



Ideas and Insights for Full-Service Restaurants | July 2, 2014

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Olive Garden's Garlic Rosemary Chicken OLIVE GARDEN

Rising stars from big cities to Middle America.

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Forty names you may not know, but FSR Rising Stars are making a significant impact on their companies and communities as they introduce innovation, creativity, and dedication to their restaurant operations, food and beverage menus, and dining experiences.

From all walks of the full-service restaurant industry, these rising stars are people you will want to take note of and visit when you're in their neighborhoods. You'll meet big-city chefs—like Marjorie Meek-Bradley, the 29-year-old executive chef who worked in leading restaurants coast-to-coast before landing at Ripple in Washington, and chef Zack Sklar, 28, who is helping create jobs and open new restaurants in his hard-hit hometown of Detroit. There are plenty of folks from Middle America as well—independent operators who are helping small towns turn around, entrepreneurs expanding franchise opportunities, leaders at fast-tracking regional restaurant groups, and key executives in national chains who are bringing healthier menus and greater efficiencies to restaurants across the country—like Cheryl Dolven, who is helping to bring healthier dishes to the 425 million guests that Darden Restaurants serves each year.

Cheryl Dolven, M.S., R.D.

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Age 39

Director of Health & Wellness

Darden Restaurants

When Darden Restaurants—the largest restaurant company in the U.S. with sales topping \$8.5 billion in its 2013 fiscal year—made a commitment to bring healthier menu options to its more than 2,000

restaurant locations, the company tapped a nutrition expert and registered dietitian to lead the charge.

Cheryl Dolven joined Darden in April 2011 as the company’s director of health and wellness, having served previously as the director of nutrition marketing for the Kellogg Company and as corporate dietitian for two supermarket companies.

Five months later, Darden announced it would reduce calories and sodium across its entire portfolio, while also bringing healthier options to its children’s menus. Almost immediately, Dolven says, “The commitment to lower sodium and calories changed the culinary conversation at Darden.

“We put nutrition into the conversation—across all levels of the organization, and it’s a big change,” she says. “The conversation is about transparency, choice, variety, and innovation. It’s about making positive social changes.”

Darden’s commitment to bring health and wellness to its menus started in the C-level suite, and was born out of a commitment to be a company that makes a difference. “Reducing sodium and calorie measures are important, but what’s exciting to me,” says Dolven, “is the change it has created within the organization. Now we’re talking about nutrition in conversations where before we might only have talked about cost or quality.”

Dolven leads a team of five people that does nutritional analysis for all the Darden brands to make sure guests have the options and information they need to make decisions that are right for them. “We work across the organization with the supply chain group, the culinary team, and the marketing and communications departments to bring healthier menus to our guests.”



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But encouraging healthier eating habits, while enticing diners to enjoy their special eating-out occasions, is not an easy change.

One of the most obvious hurdles, Dolven notes, was determining whether customers would want healthier options.

“Casual dining isn’t an everyday event, and indulgent menu options have a higher preference rate,” she explains. “Many customers splurge on calories when they dine out.”

She set out to learn what customers really want, and discovered, “people want to be healthier, but they want options so they can balance choices in their own way.”

According to her research, an estimated 80 percent of diners want healthy options on the menu. To meet this demand, Darden restaurants began making changes. Olive Garden brought a “Lighter Italian Fare” section to its menu with all items 575 calories or less, and LongHorn Steakhouse showcases low-calorie dishes as “Flavorful Under 500.” All of these dishes are healthier, but still align with the flavor profiles the restaurants are known for.

While the commitment is the same across the company, every brand has its own challenges and its own starting place. “There are a lot of different ways we can shift our footprint—we can lower calories and sodium by what we add to the menu, what we take off the menu, or what we reformulate,” she says. “But we try to limit the amount of reformulation that we do because altering something our guests already know and love can be tricky.”

As a logical first step, Darden identified ingredients that drive the most sodium or most calories. “For Olive Garden, we picked three or four sauces that were used in a lot of menu items, and we knew if we could reduce sodium or calories in those sauces, then we could impact a lot of menu items. Then we did the same thing across all our brands to determine where we would prioritize reformulation,” says Dolven.

Already, Darden has made sweeping changes—introducing more teas to beverage menus in an effort to counter sugary soft drinks, adding skinny cocktails to the adult beverage menu, and making perhaps the strongest statement on its children’s menus, which no longer feature soft drinks as a visible option. Low-fat milk is now the default drink on Darden children’s menus, soft drinks are available by request, and fruits and vegetables have become the default sides.

Going forward, all the Darden brands have a handful of ingredients that they are looking to reformulate, specifically as it relates to sodium. “To lower the amount of sodium in what we put on our plates, we have to lower the sodium in the ingredients that we purchase, which is more difficult with sodium because it has functionality in food beyond taste,” says Dolven. “We have to work all the way back to the manufacturers to change some of the ingredients we purchase, but our suppliers have been incredible partners in this journey.”

The company is also spending more time on new development and putting processes in place to think more proactively about the nutrition of each dish. “We’ve built our team and introduced a whole new approach to nutritional analysis,” says Dolven, referring to the implementation of ESHA Genesis, a software widely used in the foodservice industry. “We’ve invested in the right tools and the right talent so our chefs will have an understanding of sodium and calorie counts while they are developing dishes, rather than waiting until the end of the development process.”

