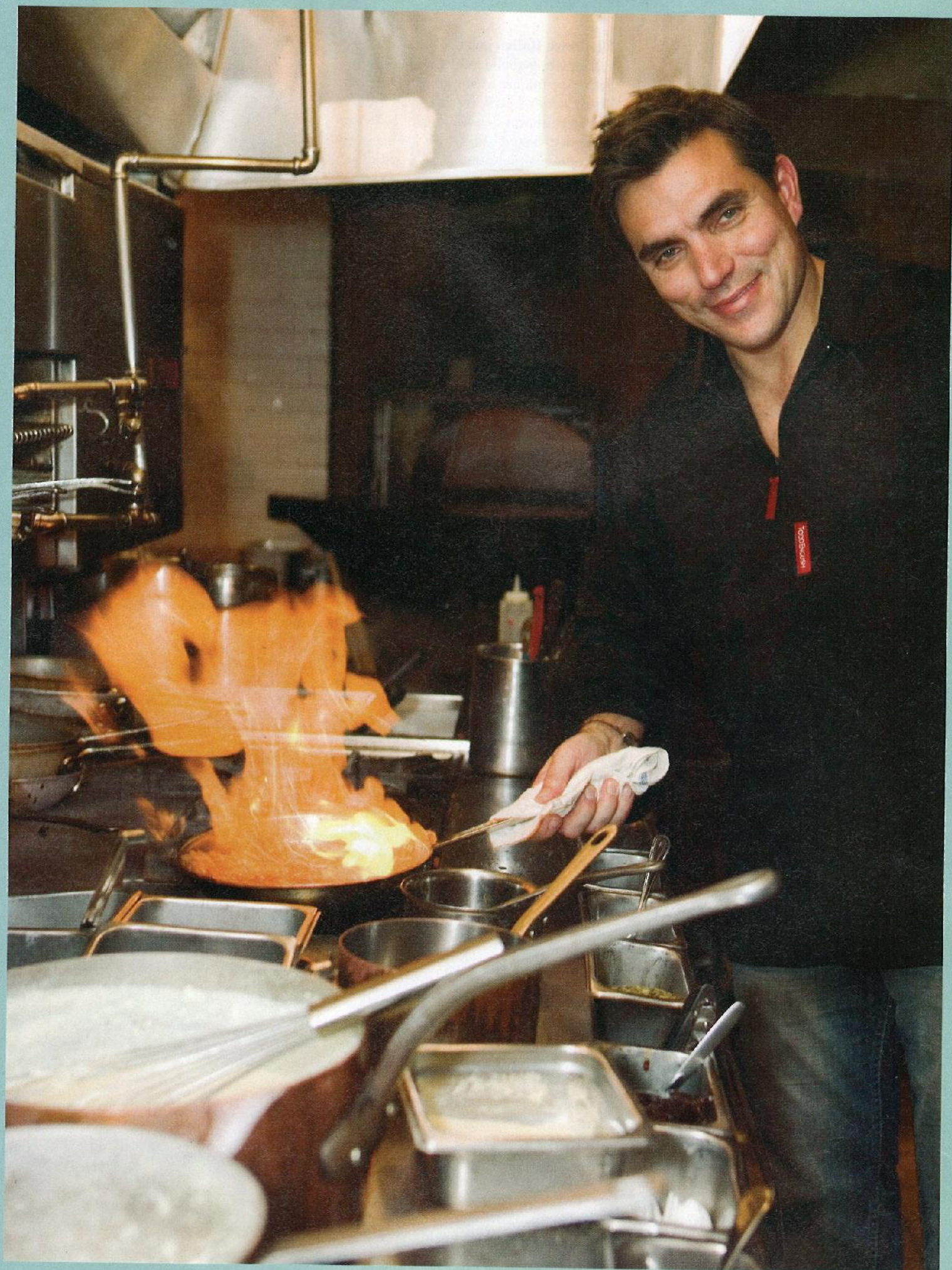


# TODD ENGLISH GOES ITALIAN

**His name may be English, but this famous chef and restaurateur grew up eating Italian, thanks to his mother's family roots in Sicily and Calabria.**

*[ By Lauren Birmingham Piscitelli ]*







**I** came from a family of amazing cooks," says Chef Todd English. "My great-grandmother, Bettina, who lived to be something like 100 years old, would always make pasta. I remember going into her bedroom and the pasta that she had made, using knitting needles, was laid out on her bed. Old school, great stories. I have fond memories of food," English recalls as he reminisces about his Calabrian grandmother's traditional way of making fusilli.

