

## **The Gospel According to Wayne** **By Andrew Zimmern, *Mpls St. Paul Magazine*, March 2005**

**Article Summary:** Wayne Kostroski, John Dayton, and Mark Haugen are named Restaurateurs of the Year by *Mpls St. Paul Magazine*. In 1994, they formed Cuisine Concepts, which owns and operates Goodfellows, Bar Abilene, Tejas, Franklin Street Bakery, and a consulting division.

While Kostroski says Cuisine Concepts' growth and success is a group effort, Zimmern writes that Haugen and Dayton, "call Kostroski's fierce determination, marketing brilliance, and unwavering devotion to relationships the linchpin of their success." These qualities, along with Kostroski's work ethic and commitment to serve others has led to his success in the hospitality industry and the national fight to end hunger. Notable accomplishments, among others, include dozens of awards for his charitable efforts, being named the National Restaurant Association's Humanitarian of the Year, and creating the Taste of the NFL, a national hunger relief fundraiser held for the 14<sup>th</sup> time this year.

The dynamics of the partnership among Kostroski, Dayton, and Haugen has allowed the businesses of Cuisine Concepts to survive under crisis, such as the recent departure of chefs and managers of Tejas and Goodfellows on top of 3 very slow years following 9/11. Zimmern writes that faced with these challenges, "Many operators would have said, 'I've had a good run, it's time to pack it in'."

Haugen remarks about the partnership, "Our symbiosis is extraordinary. We all share the same visions and direction." Likewise, Cuisine Concepts operates according to certain shared core values. Kostroski asserts, "We are about great food first, always. We believe more and more in simplicity, and our guests have to feel better when they leave than when they came in. Our business is about experience and memory. Our guests give us their wallets and their time, so we have to deliver. We have to exceed expectations."