The new approach has effectively built an infrastructure that ensures Darden can meet the growing need for transparency dictated by new regulations for nutritional information on menus and a heightened awareness of meeting special dietary needs such as gluten-free requirements. But Darden continues to stretch its commitment to healthy menus far beyond the “must do’s.”

Dolven says she is planning to lead a portfolio-wide pantry review to further scrutinize ingredients, which may lead to more definition around nutritional targets for future innovation.

As for meeting the commitment pledged in 2011, Dolven says the company is making great progress, working against baseline measures established in 2010. The first goal called for 10 percent reductions in sodium and calories by 2016, followed by a 10-year goal that would reduce Darden’s sodium and calorie footprint by a total of 20 percent by 2021.

“This will be a continuing effort for us as we identify future opportunities for health and wellness,” concludes Dolven, who doesn’t believe in limiting what she can eat in her personal life. “I focus on what I should be eating instead of what I can’t eat, and when I’ve eaten the healthy servings I need, suddenly I’m full.”



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James Ablett

Age 35

Chef de Cuisine

Taste

In Plymouth, California, population 1,000, chef James Ablett serves more than that in a busy week at Taste.

Located in the wine-rich Sierra foothills, Ablett has matched the innovative spirit of more than 50 local wineries to create wine-friendly dishes that are the talk of the town—and beyond. In fact, Zagat recently tabbed Taste as Sacramento's Best Restaurant, an intriguing accolade given Taste's location 40 miles from California's capital city.

"I'm blessed to have the freedom to be creative," says Ablett, now in his third year at Taste.

Ablett's latest passion has been tending to Taste's 60-by-60-foot garden, where he grows tomatoes, squash, and other produce that he can weave into his imaginative dishes.

"Having a garden gives our team a sense of pride and immense care for what hits our guests' plates," he says.

Jeb Aldrich

Age 31

Chef de Cuisine

4th & Swift

In one of the South's up-and-coming hot spots, 4th & Swift Chef de Cuisine Jeb Aldrich has accomplished much at an early stage in his career—in large part due to the guidance of his father. Absorbed in the industry since he was 16 years old, Aldrich worked in a number of restaurants across the world—including Osteria del Boecc in Cantu Como, Italy; Schloss Hotel in Turracher Hohe, Austria; Peninsula Grill in Charleston,

South Carolina; and now in Atlanta under the helm of his father, Jay Swift, at 4th & Swift.

In his role as chef de cuisine, Aldrich is responsible for crafting the nationally acclaimed establishment's daily and seasonal menus, as well as tending to the on- and off-site gardens from which 4th & Swift sources many of its products. With the goal of becoming the concept's head chef, Aldrich says he looks forward to the opportunity to continue growing both his culinary skills and the family business.



Manny Arce

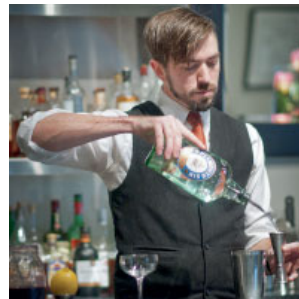
Age 32

Executive Chef

Poquitos

At Poquitos, a 244-seat Mexican restaurant and bar that opened in Seattle in March 2011, the restaurant hit an impressive \$4.5 million in sales in 2012—

with food accounting for 50 percent of the revenue. The man behind the food is Manny Arce. Through Arce's creativity, natural foods, and thoughtfully sourced produce, the restaurant has gained a huge following. Truly dedicated to his craft, he keeps costs low and his team happy. He started cooking at age 15 and was trained at Riverside Culinary Academy in California, then traveled the globe in culinary internships before settling in Seattle. When not thrilling his guests, he's out thrill seeking on his surfboard or motorcycle.



Bill Anderson

Age 28

Bar Manager

Vie

At Vie, James Beard–nominated chef Paul Virant's 10-year-old restaurant in Chicago's western suburbs, bar manager Bill Anderson extends the upscale eatery's

passion for local ingredients and complex preserves from the plate to the glass.

On any given day, Anderson ventures into Vie's canning room, plucking novel ingredients from the shelves—smoked apple butter, huckleberries, and pickled onions among the choices—and embracing the freedom to concoct novel beverages with an artisan's flair and a bartender's curiosity.

"There's a duality here that I think is rare to find," Anderson says.

"Because of the culinary philosophy at Vie, I'm able to go out and broaden our guests' horizons and palates in the same way they do in the kitchen. It's a remarkably liberating and exciting process."

Calvin Banks

Age 34

Director of Training

The Broadmoor Hotel

Calvin Banks has come a long way from his first foray into the foodservice business as an employee at quick-service chain Taco Bueno. After joining



up with Six Flags Entertainment Company for eight years and then jumping into the hotel business with Gaylord Hotels, Banks became senior training manager at Gaylord National in Washington, a four-restaurant property where he was eventually promoted to director of training. “Bringing together 2,000-plus people to open a property was a significant accomplishment,” he says of

the experience at Gaylord National.

In March 2013, Banks brought his training skills to The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs. With nine full-service restaurants at the resort—including the Penrose Room, the only five-star, five-diamond restaurant in the entire state of Colorado—Banks has his hands full with foodservice staff training throughout the hotel.