Today, the 6-foot-2, internationally known celebrity chef stands over a growing empire of award-winning restaurants: Olives, Figs, Ça Va Brasserie, Tuscany, da Campo, KingFish Hall, Todd English Restaurant aboard the Cunard Line's Queen Mary 2 & Queen Victoria, bluezoo, Wild Olives, Todd English P.U.B., Ember Room, The Plaza Food Hall By Todd English (a European-inspired food court where Harrods meets Dean & DeLuca), and his newly opened Isabelle's CurlyCakes in a partnership with daughter Isabelle, 17.

CurlyCakes was the result of an idea that came to father and daughter while they were in London visiting a cupcake shop. Isabelle, who loves to bake and describes herself as a chocolate lover, explains, "I was inspired by this cupcake shop we had visited. It had lots of pretty cupcakes. Later that evening at dinner, my dad and I started scribbling ideas and brainstorming. When we returned to Boston, the idea took off when we found our location," says Isabelle. CurlyCakes is a name that plays off Isabelle English's brown curly locks.

Nestled on 81 Charles Street on Boston's elegant Beacon Hill, CurlyCakes boasts a welcoming brown-and-white awning with an overhead sign in the shape of a darling cupcake. An inviting scent of freshly baked goods draws you in. The cafe and cupcake shop has a comforting feeling of old-fashioned candy stripper meets modern day chic.

The sweet menu includes oversized and artfully decorated cupcakes in flavors like Red Velvet, Boston Cream, Peppermint, and Triple Chocolate, which is ganache filled and topped with Cocoa Puffs sprinkles. Summer cupcakes will be

filled with Italian gelato.

English, Isabelle, and English's Mom, Patty Arcuni, are at work in the kitchen. Three sets of striking ice-blue eyes, a family common denominator, look over some just-baked cakes. "We have a deep rich chocolate caprese and a tiramisu," says English. Patty turns the pages of her fifth-generation family recipe book and talks about her old black-and-white photos from her family bake shop.

Despite his last name, Chef Todd English is Italian. "My grandmother Giulietta was from Oppido Mamertina in Calabria and my grandfather was from Palermo, Sicily. They came over in 1910, New York-based and that started it all," explains English. "My Uncle Placido had a bakery in the Bronx where I would go as a child and stare at the blocks of butter that were taller than me. He was a master Venetian pastry chef."

"We would visit Zio Placido Colusso and leave with so much pastry," he continues. "There was no way we could have eaten it all. Placido was from Venice, and he would make gorgeous Venetian pastries. He had once made an elaborate cupcake wedding cake."

Patty tells the story of Friend's, the family's successful bakery. She also tells the story of her family. "Zia Maria was married to Placido. It was an arranged marriage. He was supposed to marry my mother's younger sister, Caterina. But Rosario, my grandfather, said the younger daughter could not marry first, and so he arranged Placido's marriage to Zia Maria, the oldest daughter. He set Placido up in the New York bakeshop."

"Todd showed an interest in cooking at an early age of 9. Although he loved to play bocce with his great-grandfather Rosario, he had a strong interest in cooking. My family started in New York, and after Todd expanded all over the country, he has come full circle back to New York where it all started," says Patty.

"Once I returned to my mother's small town of Oppido Mamertina with Todd and Isabelle. They all knew we were coming, and we arrived early. Everyone was waiting in the little piazza. We were greeted like celebrities, and every place we visited we had to stop. My heart is shaped like the Italian boot," exclaims Patty.

