



MIRIAM'S KITCHEN

## In the News

# The Washington Post

### Dish

*By Tom Sietsema*

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**DIGNITY ON THE MENU:** Backstage at one of the best breakfast spots in the city, chef Steve Badt is watching over a dozen busy cooks, stopping here to admire the freshly baked raisin bread that is destined to become French toast, there to chat up a man stir-frying beef, tomatoes and potatoes for a Peruvian-style lomo saltado. It's 6:15 a.m. on a recent Tuesday — showtime is just 15 minutes away — and the line of patrons waiting for the doors to open wraps around the block.



As it has weekdays since 1983, Miriam's Kitchen, in the basement of Western Presbyterian Church on Virginia Avenue NW near 24th and G streets, is poised to serve 200 or so of the city's homeless population. Last year, with the help of 1,250 volunteers (Badt is the only paid worker), the nonprofit Foggy Bottom facility served more than 55,000 free hot meals.



Badt, who once cooked at the Tabard Inn in Dupont Circle, treats his volunteers like sous chefs and his customers like restaurant guests. "Good food isn't rocket science," he says. But his ingredients have to be prime and the food appealingly displayed. Thus the fruit bowl is fetching with pink watermelon, red apple and just-cut bananas; the sauce for the French toast uses fresh strawberries; and inspiration comes from donations from farmers markets and the cookbooks of best-selling authors that line a shelf here. (Miriam's Kitchen also allows patrons to make a phone call, pick up mail, get bus tokens and attend after-meal classes. And all the art displayed is the work of the people who eat here.)



There's a long waiting list to volunteer here, but seats are available for the charity's annual fundraiser, "100 Bowls of Compassion," scheduled for May 10 at the National Building Museum. Tickets are \$250; call 202-452-8926, Ext. 4, or go to [www.miriamskitchen.org](http://www.miriamskitchen.org). To be prepared by the volunteers at Miriam's Kitchen (I spotted Karen Hughes cutting fruit before going to work



at the State Department), this year's dinner has a South American theme. If the lomo saltado — laced with cilantro, punched up with garlic and prepared in small batches — is any indication, you'll surely want in on the feast.

There's room at our table.