Recently Banks received his master’s degree in human resources, and he’s also the president of the Council of Hotel and Restaurant Trainers (CHART), an industry organization he’s been involved with since 2010. “I like to help people grow and develop,” he says. “I see myself continuing to be in a position where I have the opportunity to help people grow and develop.”



Connor Burke

Age 26

Beverage Director

David Burke Kitchen

Before Connor Burke joined the restaurant group headed by his father—noted New York City chef David Burke—in 2010, he asked his father if there were

any restaurant jobs he hadn’t held.

“When he said he’d never been a bartender, I knew that’s what I’d do. I figured it would entail the least amount of scrutiny,” Burke quips.

Four years later, Burke continues forging a reputation all his own, leveraging the massive innovation of craft breweries and distilleries to produce inventive, one-of-a-kind drinks at David Burke restaurants in the Northeast.

“The beverage side is the most fun aspect of the restaurant, a place where I can express myself and deliver great hospitality to guests,” says Burke, who’s leaving New York City behind this month to direct the beverage program at the newly opened David Burke Kitchen in Aspen, Colorado.



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Christine Cipullo

Age 29

owner/operator

Bacco Restaurant Group

For Christine Cipullo, restaurants have been part of her life since she started busing tables in the family business at age 10. As the family opened additional concepts throughout the Philadelphia area, Cipullo got a taste of the operations side of the business, helping her father develop and manage new units.

But it was the opening—and continued success—of Bacco Bistro nearly five years ago that Cipullo says was her crowning achievement. “It was during the economy doing so bad and everyone was saying, ‘You’re going to close,’” she says, adding she was pleased to have opened successfully despite the difficult circumstances.

In addition to her devotion to Bacco Restaurant Group’s growing number of establishments, Cipullo makes sure to squeeze in time for her volunteer work as a children’s counselor, too. “The restaurant business is what I know and what I do,” she says. “But at the end of the day, caring for troubled kids is one of the [most important] things I love to do.”

Scott Craig

Age 36

Chef

Myers Park Country Club

At the platinum-ranked Myers Park Country Club, a sprawling 84-year-old private enclave in Charlotte, North Carolina, chef Scott Craig manages five kitchens, a staff of 52 culinary professionals, five dining outlets, and multiple banquet functions.

Last year he was one of six Americans to win a coveted gold medal at the International Culinary Olympics in Erfurt, Germany, where 52 chefs competed for the honor. This year he will compete in the 2014 Culinary

World Cup in Luxembourg, and in the 2016 International Culinary Olympics he is slated to be an individual competitor.

A mentor to many, Chef Craig hosts student interns from Johnson and Wales University, the Art Institute of Charlotte, and Central Piedmont Community College—and is coaching multiple chefs for culinary competition, including two students who are eligible to try out for the 2016 United States Youth Culinary Olympic Team. His own education includes study at Virginia Tech, Johnson and Wales University, and the Culinary Institute of America. Chef Craig honed his talents at two clubs rated among the top 10 private clubs in the nation, Baltimore Country Club and the Chevy Chase Club.

Shaun Curtis

Age 34

COO

Buffalo's Franchise Concepts

An industry veteran with more than 20 years in the restaurant business, Shaun Curtis quickly climbed the corporate ladder at family-friendly chicken-wing chain Buffalo's Cafe. As part of the team for nearly 14 years, Curtis has held numerous positions at the company, including everything from corporate executive chef and director of R&D to vice president of brand development and, now, chief operating officer. Not to mention, he also owns his own Buffalo's Cafe unit in Loganville, Georgia.

With a major role in menu development and recipe creation for the 15-plus-unit concept, Curtis has helped turn the evolving brand into the international company it has become today, all while staying true to the wings concept.

And though he may be dedicated to the restaurant industry for the long haul, Curtis' other passion—cars—has led him to own more than 25 vehicles over his lifetime. “My family pokes fun at me that my driveway often looks like a car lot,” he says. “I’ve always thought of that as my fallback.”



Ebou Dadzie

Age 32

pastry chef

NYC Marriott Marquis

A love for baking—instilled by his grandmother—led Ebou Dadzie to realize that the foodservice industry could be his ideal career path. After working with a number of pastry chefs and completing an externship in the southwest region of France, he returned to the U.S. to work as a pastry chef at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in New York City.

Named U.S. Pastry Chef of the Year at the 2007 U.S. Pastry Competition, Dadzie was recruited by the Marriott Marquis the following year.

Though pastries are his passion, Dadzie is also dedicated to his position as adjunct professor at Monroe College, where he teaches confectionary and pastry classes. “The best thing for me now is actually bringing up the future [generation] and teaching,” he says. “Being able to see what the future is going to bring and being able to be a part of that is something

I'm enjoying a lot."

Jennifer Davis

Age 31

Director of Training

The Greene Turtle

While in college, Jennifer Davis was a server at The Greene Turtle, then a bartender, and now she is the director of training. When she started as a corporate trainer in 2007, the company didn't have any formal training in place. She spent her first six months designing and developing a training program that was implemented system-wide a year later. She has opened 33 units with The Greene Turtle. Last year, under Davis' supervision, the training program introduced all new materials, systems, and requirements—the same year that Davis gave birth to her twin boys, Blake and Brantley.

