



At Chicago-based Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises' Big Bowl chain, the pork chow fun item features Berkshire pork from Iowa.

## Local-foods trend goes mainstream as chains shop close to home

By Bret Thorn

A story about fine-dining restaurants using local products might have turned heads 15 years ago, but no longer.

Now the news is that high-end restaurants' long-term practice of developing relationships with farmers and other local suppliers has trickled down. Chain restaurants, even some quick-service operations, are learning the benefits of shopping locally.

Driven by customer demand, restaurants are finding that using local products can build goodwill and improve the quality of their food, and in some cases it can maintain consistency and even improve costs. Shortcomings still exist, however, and even restaurants dedicated to using local products sometimes find that they need mass-produced items from farther away for the sake of consistency.

(See **LOCAL**, page 27)

## Post-Hortons Wendy's seen as ripe for takeover

Pundits: Sept. 29 spinoff of doughnut chain could make ex-parent affordable

By Sarah E. Lockyer

DUBLIN, OHIO — Wendy's International Inc. is expected to fully spin off its lucrative doughnut chain, Tim Hortons, on Sept. 29, ending a bitter struggle between the restaurant company

and activist investor Nelson Peltz and moving the company one step closer to becoming a single-concept operator and franchisor. But without the nearly 2,900-unit Tim Hortons, and given

Wendy's potential divestment of other brands and investments, including Baja Fresh Mexican Grill, Cafe Express and Pasta Pomodoro, industry observers see Wendy's — as the prospective

parent of but a single hamburger brand — as a prime candidate for a corporate takeover. Spurring such speculation, observers note, is the fact that (See **WENDY'S**, page 6)



Richard Sneed, chairman of the NRA's Save American Free Enterprise committee, stressed the importance of being active in state politics to attendees at the NRA's Public Affairs Conference in Washington, D.C.

PAUL FRUMKIN

## Industry sees big dearth of black males in fine dining

By Milford Prewitt

The diplomats, politicians and gentry who prayed for an invitation to dine on the cooking of brothers James and Peter Hemings probably never called them celebrity chefs. After all, that was some 230 years ago, and the Hemings were slaves, paradoxically owned by Thomas Jefferson, champion of human rights and principal author of the Declaration of Independence.

Jefferson — who developed a love of French food during his ambassadorship in France — ordered the elder Hemings, 19-year-old James, to master French culinary technique by apprenticing in a famed Paris restaurant. Then Jefferson offered James his freedom if he shared his knowledge with Peter and the other slaves.

But the Hemingses' legacy — a long lineage of black chefs who were their direct descendants or had worked with them before becoming executive chefs at the White House or successful private caterers up until the 1900s — has devolved into an ironic reality in the modern era of foodservice: black men are largely underrepresented in fine dining in America. (See **IN**, page 51)

## NRA's Public Affairs Conference warns of political shift to state ballot efforts

Leaders urge local activism on minimum wage, health care issues

By Paul Frumkin

WASHINGTON — Restaurateurs and state association officials from across the country who recently traveled to Washington to engage federal lawmakers on key industry issues were warned that a new political front was opening up closer to home.

Citing such dangers as "poorly

shaped ballot initiatives" that skirt the legislative process, restaurant executives and National Restaurant Association officials advised attendees at the 2006 Public Affairs Conference that the battle on Capitol Hill is rapidly expanding to statehouses across the nation.

"For the last few years we have seen a trend that should be of concern to restaurants," said Richard Sneed, president and chief executive of Carlson Restaurants Worldwide and chairman of the NRA's Save American Free Enterprise, or SAFE, committee. (See **NRA**, page 88)

<p><b>ALSO THIS WEEK:</b></p> <p><b>CONSUMER TRENDS:</b> NPD Group: Food preferences vary in international markets pg. 18</p>	<p><b>COMMODITIES CORNER:</b> Barone: Choice beef supplies to remain tight through fall pg. 24</p>	<p><b>ON-SITE RESTAURANTS:</b> Mount Rushmore's foodservice undergoes \$2M renovation pg. 44</p>
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# In the matter of black men in full-service restaurants, industry coming up empty



Much is blamed — from racism to a lack of role models — but little is known for sure why so few black men pursue careers in the tableservice segment

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While many industry leaders and corporate executives are mostly radiant about the successful integration of racial, ethnic and immigrant diversity in all segments of the industry in the past decade, others are struggling to understand and overcome the complex array of problems that are leaving black men out of the picture.

