

Jacksonville chef in spotlight at Epcot fest

The edible Epcot

Disney kicked off its Epcot International Food and Wine Festival last Saturday with a grand tasting in the park's Odyssey venue. There were a number of well-known chefs from around the country as well as some of WDW's star culinarians cooking up some pretty tasty tidbits. Celebrity chefs Bobby Flay of New York's **Mesa Grill** and Rick Bayless of **Fronterra Grill** in Chicago were on hand. Francois Payard of **Payard Patisserie** in New York, said to be the most Frenchlike patisserie in the city, served dark chocolate phyllo with milk chocolate mousse and praline rice crispy (as opposed to a Rice Krispie). It was heavenly and ran out before the event was over. Another dessert — a tuile cookie ashtray with a brandy chocolate cigar from Lothar Neumaier of the Epcot events office — was also quite good, but who wants

to eat out of an ashtray?

The celebrity chefs' food was good but nothing to make you want to hop on a plane. The Disney chefs turned out some fine eats, especially **California Grill's** Cliff Pleau, whose root vegetable risotto had people lining up down an entire wall. Pauli Millote of the **Yacht & Beach Club Resort** had a delicious crab and langostino cake, and **Citrico's** chef Roland Muller did a mean braised veal shank with creamy polenta.

But it was Tom Gray of **Bistro Aix** in Jacksonville (!) who blew everyone away with his pan-seared halibut with celeriac puree and sauce barigoule, a broth made with artichoke, fish stock, white wine and sweet carrots. It was wonderful, and it did make me want to hop on I-4 and steer the Houndmobile to Jacksonville to check out the rest of the menu.

In case you get there before I do, you'll find **Bistro Aix**, which has been open just a little over a year, at 1440 San Marco Blvd., Jacksonville. The phone number is 904-398-1949.