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Kristy Del Coro, R.D.

Age 30

Senior Culinary Nutritionist

Rouge Tomato

The persistence and determination that Kristy Del Coro used to hike Machu Picchu is the same mindset she carries into her work at New York City's Rouge

Tomato, one of the globe's few Michelin-starred restaurants with an in-house registered dietitian.

Since joining the Rouge Tomato team in 2011, Del Coro, an SPE Certified Culinary Nutritionist, has worked with the acclaimed eatery's culinary team to produce refined, market-driven dishes optimizing nutrition and taste.

"It can be challenging, it can be tiring, but finding that perfect balance between nutrition and taste forces us to think creatively and deliver a rich experience for our guests," says Del Coro, who calls her position at Rouge Tomato her "dream job."

"It's unusual to have this kind of philosophy, but it's incredibly rewarding when we get it right."

Gregory Ellis

Age 33

Chef and Partner

2 Sparrows

Starting his professional life as a graphic designer, chef Gregory Ellis certainly didn't take a simple path to the restaurant industry. However, he quickly discovered that his passion for cooking was the perfect way to start a second career. After graduating from culinary school, Ellis worked his way through the kitchen at Chicago's famed Charlie Trotter's, then followed his future wife to Arizona, where he worked as sous chef.

After returning to Chicago and bouncing around a number of restaurants, Ellis teamed up with a partner to open 2 Sparrows, a popular brunch spot in the Windy City. “It is the hardest mountain that I have ever climbed,” Ellis says of opening his own restaurant. “I learned so much from doing it.”

With a love for traveling out West, camping, and riding his motorcycle, Ellis has one goal for his future in the restaurant industry: “I just want to be happy,” he says. “If you’re happy, you never have to work a day in your life.”



Katie Emmerson

Age 29

Bar Manager

The Hawthorne

While pursuing a New York City career in theater, Katie Emmerson decided her true calling was behind the bar despite several successes on stage. “I come from a theater and dance background and working in the service industry was always a means to an end, but one day I picked an extra bartending shift over an audition and I knew that said something.”

And the beverage industry soon took notice of Emmerson, especially after she was recognized as one of *Beverage Media*’s 10 Mixologists to Watch.

In 2011, she joined the bartending staff at Boston’s popular enclave The Hawthorne, and has been promoted twice. The bar, which is noted for its cozy atmosphere, is widely celebrated for its specialty cocktail program and provides Emmerson the perfect stage to perfect her craft.

“There are a lot of similarities between hospitality and theater, but bartending is more interactive than musical theater, and I love making people happy.”

Meaghan Fitzgerald

Age 30

Restaurant Manager

Jacob Wirth Restaurant Company

Meaghan Fitzgerald’s life changed dramatically in 2011 when her father, the third-generation owner of Jacob Wirth, was in a devastating car accident. During his hospital stay, she worked 18-hour days to keep their 145-year-old family restaurant running smoothly. “I have not met anyone else who has shown the courage and skill it took to run the business,” says her father, Kevin Fitzgerald. And she has also taken Boston’s historic restaurant to new heights, expanding the craft beer offering on the menu and focusing more attention on the catering portion of the restaurant. She also gives to the charitable organization responsible for saving her father’s life. “I may have been able to fill my father’s shoes, but I will never fill my daughter’s,” says Kevin.

Michael Giese

Age 38

Executive Chef

Pueblo Harvest Café



As the executive chef at the Pueblo Harvest Café, located in Albuquerque, New Mexico's, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Michael Giese understands many of his diners are having their first interaction with Native American cuisine. It's a responsibility he embraces.

"I had never even dabbled in Native American food before coming here, but I jumped in and have done my best to respect traditions while bringing in a fresh spin" Giese says, pointing to the restaurant's savory deep-fried black cherry Kool-Aid pickles as one example of the restaurant's juxtaposition of tradition and creativity.

More than anything, however, Giese has created community through his food and installed a 21st century version of Pueblo hospitality with a revolving tapas menu for the restaurant's regular "Party on the Patio" events and by teaching community cooking courses and mentoring local culinary students.

"I love how food can inspire and connect people," he says.



Sam Hellman-Mass

Age 28

Chef/Partner

Barley Swine and Odd Duck

Already chef/partner at two of Austin, Texas', most-popular restaurants for foodies and cooks alike, Sam Hellman-Mass says, "I feel so lucky because the best chefs in Austin want to cook with us."

With a specialty in Texan cuisine, Barley Swine and Odd Duck source all products locally. "Both restaurants are doing great. We get inspired by all types of cuisine but because everything is local, it's truly Texan."

A partner since 2010, Hellman-Mass earned his culinary stripes cooking in Boston, Australia, and Colorado after earning a finance degree from Boston University.

"I have a real comfort with numbers, and that often allows me to look at things from a different angle," he says.

When he's not working, Hellman-Mass enjoys playing sports, exploring the competition, reading biographies, and traveling the world to experience other cuisines.



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Gavin Jobe

Age 26

General Manager

Tsunami Sushi

A foodie from the start, Gavin Jobe nabbed his first restaurant job washing dishes at age 12 and, years later, joined the team as a server at Sullivan's Steakhouse, a Del Frisco's Restaurant Group concept. Sniffing out an opportunity after the establishment's sommelier departed, Jobe took and passed the Certified Sommelier Exam, becoming sommelier for Sullivan's \$1-million-a-year, 5,000-bottle wine program.