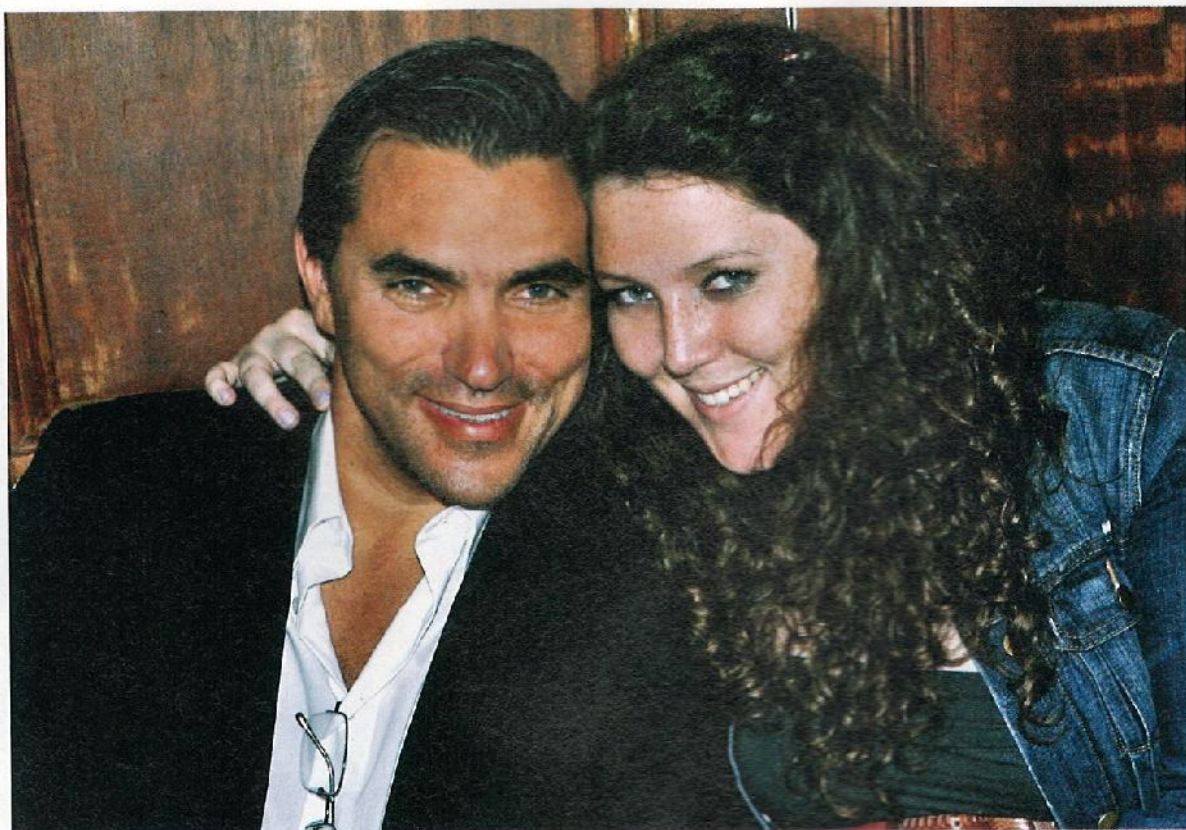
English's food is rustic Mediterranean with a strong tie to his Italian roots. "Simplicity. In Italian cooking simplicity is the hardest thing to get right. There is no disguising it. Italians are noted for using only three or four ingredients and











that's it. If you do not have the perfect technique of making something, then it doesn't come out right. I think there is so much to learn in Italy. What I love about Italy is that it is very regional. If it's called tagliatelle in one place it's called fettuccine in the next," he notes.

"Being in the restaurant business is nurturing. As a chef, one of the things that is most important to me is having people leave happy. We nurture them, we feed them, we feed their souls, we feed their spirits," says English.

Isabelle is already following in her father's footsteps, boasting celebrity clients Katie Holmes and Justin Timberlake. Holmes has such a sweet tooth for the Red Velvet and Grasshopper flavor cupcakes she sent them to the Canadian set of her miniseries, "The Kennedys."

As English says, "Cupcakes are a feel-good kind of food. Who doesn't love a cupcake?"

English is an A-list culinary award winner of the James Beard Foundation's National Rising Star Chef in 1991; the James Beard Foundation's Best Chef in the Northeast in 1994; Nation's Restaurant News Top 50 Tastemakers in 1999; Bon Appetit's Restaurateur of the Year in 2001; James Beard Foundation's Who's Who-Food and Beverage in America; and James Beard's House Foundation's Best Television Special Award for his Peru

episode where he cruised and cooked at Machu Picchu.

