

TCBMag.com  
JULY 2009

# Twin Cities BUSINESS

## 2009 MINNESOTA BUSINESS HALL OF FAME™



**Honoring Five Lifetimes of Achievement**

From left to right:

**Viet Ngo**

**Dennis Frandsen**

**Edward Jay Phillips**

**Michael Fiterman**

**Carl Platou**



# Dining

by ANN BAUER

## The Saffron at Saffron

A golden thread ties the menu together.

To name a restaurant Saffron is to conjure associations of the rare and precious. Like natural pearls and golden caviar, saffron is expensive—about \$150 an ounce.

But the name also is an apt signifier of Mediterranean cuisines. A few diligent farmers in Pennsylvania have managed to cultivate saffron, but the vast majority

(and the finest grade) comes from the Mediterranean, where clay-rich soil and generous rainfall create the perfect environment. That's why brothers Saed and Sameh Wadi—born in Kuwait of Palestinian descent and displaced to the United States by the first Gulf War—chose the name Saffron when they opened their restaurant in 2007.

"Every country we draw from uses saffron one way or another," says Sameh, executive chef at Saffron.

Extracted from the stigmas of the flower *Crocus Sativus*, saffron has a vibrant red color that lightens to orangey yellow when cooked. It tastes like bitter oil, red pepper, and fresh meadow grass. It's been used historically as a hangover cure, a poison, an aphrodisiac, and a digestive.

The Wadi brothers use it in roughly half the items on their monthly-changing menu, a fusion of North African, Spanish, and Middle Eastern cuisine. Saffron serves *tagine*, *tabbouleh*, and *bisteeya* but mixes ingredients from different regions: A dish traditionally made with lamb might use tuna steak; a Hudson



Left: Saed and Sameh Wadi. Above: The grassy, pleasant bitterness of saffron infuses a seafood tagine.



### Saffron Restaurant & Lounge

612-746-8533

[saffronmpls.com](http://saffronmpls.com)

123 N. 3rd St.

Minneapolis

## Small Bites

○ Loring Park gets a new restaurant in August when **Birch's** of Long Lake opens a second location in the redeveloped Eitel Hospital building, now the **Eitel Building Apartments**. The restaurant and bar will feature a four-season patio overlooking the park.

○ The former J. P.'s American Bistro site on Lyndale Avenue South in Minneapolis is being redeveloped by first-time restaurateur **Gene Suh**. No name for the place yet in early June, but it will open in late August. It and the Birch's project are both being designed by Minneapolis-based **Shea, Inc.** —D. L.

Valley foie gras will be topped with medjool dates.

For those who simply love the spice, certain saffron-tinged items are always available. The Saffron Rose martini, for instance: a blend of Sapphire gin, orange blossom water, saffron, and sparkling rosé that is pleasantly bitter, bubbly, and fruity but not sweet.

The most popular entrée—and my favorite of all the wonderful things I tried—is the salmon and clam tagine, which Saed, who manages the restaurant, assures will remain on the menu for as long as customers continue to request it. There's something bouillabaisse-like about the combination of fish and other seafood, but it sits on a bed of olives, peppers, fennel, and potatoes with a scant saffron broth.

And somehow in this dish, the bitterness of the saffron softens. It blends with the juices and loses its strong edges to become smooth, savory, and rich.

---

## Arts Picks

by CAMILLE LEFEVRE

### Code Talkers

✿ During World War I and World War II, the United States secured a significant advantage when Native American soldiers transmitted tactical information encoded in versions of their native languages. The soldiers became known as “code talkers,” whose ingenious work proved indecipherable to the enemy. A traveling exhibition from the Smithsonian Institution, *Native Words, Native Warriors*, presents code descriptions, battlefield experiences, and oral histories to recreate the excitement generated by the code talkers' success, and their relief at no longer enduring punishment for speaking their native languages. Through August 23, \$5–\$10 museum admission, Minnesota History Center, St. Paul, 651-259-3000, [mnhs.org](http://mnhs.org).



---

### Clued In

**News producer Julie Kramer draws on her career to flavor her mysteries.**

Investigative reporter Riley Spartz is a work of fiction. Her creator, Julie Kramer, is for real—a longtime journalist and producer of investigative reports for WCCO-TV news in the 1980s and '90s, and more recently a stringer for NBC's *Today*, *Nightly News*, and *Dateline*.

Kramer sends Spartz off on a new assignment in *Missing Mark*, her second mystery novel, scheduled for release July 14 by Doubleday. Through Spartz, she takes readers inside the tensions of the TV newsroom.

After a career that's included breaking the story of 9/11's “20th hijacker,” Zacharias Moussaoui, and getting NBC the first interview with the family of Flight 93 hero Tom Burnett, “writing is easy for me,” Kramer says. “I spent years telling stories, working with pacing and language, interviewing people, many on the best or worst days of their lives—I think that gave me an ear for dialogue.” —Merle Minda



Julie Kramer's debut novel, *Stalking Susan*, took the top prize for genre fiction at the Minnesota Book Awards in April. She's making it a series with the release of *Missing Mark* in July.