Feeling the itch to travel, Jobe left Sullivan's and, during the summer of 2012, explored the U.S. and exotic locales in Thailand, Jamaica, and more, studying the cultures and cuisines of foreign lands. Making his way back to his home state of Louisiana, Jobe wound up at Tsunami Sushi, a Baton Rouge establishment that sits atop the Shaw Center for the Arts, overlooking downtown Baton Rouge and Louisiana State University.

Appointed general manager last summer, Jobe has guided Tsunami to its biggest sales day ever—beating prior records by nearly 15 percent—and recently led the charge on the first menu refresh in the restaurant's 13-year history.

With dreams of getting back into his chef's whites and eventually opening his own restaurants, Jobe plans to stick with the hospitality industry for the long haul. "Success and money are means to being able to be with people you care about later in life," he says.

Joseph "JJ" Johnson

Age 29

Chef de Cuisine

The Cecil

When he was seven years old, "JJ" Johnson saw a commercial for The Culinary Institute of America. That's when he knew he wanted to be a



chef.

Now, more than two decades later, Johnson is not only a CIA graduate, but continues gaining notoriety as one of the industry's rising stars. Earlier this year, Forbes named Johnson to its 30 Under 30 list, where he joined the likes of actress Olivia Wilde, musician Bruno Mars, and tennis star Maria Sharapova.

At The Cecil, a one-year-old Afro-Asian-American restaurant in Harlem, New York, Johnson incorporates the culinary traditions of African Diaspora, bold flavors, and unexpected ingredients to transform the simple into the dynamic in menu items such as braised lamb shank and citrus jerk wild bass.

John Kushner

Age 33

Operating Partner

Ruby Tuesday

In the 700-unit Ruby Tuesday chain, John Kushner shines. As an operating partner for the Maryville, Tennessee-based chain, Kushner oversees 11 Ruby Tuesday restaurants across Indiana and Kentucky, coaching and developing managers as well as hourly employees.

“Being in the restaurants and working directly with the teams, coming up with smarter ways to do things, is invigorating work for me,” Kushner says.

It's a passion Kushner developed while working in New York City's Mesa Grill, a Bobby Flay restaurant. There, Kushner moved from server to manager over four years and learned “the enthusiasm and focus necessary to be successful in this business,” he says.

And Kushner's work doesn't go unnoticed by Ruby Tuesday's corporate office. Director of people, standards, and results Brent Keyes calls Kushner a peer resource who develops leaders and inspires “teams to think rationally and for long-term benefit.”



Matthew King

Age 37

National Director of Culinary Development &
Corporate Chef

Smith & Wollensky Restaurant Group

Responsibilities held by the corporate chef of the upscale Smith & Wollensky Restaurant Group are complex and

varied. Chef King oversees culinary standards and execution company-wide, while adhering to the classic steakhouse menu that the chain's guests have come to expect. But the chef's cooking philosophy is simple: “We source the best, freshest ingredients seasonally. We don't over-complicate anything. We take premium ingredients and combine them in a way that people can understand. It's all about keeping it simple and leaving nothing to hide behind.”

A graduate of The Culinary Institute of America, Chef King has worked in the five-star Ponte Vedra Inn & Club in Florida and the Essex House in New York City. He has prepared meals for dignitaries, including Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, the Dalai Lama, Bono, and Elton John.

He worked in Boston at Starwood Hotels, followed by Smith & Wollensky Back Bay, and then opened his own steakhouse in Ireland before returning to the Smith & Wollensky Restaurant Group in 2010.



David Leonardo

Age 39

Chief Development Officer

Wild Wing Cafe

After launching his career on Wall Street in private equity and mergers and acquisitions, David Leonardo now finds he is in a better spot to help others

achieve the American Dream.

As chief development officer for 33-unit Wild Wing Café based in Miami, Florida, Leonardo is charged with implementing franchise agreements and a host of other executive responsibilities.

During his tenure, Leonardo has increased the lead pipeline by more than 100 percent while focusing on multi-unit agreements, producing \$500,000 in development fees in less than a year.

“Working in franchising really gives me a unique sense of the pulse in our economy,” he says.

With 10 years of franchising under his belt, Leonardo has changed hundreds of lives. “I am a first-generation American so helping others go from rags to riches really resonates with me, and there are more of those stories in restaurants than any other industry.”



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Adam Long

Age 38

Executive Chef

Bad Daddy's Burger Bar

Executive chef Adam Long has hunted and foraged through the Smoky Mountains to create gourmet meals for an “Adventure Chefs” reality show. He prepared dishes with ingredients from a 99-cent store for a “Wild Wedding Cook Off.” But when he’s not hunting and scrimping, he is in the kitchen at Bad Daddy’s Burger Bar in Charlotte, North Carolina, where he has been executive chef since 2007—focusing his attention on regional ingredients and local microbrews. He has been with the company through the opening of six additional locations in North Carolina and the formation of the Bad Daddy’s Burger Bar franchise. Last month, Bad Daddy’s Burger Bar opened its first location in Colorado.

Tim McEnery

Age 37

Founder and CEO

Cooper's Hawk

Nearly nine years after Tim McEnery founded Cooper’s Hawk in suburban Chicago, his upscale casual restaurant that combines a working winery and tasting room with specialty food and gift items continues making industry headway.