He graduated with honors from the Culinary Institute of America, worked with Jean-Jacques Rachou at La Cote Basque in New York, at the Dal Pescatore in Canneto Sull'Oglio and Paracucchi in Locanda Dell'Angelo, Italy and with Julia Child.

English is the force behind "Food Trip with Todd English," his television show on PBS, three cookbooks—The Olives Table, The Figs Table and The Olives Dessert Table, and the Todd English cookware line GreenPan sold on HSN.

He is also very involved with several local and national charities including Citymeals-on-Wheels, Community Servings, Share Our Strength, the Boys and Girls Clubs, Volunteers of America, The Food Bank and City Harvest.



**FAMILY:** Chef Todd English and daughter, Isabelle, top; Cupcake wedding cake made by Zio Placido; Zia Maria.







## Red Velvet Cupcakes

- 2½ cups all purpose flour**
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder**
- 1 teaspoon baking soda**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- 1 cup butter, softened**
- 2 cups sugar**
- 4 eggs**
- 1 cup sour cream**
- ½ cup buttermilk**
- 1 ounce red food color**
- 1 ounce red wine vinegar**
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract**

Preheat oven to 350°F. Mix flour, cocoa powder, baking soda and salt in medium bowl. Set aside.

Beat butter and sugar in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed for 5 minutes or until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs, one at a time. Mix in sour cream, buttermilk, food color, vinegar and vanilla. Gradually beat in flour mixture on low speed until just blended. Do not overbeat.

Spoon batter into 30 paper-lined muffin cups, filling each cup half full.

Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until toothpick inserted into cupcake comes out

clean. Cool in pans on wire rack 5 minutes. Remove from pans; cool completely.

Frost with vanilla cream cheese frosting.

### Vanilla Cream Cheese Frosting

- 1 (8-oz.) package of cream cheese, softened**
- ¼ cup butter, softened**
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract**
- 1 (16-oz.) box confectioner's sugar**
- 8 ounces melted white chocolate**

Beat cream cheese, softened butter and vanilla extract in large bowl until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in confectioner's sugar until smooth.

Place your frosting in a pastry bag fitted with a plain tip. Pipe frosting onto the cupcakes in a curly pattern.

Chill your cupcakes for 30 minutes or until the frosting is firm.

Remove from the refrigerator and gently dip the tops of the cupcakes into the melted white chocolate. Allow the cupcakes to warm to room temperature before serving.

Makes 30 cupcakes.



## Todd English Olive Oil Mixed Berry Cake with Vanilla Ice Cream and Cilantro Syrup

- 3 sticks unsalted butter**
- 1 cup sugar**
- ½ cup brown sugar**
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest**
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- 9 eggs**
- 1½ cups extra virgin olive oil**
- ½ cup sour cream**
- 6 cups flour**
- 1 tablespoon baking powder**
- 2 teaspoons baking soda**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- ½ cup raspberries**
- ½ cup blackberries**
- ½ cup blueberries**
- 2 tablespoons sugar**
- ¼ cup pine nuts**

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly grease and flour two cake pans. Combine butter, sugars and lemon zest into the bowl of an electric mixer (fitted with a paddle); mix on high until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Combine vanilla with eggs (add one at a time, beating well with each addition). Combine extra virgin olive oil and sour cream. Combine dry ingredients with the wet, alternating one-third at a time, starting with the dry ingredients first. Repeat until all are incorporated and mix just to combine.

Mix berries with sugar and let sit 10 minutes to macerate. Divide cake batter into 2 cake pans, and spoon half the berry mixture over top of both cakes and bake 25 to 35 minutes.



- ½ cup light corn syrup**
- Small bunch cilantro**

Bring a small sauce pot of water to a boil. Wash cilantro and toss into boiling water and let sit for 10 seconds, then remove and place into ice water bath to blanch. Remove and squeeze out excess water, then rough chop and place into a blender along with light corn syrup. Blend until smooth. Reserve for later.

To serve, spoon a tablespoon of reserved berries onto a plate and top with a slice of olive oil cake, then drizzle with cilantro syrup and garnish with pine nuts and a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

Makes 12 servings.