"I think we have a lost generation of young black people who are just turned off by the business," says Alex Askew, president and co-founder of the Black Culinarian Alliance, a 13-year-old networking and mentoring organization based in Harlem, N.Y. "So if we are not attached to the history, we lose the vision of the future.

"It's almost as if the younger generation of black Americans do not see themselves attached to a bigger mass of people who fought and achieved something."

Askew will be one of several panelists scheduled to examine the broader social and economic ills that are undermining the ability of many black men to achieve success at an upcoming conference to be held at Princeton University early next year.

Part of the problem in attracting black men to the midscale and upscale segments of the restaurant business, he argues, is a lack of black role models.

"This is why at our annual awards dinner, we honor people like [the late] Edna Lewis or Leah Chase or Jefferson Evans, the first black man to graduate from the CIA, in 1941, and who we have named an annual award after," Askew says.



In 1941, Jefferson Evans became the first black man to graduate from The Culinary Institute of America.

"Why no mainstream restaurant company or food company has not snatched him up to promote this industry or black people's contributions to it boggles my mind."

## Dire straits

However, the Urban League and Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Ohio State universities recently have produced separate studies that suggest that promoting meaningful role models in foodservice — or any other business outside of sports and entertainment — is useless when so many black men and black youths are following a self-destructive lifestyle.

Among the conclusions in the studies: 50 percent of native-born black men between the ages of 16 and 62 are unemployed in the nation's biggest cities; more black men are in prison cells than in college classrooms; and, on any given day, a quarter of all black

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**“We have a lost generation of young black people who are turned off by the business. So if we are not attached to the history, we lose the vision of the future.” — ALEX ASKEW, PRESIDENT & CO-FOUNDER, BLACK CULINARIAN ALLIANCE**

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men are either in jail or on probation or parole.

As an editorial in *The New York Times* put it in assessing the data: “Finishing high school is the exception, legal work is scarcer than ever, and prison is almost routine, with incarceration rates climbing for blacks even as urban crime rates have declined.”

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports in its population survey for 2005 that of the 12.5 million people employed in “food services and drinking places” in 2005, 817,000 were blacks, up 6.3 percent over the 768,000 black foodservice workers in 2000.

Black males held about 391,000 foodservice jobs in 2005, a 9-percent increase from 2000, but still made up only 3 percent of the total number of persons employed in the industry.

By contrast, Hispanics — the nation’s largest minority group — held 1.5 million foodservice jobs in 2005, up 25 percent from the 1.2 million jobs they held in foodservice in 2000. Hispanic males held about

911,000 jobs — significantly outnumbering those held by black males.

What the restaurant industry — especially in the full-service side of the business — can do to offset the dire condition of native-born, black American males has become a topic of discussion with few proposed solutions.

“I know there are going to be a lot of people who don’t want to hear me say this, and I’m going to get some letters, but I think this industry just does not do enough to promote itself as a good career option in general — and we certainly don’t do it towards blacks,” says Gerry Fernandez, president and co-founder of the Multicultural Foodservice and Hospitality Alliance, a widely supported Providence, R.I.-based advocacy group promoting diversity in the foodservice industry.

“Black Americans have made incredible strides in other businesses and fields like sports, entertainment, various corporate fields,” he continues. “But



**Gerry Fernandez, president of the Multicultural Foodservice and Hospitality Alliance, says the industry could do more to promote careers in full-service restaurants as a good option for black Americans.**

somehow the message out there that most of our kids get is that it is not cool to work in a restaurant.”

While no one discounts the impressive career gains of a growing number of black executive chefs, chef-owners and entrepreneurs, like Marcus

Samuelsson, Robert Gatsby, André Halston, Jeff Henderson and several others, critics say too few black men are demonstrating that they can make it in fine dining for it to be of consequence.

Even though the first name many speak when pointing to black success in fine dining is the Ethiopian-born, Swedish-reared Samuelsson, the award-winning celebrity chef-owner of *Aquavit* in New York, others see his career as an exception not likely to be duplicated by other black men in this generation.