In 2014, Cooper’s Hawk will open four new units, raising its nationwide restaurant count to 18 and giving the Countryside, Illinois-based company new opportunity to create loyal fans.

It is, however, just the beginning for the award-winning concept, which McEnery describes as the brewpub idea brought to wine.

“As I look at the company today, we’re nowhere near what I see as our full potential,” the father of two says. “The biggest challenge will be to continually innovate at a level that equals the growth of the company.”

Lane McFarland

Age 25

Chef, Kitchen & Bar Manager

Beechie's Place

Talk about a lot of irons in the fire. Chef Lane McFarland is not only head chef and kitchen and bar manager at Beechie's Place, his family's restaurant in Meadow Lands, Pennsylvania, but he's also created a software company and owned a recording studio for six years.

Working at a number of local establishments since the ripe age of 14, McFarland has held every restaurant position possible over the years, from host and busboy to manager and chef. During his college days at Westminster College—where he graduated with a degree in music and business—McFarland completed an integral internship at a restaurant in Pennsylvania, an experience that taught him “all of the management styles and techniques that I would never use in life,” he says.

Four years into his stint at Beechie's Place, McFarland continues to work out the kinks of co-owning a new restaurant and bringing the menu to the level he desires. “We bring new and interesting things that the town has never seen,” he says. “I bring Italian cuisine, new Irish cuisine, and new American cuisine to show them there's more to life than just burgers, fries, and stuffed peppers.”



Marjorie Meek-Bradley

Age 29

Executive Chef

Ripple

If you ever wonder what it's like to hop cities working for renowned chefs—Thomas Keller, Marcus Samuelsson, Daniel Humm, José Andrés—before even

turning 30, all you have to do is ask Marjorie Meek-Bradley.

After attending culinary school in Philadelphia and working at the five-diamond Lacroix in Rittenhouse Hotel and Stephen Starr's Washington Square, she moved to famed California establishment Bouchon Bistro, where she served as the first woman in the restaurant's history to work on the hot line. Next, she traveled to New York to work at Eleven Madison Park and Per Se, making her way through the stations before trekking to D.C. to work with Mike Isabella at José Andrés' Zaytinya.

After becoming chef de cuisine at Isabella's Graffiato, Meek-Bradley finally made her way to Ripple in March 2013 as executive chef. “Moving around so much has allowed me the opportunity to learn so many different facets of the business in a shorter period of time,” she says of her career progression. “I would basically work at the best restaurant in the city, and once I was done there, I would move to a new city.”

Arthur Morrissey

Age 32

Corporate Director of Marketing

Morrissey Hospitality Companies Inc.

Arthur Morrissey's degree in psychology is the perfect complement to a

career in marketing. “I love trying to understand human behavior and, if at all possible, trying to persuade it,” he says.

As corporate director of marketing for Morrissey Hospitality Companies in St. Paul, Minnesota, Morrissey gets plenty of opportunity to do just that. During the last five years, MHC has been involved in the development of more than \$200 million in hospitality brands including KeyLime Cove Water Resort in Illinois and The Hotel Minneapolis.

Morrissey has earned a stellar reputation with market-defining programs such as a “Buy \$100, Get \$100” holiday gift card promotion and The St. Paul Grill Scotch Club, where participants earn a complimentary pour of a premium \$750 Scotch.

“I love the diversity of my job because it involves almost all areas of our company,” says Morrissey. “It also gives me the opportunity to work with all kinds of passionate people.”



Stuart Melia

Age 38

Vice President of Beverage

CraftWorks Restaurants & Breweries

With foodservice in his blood, Stuart Melia grew up surrounded by food and beer—literally. His parents operated a pub and restaurant in Sheffield, England, and

the family lived just upstairs, ready to clean beer lines or work in the kitchen at a moment's notice.

Dipping his toes into the family business, Melia came stateside in 1995, landing a role at Darden Restaurants, where he worked on everything from new unit openings and remodels to service-excellence and labor-saving initiatives. Following his mentor Rob Effner to Logan's Roadhouse, Melia took up the position of director of new restaurant openings and beverage in 2004. He later went on to spend nearly five years as corporate director of beverage at O'Charley's Inc., then—taking note of the craft beer craze that would soon sweep the nation—jumped at the chance to join Chattanooga, Tennessee-based CraftWorks as VP of beverage in 2011. A fan of Rock Bottom ales, Gordon Biersch lagers, and the St. Bernardus Abt 12 from Brouwerij St. Bernardus NV, Melia says he treasures the chance to work with a company that carries so many great brands.

Hoping to transition into a COO role for a mid-size company in the future, Melia says he wants to remain in a position that allows him to work directly with employees, guests, and the communities he operates in. “This business is about people, and that is what makes this industry special,” he says.



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Charles Olalia

Age 30

Executive Chef

Patina Restaurant

As executive chef for the Patina Restaurant Group's flagship restaurant in Los Angeles, Charles Olalia, is firmly ensconced in fine dining.

"Patina is a beautiful place and it is such a luxury to work in a restaurant that is so established that we know exactly who we are," he says.

