

A show of great tastes; flavors of opera on the menu

01:00 AM EST on Thursday, February 2, 2006

Food "mini-environments," opera-inspired Italian menus and a chocolate festival are all on the menu this weekend.

Tonight beginning at 5:30 p.m., the Alliance of Artists Communities cosponsors the Arts & Business Council of Rhode Island Encore Awards, an event showcasing the state's creative talent. The Rhode Island Convention Center's Exhibit Hall will be transformed into mini-environments of food, art and performance, as chefs and designers pair up to create food stations to please eye and palate.

Chefs include John Richardson of Pot au Feu; Eric Wolf and Ray Montaquilla of CAV; Will Hebert of Renaissance; Kevin Millonzi of Prov; Michael Kyriakakis and Mark Maginot of Geppetto's; Jeffrey Carroll of Napa Valley Grille; and Nick Rabar of Ten Prime Steak and Sushi, XO Steakhouse and Big Fish.

Audrey Niffenegger, author of *The Time Traveler's Wife*, is event speaker. The event includes an hors d'oeuvres reception and entertainment by the Providence Singers, Festival Ballet of Providence and Tim O'Keefe.

Tickets cost \$150 general admission; \$50 for artists and nonprofit organizations. Tickets may be purchased at www.arttixri.com. For more information, call (401) 621-6127.

In conjunction with Opera Providence's Italian one-act operas -- Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Puccini's *Suor Angelica* -- on Friday and Sunday, local restaurants are using opera as their inspiration for creating a different dining experience.

Capital Grille, One Union Station, offers a pre-theater and post-theater menu. Call (401) 521-5600.

XO Steakhouse, 125 North Main St., (401) 273-9090, and 10 Prime Steak & Sushi, 55 Pine St., Providence, (866) 477-7463, will offer some Italian dishes for these opera events.

Zooma Bar Ristorante, 245 Atwells Ave., Providence, offers a \$59 dinner for two Monday to Friday from 5 p.m. Call (401) 383-2002.

Whole Foods Market will host a Chocolate Fest on Saturday from 1 to 4 p.m. with a tasting of chocolates and desserts, including handmade chocolates crafted in Belgium and a fondue made with Valrhona chocolate. The event is at both locations in Providence, 261 Waterman St. and 601 North Main St.

MORE FOOD EVENTS

Italian Night (6th annual), St. John the Evangelist Church, 61 Poplar St., Newport. 847-0012. Sat 5-7 pm. \$11, \$7 under age 10, free under age 5.

Polish Picnic, Fierlit Korzen Post 79, 44 Central St. Central Falls. 726-9437. Sun 1-5 pm. \$12.50.