Jessica Harris, a culinary educator, lecturer and author of nine cookbooks, including one with Edna Lewis, an influential black chef who specialized in Southern cuisine, says that, in the past 50 years, there have been only three or four blacks of either sex who made it far enough in fine dining to even approach role-model status.

She says the irony in the discussion about the shortage of black men in fine dining is that, historically, whether blacks were forced into or naturally gravitated to cooking, farming and hospitality for survival’s sake, generations worked in those arenas.

“African-American men and women come out of a tradition and history of enslavement in this hemisphere,” she says. “With centuries of forced servitude it is not necessarily a given that you want to go into a service industry, and the culinary industry is a service industry. Even today, few middle- to upper-class African-Americans want to say, ‘My son is a chef.’”

“And then, what celebrity chefs are there besides Marcus Samuelsson? And sad to say, he is not a role model for young black men. I would opine that he is not someone who speaks their language.”

### Enduring prejudice

“There is plenty of blame to go around, and, I hate to say it, but we, black Americans, are just as guilty for the state of affairs as anyone or anything else,” says Mitchell Glover, a Howard University Ph.D. candidate whose dissertation will examine the rise and disappearance of black labor in the evolution of America’s dominance in foodservice and food processing.

Racial prejudice, Glover suggests, remains a  
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Alex Askew, president and co-founder of the Black Culinarian Alliance, argues that a lack of black role models is to blame for the relative scarcity of black men in full-service restaurants.



**“Somehow the message out there that most of our kids get is that it is not cool to work in a restaurant.”** — GERRY FERNANDEZ, CO-FOUNDER & PRESIDENT, MULTICULTURAL FOODSERVICE AND HOSPITALITY ALLIANCE

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daunting disincentive to pursue a foodservice career.

“Just like there are private golf clubs today in the United States where the only way Tiger Woods would get in is if he shined shoes, cut grass or agreed to caddy, there are posh, three- and four-star restaurants in every major city of this nation that will never, ever hire a qualified black male if the job involves handling customers or handling food,” he says. “And yet, that’s the least of our problems.”

Kevin Scott, a self-taught cook, wine connoisseur and commercial kitchen equipment consultant who owns and operates Clean Plates, a New York City-based private firm that specializes in new American cuisine, agrees, saying that prejudice against black employees and black customers is rife in fine dining.

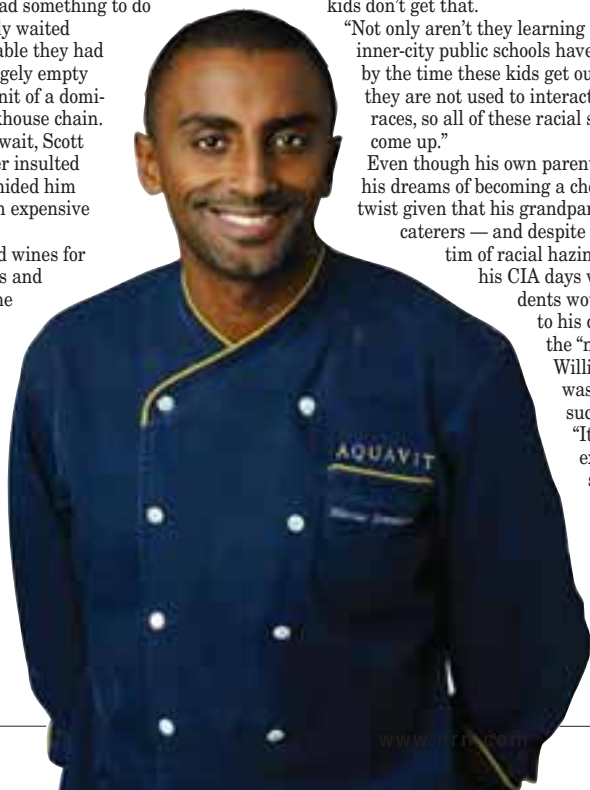
Scott, who has cooked for private parties for high-profile business executives, Hollywood celebrities and other prominent lovers of fine dining, says that it is not uncommon for him to bid on a job or audition for work and be asked by catering contractors such insulting questions as “How did you get so articulate?” “How do I know you can cook all of this?” and “How do you people learn so much about food?”

