



Scene Last Night: Nadal, Mardy Fish, James Blake, Gilles Simon

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by
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Aug. 27 (Bloomberg) -- "How often does New York get hit with an earthquake and a hurricane in the same week?" asked Paul Annacone, coach of No. 3 seed Roger Federer, a few days before the start of the U.S. Open in New York.

Fernando Verdasco, the 19th seed, was taking the forecast in stride.

"The tournament starts on Monday and the hurricane is this weekend," said the 27-year-old lefty, who lives in Madrid. "I think it's going to be fine."

They were among the 700 guests who turned out for the 12th annual BNP Paribas Taste of Tennis, which featured 28 chefs serving dishes in a maze of banquet rooms at the W New York Hotel in Manhattan. The event this year benefited the New York Junior Tennis League, which provides free tennis lessons for 100,000 children.

Defending champion Rafael Nadal walked the red carpet. Frenchman Gilles Simon sampled a mini venison burger from the Nolita eatery Public. Serbian tennis player Bjoana Jovanovski helped Boqueria's chef, Marc Vidal, garnish plates of tomato, goat cheese and basil salad. James Blake of the U.S. made a toast.

Chef Michelle Bernstein of the Miami restaurants Michy's and Sra. Martinez dispensed sauteed shrimp with pineapple, chilies and rum -- and advice on hurricane preparedness.

"Make sure you have lots of water and gas for the grill because you can cook anything on it," she said. "And bug repellent. I've never seen so many mosquitoes as after a hurricane."

The Meatball Shop, with outposts on the Lower East Side and in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, is selling a hurricane preparedness kit -- a bucket of 25 meatballs for \$35.

Feeding Four

"If you're frugal, a family of four could feed on that until the power comes back on," said Daniel Holzman, the shop's executive chef and co-owner.

Mardy Fish, the top-ranked American tennis player, attended the benefit but abstained from the tastings, passing up zucchini and mint-stuffed squash blossoms from BLT Bar & Grill, beef short ribs from STK and a slice of The Best Chocolate Cake in the World.

"I had a Cobb salad for dinner, with balsamic dressing on the side," Fish said.

Fish said his switch to a low-fat diet after knee surgery in 2009 helped him lose 30 pounds (to 180 pounds, or 82 kilograms) and propel him from a ranking as high as 108 in January 2010 to No. 8 seed at the Open. He said he now rarely eats dessert.

"I intend to make up for it when I retire," said Fish, who turns 30 on Sept. 12.

Tuna for Fish

As a line formed for guests to collect goody bags filled with tennis balls, Fish slipped into a side room to announce an endorsement deal with closely held Bumble Bee Foods LLC. It involves chef Scott Leibfried and promoting better nutrition.

Does the appropriately named Fish eat Bumble Bee tuna as part of his diet?

"I do now," he said with a smile.

(Amanda Gordon and Philip Boroff are writers and photographers for Muse, the arts and leisure section of Bloomberg News. Any opinions expressed are their own.)

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