Olalia, who was born in the Philippines, has trained with some of the world's most renowned chefs including Thomas Keller at The French Laundry, Guy Savoy at Restaurant Guy Savoy in Las Vegas, and of course Master Chef Joachim Splichal, the founder of Patina.

For Olalia, a modest man with big dreams, his top priority is mentoring, inspiring, and pushing his kitchen team.

"I want all of my cooks to progress to a different level," he says. "What I have seen is that everyone falls off the wagon because it gets tough. I can help them move forward and use their passion to get over that hump."



Michael Perez

Age 28

Executive Chef

Indaco

An intense competitive streak lured Michael Perez to the kitchen and brings out the best in him to this day. "I love sports and always enjoy competing. When

I was younger, I signed up for cooking competitions and fell in love with the restaurant business."

That love has taken Perez, who is executive chef at the newly opened and well-received Indaco in Charleston, South Carolina, from his childhood home in Portland, Oregon, to the Deep Creek Fishing Club in Ninilchik, Alaska, to Scarpetta in Las Vegas.

Now in the Deep South, Perez, who has eight years of professional cooking under his belt, has garnered critical praise for his focused, rustic Italian cuisine.

“I never feel as if I am working, and I love leading the team, pushing people to make everything come together. The chef really is the quarterback of the kitchen.”



Ryan Pernice

Age 28

Owner/Operator

Table & Main and Osteria Mattone

Having received the prestigious Drown Prize from Cornell University’s School of Hotel Administration and worked as an operations specialist for Danny Meyer’s

Union Square Hospitality Group all before the age of 30, Ryan Pernice has already set the stage for an illustrious foodservice career.

Bringing his operations experience back to his hometown of Roswell, Georgia—a small Atlanta suburb—Pernice created Southern tavern Table & Main in August 2011, a restaurant that has been praised by Atlanta magazine, Zagat, and more. “If you would have told me I was going to open a restaurant in my hometown 10 years ago, I would have said, ‘You’re crazy,’” Pernice says.

Last November, he opened a second concept, Italian restaurant Osteria Mattone, located just down the street from Table & Main. But he didn’t do it alone. Before returning to Roswell, he enlisted his brother—former sommelier at James Beard Award–winning restaurant The Modern in New York City—to be his partner in their budding restaurant business.

Greg Pearce

Age 39

Chef/owner

Over the Falls

It takes vision and commitment to turn around a small town. When he purchased a small restaurant in historic Wake Forest, North Carolina, (population 30,000) Greg Pearce had both. That was 2007, the restaurant sat 40 inside, 16 outside, and did \$250,000 in sales. In January 2012, Pearce relocated Over the Falls to a larger 120-seat space with a considerable uptick in décor, including a bar area and a sunroom—but against the advice of experts, he located in a blighted downtown area desperate for reinvention. Sales hit \$1.8 million the first year and neared \$1.9 million in 2013—thanks in part to Pearce’s dream for turning the area into the town’s Renaissance Center, but mostly because the food made the restaurant a destination.

“We wanted to grow our menu slowly to keep with the skill level of our personnel, so all we added at first were burgers and fresh-cut fries, but right away we got voted best burger in town,” Pearce says. “Six months in,

we started adding more to the menu and now we've added higher-dollar entrées." Even at that, the most expensive item on the menu is \$11. Next on his list: Making the entire town a destination, with special events like a food truck rodeo.

Miguel Pires

Age 30

General Manager

Carmello's

Growing up in his family's Italian and Portuguese restaurant in the historic town of Manassas, Virginia, Miguel Pires developed a passion for wine, and made it his goal to expand Carmello's beverage program. He's done so with great success. The restaurant just celebrated its fourth straight year of being Wine Spectator-rated, and touts one of the largest Portuguese wine lists in the country.

"People come from 50-plus miles away to try some of the wines we have," Pires says.

Two years ago, he also helped launch Monza, a casual concept that features wood-fired pizzas and craft beers. "Every month since we opened we've had a 5 to 10 percent increase [in sales]," Pires says. "It's actually more popular than our original concept."

In addition to opening new restaurants, Pires wants to continue the tradition he started last year with the Taste of Historic Manassas, an event that celebrates the town's many establishments. "We integrate our business into the community as much as possible," Pires says. "Being able to get everyone together, that was a very proud accomplishment."



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Shane Schaibly

Age 32

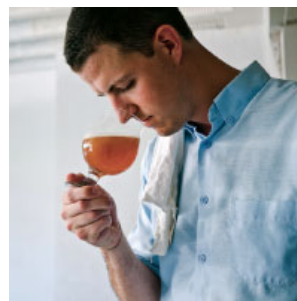
Corporate Chef & Director of Culinary Operations

First Watch Restaurants

Graduating at the top of his class from Johnson & Wales in 2005, Shane Schaibly jumped right into the fine-dining scene, working first at the Ritz-Carlton in Miami Beach, Florida, and then as pastry, catering, and sous chef at Tampa's Café Ponte.

When he moved over to the Front Burner Brands concept The Melting Pot in 2007, Schaibly took up the roles of manager of culinary development, director of food and beverage, and, most recently, corporate chef for the Front Burner restaurant group. Now a part of the team at First Watch Restaurants in Bradenton, Florida—the largest daytime-only restaurant company in the U.S.—Schaibly has shifted his focus to the breakfast, brunch, and lunch dayparts.