## Plaza Food Hall Whole Roasted Branzino

- 2 whole Branzino (12 to 14-oz. each), scaled and gutted (you may substitute sea bass or red snapper)**
- 4 garlic cloves, chopped**
- 3 shallots, sliced**
- 6 thyme sprigs**
- 1 bulb fennel, thinly shaved**
- 1 orange, segmented**
- Salt and pepper to taste**
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil**
- 1 lemon, sliced into three ⅛-inch slices**

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Rinse fish thoroughly inside and out under cold, running water. If fish was not thoroughly scaled, remove by running the edge of a spoon along the length of the scaled area, from tail toward head.

In a bowl, mix together the garlic, shallots, thyme, fennel, and orange to make fish seasoning. Place fish seasoning mixture into the cavity of the fish and season with salt and pepper. Place fish on a hot grill and cook for 4 minutes on each side. Remove from the grill and place in a frying pan with the olive oil. Top fish with lemon slices and finish cooking in the oven for 10 minutes.

Makes 2 servings.

## "Little Ears" in a Slow Braised Meat Sauce

- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- 2 to 3 cloves of garlic**

- 1 pound spicy or sweet Italian sausage, removed from the casing**
- 1 medium onion, chopped finely**
- ½ cup chopped fresh basil**
- 1 pound fresh tomatoes, chopped, or 12 ounces of crushed tomatoes**
- 2 cups chicken or meat broth**
- 2 small potatoes peeled, boiled and cubed (optional)**
- ¼ cup heavy cream (optional)**
- 2 tablespoons butter**
- 16 ounces of orecchiette**
- 1 cup grated Parmigiano Reggiano**
- ½ cup chopped fresh flat-leafed parsley**

In a casserole or saucepan over medium heat, pour the olive oil and let heat up to just before smoking point. Add the garlic, then the sausage, and brown. Make sure you break the sausage up so that it will evenly distribute in the sauce. Let this cook for 4 to 5 minutes then add the onions and the basil and cook for another 2 to 3 minutes. Add the tomatoes and the broth. Let this simmer for about 20 minutes. Add the potatoes, if using.

To finish the sauce, which should be more ragu-like, stir in the heavy cream, if using, and the butter.

In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook the orecchiette (cooking time will vary depending on the dryness of the pasta). They are done when soft to the bite but still have a firm texture. Remove from the water and toss with the meat sauce. Generously grate the cheese over the top and garnish with chopped parsley. Serve immediately.

Makes 4 servings.

## Truffled Baby Artichoke Salad

### For warm Risotto cake:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- 1 onion, minced**
- 1 pound arborio rice**
- 1 cup white wine**
- 4 cups chicken stock, warm (100°F to 120°F), divided**
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- 1 cup Parmesan cheese**
- 2 to 3 teaspoons kosher or sea salt**

- 1 to 2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper**

Heat olive oil in a large sauce pan over medium heat and sweat onions until they become translucent. Add rice and stir well to coat with oil. Cook rice 2 to 3 minutes to get a good "sear." Add wine and 1 cup of chicken stock.

Slowly "feed" the remaining stock ¼ to ½ cup at a time, until rice is cooked through and soft. (Normally risotto is cooked al dente; be sure the rice is cooked through.) Fold in butter and Parmesan cheese. Season with salt and pepper. Pour out onto a sheet pan ½ inch thick and refrigerate until cooled.

Cut into 3-inch rounds and pan fry until browned and crispy on both sides. Place on sheet pan in 300°F oven 10 to 12 minutes.

### For the artichoke salad:

- 8 baby artichokes, clip outer leaves and peel stem**
- 1 shallot, minced**
- 2 tablespoons canned black truffles, minced**
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- 2 teaspoons truffle oil**
- 1½ tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese**
- 2 teaspoons kosher or sea salt**
- 1 to 2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper**

Shave artichokes lengthwise on mandoline. Place in a large mixing bowl and toss with remaining ingredients.

### For the Parmesan crema:

- 2 cups heavy cream**
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**

Heat cream in a medium sauce pan over high heat and reduce by half. Whisk in Parmesan cheese. Season with pepper.

Place warm risotto cake in center of plate. Place a handful (about 1 cup) of artichoke salad on top. Drizzle with Parmesan crema. Serve immediately.

Makes 8 servings.