

Director of Dining

Roe Bentacourt / *Concord Reserve*



How long have you been in the industry?

Seventeen years.

What or who inspired you to become a chef?

My grandmother is from Mexico and she was an amazing cook. Everyone would always be in such a great mood when she was around because they new she was cooking something great. Traditionally in my family the women would cook and men would wait around to be fed, she refused to teach me since men weren't supposed

to be in the kitchen. I took that as a challenge, while she still never taught me a single recipe, I found that I truly loved to make people happy with food no matter their background, belief or circumstance. So thank you to my grandma for giving me something to aspire to.

If you could learn under any renowned chef, who would it be?

I've love to train under Chef Masaharu Morimoto.

Can you share a memorable experience from your culinary journey?

I remember making a simple eggplant parmesan with marinara sauce. We served this dish to a table with an older lady who called me to the table to talk about the dish. She asked me if that was really eggplant. She then proceeded to tell me that in her 80+ years she had never eaten eggplant parmesan only chicken, she had always thought it was a disgusting dish so she would never order it. She heard it was the special of the day and decided to finally try it out "...what's the worst that could happen? I can just order a chicken parmesan if I don't like it" she said. It was the best meal she had in years and was kicking herself for not trying it earlier. It took her about 80 years to finally try something she realized she would have adored and I was able to make that a memory and a lasting experience for her. It just reminded me of why I love what I do.

How do you stay up to date with current trends?

Since I do not have social media, I usually research by going to different restaurants, sampling fare, and speaking with Chefs as a peer about what they do day to day.

What are some essential skills every chef should have?

I believe a chef should possess exceptional knife skills and the ability to innovate and create new dishes or variations on existing ones. They should have the capacity to remain calm under pressure and demonstrate precision not only in cooking techniques but also in plating and presentation. A chef must be skilled in tasting and seasoning dishes to achieve a balance of flavors. Additionally, they must know various ingredients, their properties, and how to utilize them. Ensuring that dishes meet customer expectations and having a willingness to learn daily are also essential qualities for a chef.

How do you balance creativity with the practicality of running a kitchen?

Test recipes and techniques often, all the while designating tasks and utilizing the skills and creativity of the kitchen staff to supplement the day-to-day operation.

For us home cooks, what's a useful tip or trick that you can share?

Keep things simple, don't try to over complicate a dish. Don't forget to taste at every step of every recipe. Simple mistakes can ruin a well executed dish.

What's your favorite local restaurant?

Gingko is my favorite restaurant in Cleveland. The food is absolutely incredible, service is on point, and the Chefs are approachable and amazing at what they do.