



CULINARY EXPERT Q & A

Regional Director of Dining Darrell Grimmatt / Columbus & Cleveland



How long have you been in the industry?

I've been in this industry for 43 years.

What or who inspired you to become a chef?

It has always been the kitchen. From a very young age, I was surrounded by a professional kitchen brigade system and all of the different people in it. It has always been that energy.

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

When I was an apprentice, I sought out the chefs who I had heard were very difficult to work for and that is where I thrived. Everyone I worked for in those days, whatever the city I was in at that time, were my inspiration. All of the chefs who I wanted to learn from were on that list. I would visit their restaurant in person, meet with them, and it worked every single time. I worked for every single one of them.

Can you share a memorable experience from your culinary journey?

All of the people who I have met along the way. I have traveled a lot in my career, and I am incredibly grateful for the memories that I have of every place and the people who were there. I shared something that I knew or learned something that I didn't know, each and every time. It was all worth it. Every single second.

What are some essential skills every chef should have?

Creativity often needs to come off of the plate and into the room. Food is always easier than people. Lead with compassion and always be aware that your vulnerability is your strength.

How do you stay up to date with current trends?

I listen to podcasts a lot and make sure that whatever conference is nearby, our Dining Leadership is there so we are able to keep up with any changes in our industry. It benefits everyone.

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

When it comes to creativity, familiarity is always your friend. Read the room.

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

Be simple in your approach to cooking. If you really want to enjoy home cooking, stay super organized before, during and after cooking. Keep it clean along the way. That's where most of us get frustrated and think we are bad at it. Surfaces and air are all you should ever see when you are cooking.

What's your favorite local restaurant?

Anyone who does a good cheeseburger. Seriously.