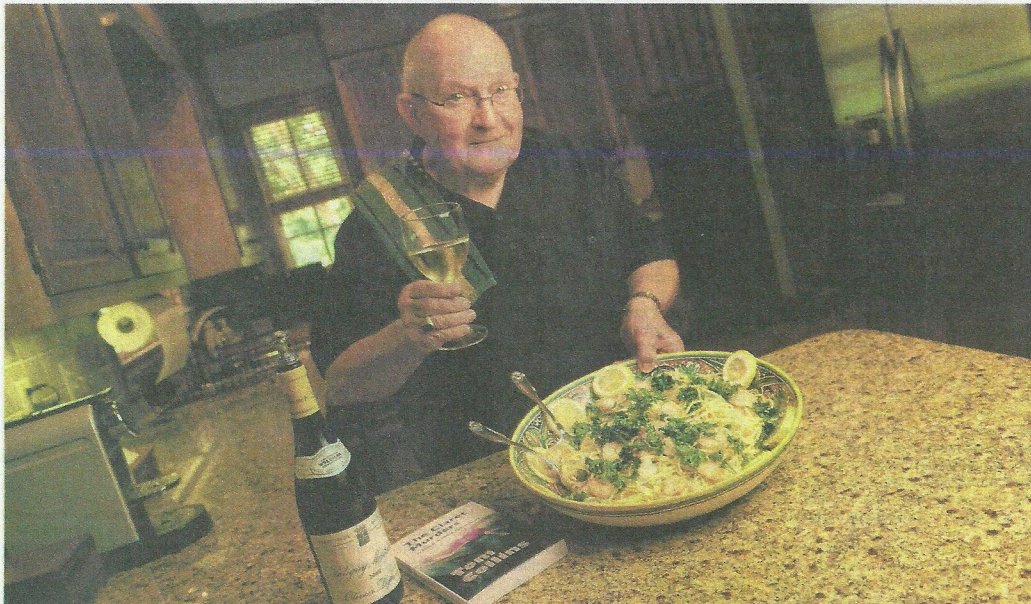


ABOUT TOWN



Tom Collins is a retired business man turned mystery writer and wine collector who now adds cook to his resume as he makes shrimp scampi at his Franklin home. PHOTOS BY SAMUEL M. SIMPKINS / THE TENNESSEAN

WHERE TO FIND THE BOOKS

Collins' books can be purchased on his website, www.markrollinsadventures.com, or through amazon.com and at Barnes and Noble. Ebook editions for iPad, Kindle and Nook are also available.



Shrimp scampi, garnished with lemon and parsley, is the type of simple meal Collins likes to prepare.

SHRIMP SCAMPI

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 pound peeled and deveined large shrimp
- 4-5 garlic cloves depending on size, minced
- ¼ teaspoon dried hot red-pepper flakes
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 5 tablespoons butter
- ¾ pound pasta
- ½ cup chopped fresh parsley

Cook pasta in salted boiling water until just tender, the way you like it. Save about a cup of the pasta water before draining.

Sauté shrimp in oil, turning over once, about 2 minutes, and transfer the shrimp to a large serving bowl. Add garlic to remaining oil, add wine, salt, pepper and red-pepper flakes. Cook over high heat, stirring, for about a minute. Add butter to skillet and stir in shrimp after the butter melts. The pasta should be ready at this time. Toss pasta well with the shrimp mixture and transfer to large serving bowl. Add parsley and, if needed, some of the reserved cooking water to keep moist.

TOM'S GRILLED MARINATED FLANK STEAK

Marinade

Combine equal parts soy sauce, oil and lemon juice. Add ginger and onion powder (garlic optional).

Horseradish Sauce

Combine horseradish, mayonnaise and a little cream. Adjust for taste and garnish with paprika

Marinate steak for 24 hours.

Grill time will depend on thickness of the flank steak. Start with three minutes on one side and eight on the second side. Adjust if needed, but do not overcook. Let the steaks completely cool before cutting. This is great served cold or at room temperature. It must be sliced thinly across the grain. Serve with horseradish sauce.

Food, wine and travel

Tom Collins cooks to balance years of meals by his spouse

By Vicki Stout
For Williamson A.M.

FRANKLIN — Tom Collins is an epicurean, world traveler, wine collector, at-home chef and a retired businessman who has turned author.

Founder and chief executive officer of Juris, a firm that designs computer software for law firms, the Franklin resident sold the company in 2007.

"My wife, Martha, said, 'So what are you going to do

now?' Since I was retiring from business, she pretty well retired from the kitchen, and I've taken over most of the cooking here at home," he said.

A mystery writer, he has just published his fourth book, *The Claret Murders*. Set in Nashville during the flood of 2010, he weaves his mystery through murky waters and a just discovered wine cellar filled with first-growth French wines.

His four books feature a central character, Mark

Rollins, a wealthy retired high-tech entrepreneur who is well connected to important people here and abroad and who has turned part-time sleuth. The guy also knows his way around a wine cellar.

"In my business career, I traveled extensively. There were a lot of airports—a lot of bookstores where I picked up reading material for flights. I tended toward mysteries. After I retired, I thought, 'Well, I could write books like that.'

So, I set out to do it," he said.

Each of the four books features fine food and wines. And each ends with a wrap-up dinner by Rollins and cohorts at Sperry's in Belle Meade.

The author and his wife dine out often, and some of their favorite eateries end up in his self-published books.

Among his local favorites are Bricktops on West End Avenue in Nashville, the Hermitage Hotel, Bricks and Kalamatas in Brentwood, The Wild Iris, The Yellow Porch, Whitfield's and Antonio's.

Once out of our domain, he loves Bouley, a French restaurant in New York; the Cheese Cake Factory at Marina Del Rey, the Ivey in Los Angeles, Sears on San Francisco Street in San Francisco, Harry Caray's in Chicago and a cast of favorites in Paris, Rome and Istanbul.

Among his favorite chefs are Jim Botsacos, Todd English and Nancy Oakes.

Simple fare

So what does an epicurean, wine collector and author stir up in his own kitchen?

"Actually, I do relatively simple fare. I do cook most evenings; Martha's off that hook since she cooked all those years I was in the world of business. I would never describe myself as a gourmet cook. I do enjoy preparing classic dishes like Steak Diane. And I do make a mean meat

loaf," he laughed.

He has a catfish pond on his property, so sometimes not only does he prepare dinner—he also catches it.

"We love Italian dishes, and I do a great beef tenderloin with homemade béarnaise sauce. I usually also make horseradish sauce as a backup in case the béarnaise goes awry," said the author.

When the couple entertains, he plans do-ahead menus.

"I like to do a flank steak because it can be served at room temperature; salmon since it can be served hot or cold and salads such as tortellini, which can also be made ahead," he said.

While his name conjures up that classic cocktail, a Tom Collins, his tastes run more to French and California wines. He collects mostly from wineries he visits in California and in France.

"Now, we did recently celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary. We had Sargent's cater it ... and we did serve Tom Collins cocktails," he laughed.

With four books under his belt, or apron as it may be, he's already looking ahead to penning his next mystery.

I was 66 when I started writing, so there's not a lot of time to lounge around between books," he said. "I keep plugging away, hoping they will go viral and someone like Clint Eastwood will knock on the door to play Mark Rollins in a film."

"I love living here. I have a wonderful feeling of freedom and I'm well taken care of. I love that if I ever need anything all I have to do is pick up the phone and call!"

—Jean Whitmire



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