Despite all of his accomplishments in the kitchen, Schaibly insists it's the family meals he makes for his wife and children that he's most proud of. (That, and helping The Melting Pot set the Guinness World Record for Largest Cheese Fondue Set in 2007, of course.) "The meals I cook at home and the smiles and laughs shared at that table hold so much value for me," he says.



Greg Shuff

Age 26

Owner

DryHop Brewers

Greg Shuff describes DryHop as brewery first, restaurant second. The one-year-old shop's quality food notwithstanding, it's an earnest nod to DryHop's unrelenting

devotion to innovative brew making as well as the fact that DryHop's bar runs directly through the middle of the 3,000-square-foot brewery in Chicago.

"We like to think of ourselves as a chef's table for breweries," says Shuff, who started his first brewery, The Last Bay Beer Company, out of an Indianapolis garage in 2010.

Shuff's inventive liquid concoctions, such as a recent special edition Cuban Coffee Stout in partnership with Intelligentsia Coffee, have earned quick fanfare in the Windy City. The brewery eclipsed the \$1 million mark within its first six months, while rising interest in its brews has staff regularly filling to-go orders at the in-store growler bar.

"Interestingly, about 15 to 20 percent of our beer goes out the front door," Shuff says.



Zack Sklar

Age 28

Owner and Chef

Peas and Carrots Hospitality

As a CIA student, Zack Sklar promised himself he'd open a restaurant as soon as he corralled enough money. Funds in hand, he made good on that goal. Diners

visiting Social and MEX, Sklar's two metro-Detroit eateries, are now the beneficiaries of that personal pledge.

"I try to make food less pretentious and create a positive experience our guests will remember," Sklar says, pointing specifically to the novel environment at MEX that features a 40-foot door, mirrored ceilings, dangling ropes, and more than 100 tequilas.

As much as Sklar enjoys crafting inventive dishes, he most enjoys creating jobs in his hard-hit hometown. Sklar's Peas and Carrots Hospitality, which includes Social, MEX, and a catering company, employs more than 225 Detroit-area residents.

"To extend hospitality from the restaurant and into our employees' lives is a special thing," says Sklar, who plans to launch at least three new restaurants by mid-2015.

Caitlin Suemnicht

Age 34

Managing Partner and Certified Sommelier

Food Fight Restaurant Group

Despite a degree in sociology, Caitlin Suemnicht knew even before she graduated from the University of Wisconsin that foodservice was her calling. Working for Johnny Delmonico's, a Food Fight Restaurant Group concept, in college, Suemnicht fell in love with the service techniques, clientele, and talented chefs the fine-dining restaurant industry had to offer.

Suemnicht jumped ship to another Food Fight concept in 2003, becoming the new front-of-house manager at seafood establishment Ocean Grill. Two years later, she switched gears again, acting as event

planner for a number of the restaurant group's concepts, then eventually securing a managing partner role at the company.

As managing partner, Suemnicht has overseen the opening of a number of the group's restaurants, most recently the modern diner Bassett Street Brunch Club. In May, she'll also assist with the debut of Cento, a high-end Italian concept that focuses on local ingredients and authentic preparation methods.

A certified sommelier and one of Madison, Wisconsin's, 28 "Women to Watch" in 2014, Suemnicht says she plans to continue creating and developing new concepts throughout her career, despite the stress that comes along with it. "That's what excites me the most, keeps me going, and keeps me up at night," she says.



Ed Sura

Age 29

Chef de Cuisine

Perennial Virant

Cooking throughout his high school and college days, chef Ed Sura decided to make his side job a bonafide career, enrolling in the Great Lakes Culinary

Institute in Traverse City, Michigan. After graduating and moving to Chicago, Sura secured a job as a line cook with Graham Elliot, where he worked for a year while the restaurant gained a Michelin star.

Going back to his comfort-food roots, Sura was offered the opportunity to work for James Beard and Jean Banchet Award-nominated Paul Virant, owner of Perennial Virant in Chicago. After moving through various stations in the kitchen, Sura is now Virant's right-hand man at the rustic American establishment.

Though he plans to remain with the highly acclaimed restaurant for years to come, Sura says he hopes to one day return to Traverse City and open his own concept. "It's just so beautiful up there," he says, "and I really did fall in love with it."



Megan Wiig

Age 35

Senior Manager of Beverage Innovation

Ignite Restaurant Group

A passion for wine sent Megan Wiig on a journey that began with a masters in wine & spirits business from the Université de Paris X/O.I.V., and now has landed her at

Ignite Restaurant Group in Houston.

"I want Americans to fall in love with wine, but I realize not everyone has the opportunity to go to France or Italy to cultivate an appreciation," she says.

Consultancy stints in Chicago and New York City further honed Wiig's skills, making her uniquely qualified to influence the drinking habits of Middle America.

“I think it’s important to spend time in Manhattan watching trends if you’re in food and beverage. It puts you that much ahead.”

Wiig, who says she is completely career-focused, is responsible for day-to-day beverage operations for all 330 locations of such iconic brands as Romano’s Macaroni Grill, Joe’s Crab Shack, and Brick House Tavern.

“Since starting here my role has quadrupled,” says Wiig, who first signed on solely at Romano’s Macaroni Grill. “Now I work on all the company’s beverage programs.”

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