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Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg Presents “Simmer & Sift” *A Culinary Experience to Enjoy All Summer Long!*

ST. PETERSBURG, FLA (Revised July 7, 2017). -- Treat your taste buds to a culinary masterpiece with the new “**Simmer & Sift**” four-part series at the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg. Beginning June 28, you can enjoy flavor-filled food tastings, signature drinks, and live demonstrations by four of Florida’s most seasoned chefs, including The Reading Room’s Lauren Macellaro and Norman Van Aken, the “Walt Whitman of American Cuisine.” A brief Q&A session will follow each delectable demonstration.

In August and September, **Simmer & Sift** will feature presentations on Florida cuisine by award-winning historian Gary Mormino. Dr. Mormino has served as a professor of history at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg and was named the 2003 Humanist of the Year by the Florida Humanities Council. In August, he will discuss the “Foodways of Ybor City” and explore the “Ten Foods that Define Modern Florida” in September.

Sponsored by AARP Tampa Bay, **Simmer & Sift** kicks off on June 28 with the sumptuous seafood fare of Kenny Tufo, the executive chef of *Sea Salt*. Tufo, whose culinary career spans over two decades, has worked alongside the talents of Gordon Hammersly, Scott Bryan, and Daniel Boulud and has cooked at New York’s legendary James Beard House.

Lauren Macellaro, the executive chef of *The Reading Room*, will bring her garden-grown demonstration to the MFA on July 26. A New York native, Macellaro attended the Institute of Culinary Education and served as sous chef for both Cucina 24 and the Locale Market before taking her talents to The Reading Room.

Dual restaurant-owner Greg Baker will present his old Florida-inspired demonstration on August 23. Baker, the chef-owner of Tampa’s *The Refinery* and *Fodder & Shine*, trained at Portland’s Western Culinary Institute and is passionate about Florida cuisine and maintaining partnerships with farmers. He was included in a cookbook by Chef Mario Batali and has been recognized in *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *Bon Appetit* and *Edible Tampa Bay*.

Simmer & Sift would not be complete without Chef Norman Van Aken’s program on September 27. He is the executive chef-owner of 1921 by Norman Van Aken and a James Beard semifinalist. He has been called “the culinary Titan of Florida” and is one of the founders of New American Cuisine. Van Aken has been featured everywhere from *Jimmy Kimmel Live* to *The New York Times* and has published five cookbooks. A book-signing will follow his demonstration. Chef Van Aken is coming to us representing his new restaurant *1921 by Norman Van Aken* in Mount Dora and his new cookbook “Norman Van Aken’s Florida Kitchen.”

Providing product for Van Aken's demonstration is Uriah's Urban Farms. Founded in January 2012 by Farmer Dave Smiles, Uriah's Urban Farms is a visionary and innovative pioneer of the United States in-door vertical farming industry. Uriah's leadership has decades of practical expertise in controlled environment agriculture, technology manufacturing and global food systems and has relentlessly pursued optimizing cultivation systems and processes to safely, efficiently and responsibly grow premier quality, nutrient dense leafy greens and herbs.

Tickets are available for \$40 per demonstration for MFA members and \$50 for non-members. Space is limited, so reserve your spot today by visiting mfastpete.org/simmerandsift or calling 727.896.2667, ext. 210. Programs begin at 6 pm. For more information and event updates, please visit us on Facebook.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA - The MFA at 255 Beach Drive N.E. has a world-class collection, with works by Monet, Morisot, Rodin, O'Keeffe, Willem de Kooning, and many other great artists. Also displayed are ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian, and Native American art. Selections from the photography collection, one of the largest and finest in the Southeast, are now on view in a gallery dedicated to the medium. **Kristen A. Shepherd** is the new Executive Director.

Hours are 10 am - 5 pm Monday-Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, until 8 pm on Thursday, and noon - 5 pm Sunday. **Admission is only \$5 after 5 pm on Thursday.** Regular admission is \$17 for adults, \$15 for those 65 and older, and \$10 for students seven and older, including college students with current I.D. Children under seven and Museum members are admitted free. Groups of 10 or more adults pay only \$12 per person and children \$4 each with prior reservations. The MFA Café is open from 11 am -3 pm Tuesday-Sunday. For more information, please call 727.896.2667 or visit mfastpete.org.

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