Scott says such encounters are bad enough when they occur among professionals, but when they happen to black consumers, the net effect can be to turn people away from the industry.

Scott recalls an incident when he sensed that race had something to do with why his family waited 40 minutes for a table they had reserved in the largely empty dining room of a unit of a dominant upscale steakhouse chain. Frustrated by the wait, Scott says he was further insulted when a waitress chided him after he ordered an expensive bottle of wine.

“I have collected wines for more than 30 years and am an expert on the subject, especially American and New World wines,” he says. “I ordered a 2000 Phelps

The celebrity chef-owner of Aquavit in New York, Marcus Samuelsson, is one of far too few black role models in the full-service segment, some say.



Insignia, and the waitress says to me, ‘Sir, you know that bottle costs \$140?’

“I told her that I had the same wine in my personal collection, and despite the 2.5-times markup that most restaurants pass on to customers, I was more than aware of what the [expletive] wine cost.”

### Plenty of blame

Troy Williams, a Culinary Institute of America graduate, general manager for Sodexo at Laurel Regional Hospital in Laurel, Md., and a Washington, D.C., coordinator for Careers through Culinary Arts Program, or C-CAP — a national school-to-work culinary program for disadvantaged youths — argues that closed-mindedness among black males does far more harm to keep them out of the restaurant business than racism does.

An isolationist street culture that affects communication skills and harbors outdated stereotypes about the nature of restaurant work have poisoned the image of the industry for a generation of black men, Williams says.

“When I went to the CIA I was shell-shocked,” he says. “I was one of nine blacks in a school of 2,000, but I knew I had to succeed and excel. Most of our kids don’t get that.”

“Not only aren’t they learning anything, but inner-city public schools have no diversity, so by the time these kids get out, or drop out, they are not used to interacting with other races, so all of these racial stereotypes come up.”

Even though his own parents discouraged his dreams of becoming a chef — an ironic twist given that his grandparents were caterers — and despite being the victim of racial hazing throughout



his CIA days when other students would paste paper to his dorm door with the “n-word” on it, Williams says he was determined to succeed.

“It’s hard to explain, but somehow I gained more respect for the industry and wanted to be part of it even more going through those experi-

ences,” he says. “Now when I go to the director meetings in these real, formal corporate environments, I’m totally comfortable despite being the only black in the room.”

But Williams says the restaurant industry is not for every black man. “I don’t think a lot of brothers can take a French guy yelling at them all day,” he says. “A lot of African-American men are bullheaded, and

they are just not going to take the hazing the industry practices.”

The stereotype that black men cannot be supervised and are easy to anger is one reason Hispanics outnumber them in foodservice jobs in the front- and back-of-the-house, many industry observers contend.

Fernandez of the MFHA argues that native-born black men believe they don’t have to work as hard as immigrants.

“All immigrants display that first-generation attitude: Bust your ass, work hard, send some money home,” he says. “Just being on American soil is a victory. Few black men will see it that way.”

“But Hispanics are not victims of American culture yet,” he continues. “They know that nothing is going to come easy to them. Getting an unemployment check, welfare or food stamps is not a goal for them the way it might be for some black men, who think they are beating the system or something.”

Even more of a turn-off, however, Fernandez says, is that the restaurant industry’s relentless opposition to minimum wage increases does not go unnoticed by black people.

“Everybody knows what the industry is against, but what are we for?” he asks.

Richard Grausman, the founder and president of C-CAP, who is to be honored by *Ebony*, a lifestyle magazine targeted to black Americans, in a swanky but private celebration of black contributions to the culinary arts, says that black public school administrators are just as bad as some parents when it comes to dissuading black men from the industry.

“They turn the students’ focus away from the service industries, especially hospitality,” Grausman says. “For those educators that do not support the industry’s efforts, their message has been, ‘If you stay in school, you won’t have to start at the bottom where the immigrant labor starts.’

“The message should be, ‘Stay in school, and although you will have to start at the bottom as everyone should, because of your education, you will not have to stay in an entry-level position for long.’”

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