



CUTZINE

PUBLISHED BY ROBERT MORRIS COLLEGE INSTITUTE OF CULINARY ARTS

COOKING ALONG THE FOX

ALUMNI PROFILE: BRENT FIEDOR



Ask Brent Fiedor, sous chef at Rox City Grill in St. Charles, about what he remembers of growing up in Flint, Michigan, and he'll tell you "the smells." Each day as he arrived home from school, he was met with the delicious smells of dinner as his father cooked in the kitchen. "My parents were both teachers and my dad loved to cook," he explained. "I think that's where I first came to enjoy cooking, watching my dad."

Brent and his dad also enjoyed hunting together and at an early age, he learned how to dress a deer, prepare the different cuts of meat for freezing, and, as he grew older, a number of different ways to prepare venison.

Cooking – and eating – has been a pleasurable activity for generations in the Fiedor family. So it was not a surprise when Brent gave up on his plan to become a history teacher. "I guess I was cooking too much," he explains. Instead, he took up culinary arts at Robert Morris College. "I cannot say enough about the program at RMC," he explained. "Chefs John Hudoc and

in Geneva, but the experience was so great, I would have worked for free." A stint in corporate food service didn't last when it didn't allow the freedom and creativity Brent sought in his cooking. But when he learned of an opening at Hotel Baker in St. Charles, he threw his chef's toque in the ring and got the job.

At first he worked at the Waterfront Restaurant and at the banquets for special events. Then Rox City Grill, a small, intimate restaurant opened, also inside Hotel Baker. Rox City is a modern little enclave nestled off the main lobby of the famed hotel. The Baker is a landmark known for its distinctive architecture and a history of being a hot spot right on the Fox River for the elite of the 1930s. This dichotomy of modern juxtaposed with classical creates an interesting setting for a menu that is rife with fun, experimental and as Brent would put it, some "old fashioned" items.

"When I think of dining, I think of white table cloths, linen napkins, professional service – I'm old fashioned in that kind of way," Brent said. But he loves to change the menu whenever he can. He experiments with flavors, constantly looking for alternatives to salt, for example, and creates dishes by manipulating very different components. For example, Brent has tried his hand at pomegranate caviar and Jagermeister jelly – two very unique concoctions.



Francois Sanchez were not only great teachers and mentors, but friends."

After graduating in 2005 with his associate degree, Brent tried a couple of different venues but none seemed to match his extraordinary internship with Chef Francois. "I was making \$6 an hour working for him at Chez Francois

SOMEONE IN THE KITCHEN...

MEET CHEF AISHA COOKS



A few examples for Aisha's artistic touch in pastry - she has even mastered the Burberry pattern in frosting!

It didn't take long for Aisha Cooks to figure out that she belonged in the kitchen. Growing up in Glen Ellyn, she attended Glenbard West and selected the College of DuPage for her general education requirements, and to get an idea of what she really might want to do for the rest of her life. The culinary program gave her just enough of a taste for the field and soon after, she was off to Le Cordon Bleu in Paris. Could there possibly be a better place to learn about pastry?

She returned to Chicago's Cooking and Hospitality Institute and completed that pastry program, then to the Illinois Institute of Art for her food handling certifications. Finally she was able to break out on her own and Aisha Cakes in Glen Ellyn - and then in Palatine - was born.

"I do cakes for special events," she explained. And to say that they are special cakes doesn't quite say enough. Bridal cakes with thirteen layers, baby shower cakes artistically decorated,

and cheesecakes with unique flavors and toppings are just a few of Aisha's creations. She connected with local country clubs and a bridal salon and the referrals started pouring in.

"There's a lot of chemistry to pastry and baking. After you master certain techniques, then you can experiment with substitutions and variations, but you have to know from the outset about the properties of often-used ingredients like baking powder or soda or butter."

Plates, pillars and dowel rods are tools of the trade. And while it sounds more like a construction site, in a sense, that's what it is. Aisha has to build a solid foundation before she gets to become the sculptor or artist. "Each order is unique and I really enjoy thinking outside the box, coming up with something different," she said. "I do everything from the truly extravagant to the plain jane cake." She also participated in a cake competition with chefs from across the country and came in second place. "I missed first place by

one point," she said ruefully, but adds with a smile, "and while the winner's was a great cake, mine tasted better."

In the middle of this whole process, and as if she didn't have enough to do, she thought she would give teaching a try and checked out RMC in 2003. After a couple interviews, she found herself on the culinary faculty at the DuPage campus teaching, of course, pastry. Her education, combined with her ongoing experience, makes for the perfect chef instructor at RMC - someone who is actively working in the field who can bring the latest practices into the kitchen classrooms. "There's a lot of chemistry to pastry and baking," she continued. "After you master certain techniques, then you can experiment with substitutions and variations, but you have to know from the outset about the

properties of often-used ingredients like baking powder or soda or butter."

"My students probably hate me in the beginning because I'm pretty tough - I don't sugarcoat it - but they love me in the end. If what they create doesn't work, I let them know in no uncertain terms. I tell them they've made a 'hot mess' and if I emphasize 'mess' instead of 'hot,' they know it's not good. It takes a great pastry chef to make it come out great, and that's what I push for."

SPRING DINNER SERIES

- » In April, the RMC Institute of Culinary Arts Dining Series will feature a Thai dinner on Saturday, April 4 at the Chicago campus and on Saturday, April 25 at the Orland Park campus. East Meets West - Thai at its Best is the title for the event. "Thai cuisine is a marriage of centuries-old Eastern and Western influences that are harmoniously combined into something that is uniquely Thai," explained Institute Executive Director Nancy Rotunno. "There are five flavors, hot (spicy), sour, sweet, salty and sometimes bitter, that comprise a Thai meal. I'm sure our unique take on this cuisine will delight all palates."
- » Back by popular demand is "That's Italian!" for the May dinners. Diners can sign up for the event at the Chicago campus on Saturday May 16 or at the Orland Park campus on Saturday, May 30. This is one of the most popular dinners in the series, as RMC students and instructors create an experience that has the traditional 'lotsa pasta' as well as other regional Italian favorites. It's not to be missed!

Each five-course meal is a prix fixe menu with a \$40 donation per person. Reservations only; space is limited. Non-alcoholic beverages are served; corkage service is available. Dinners start promptly at 6:30 p.m.; please arrive by 6:15 p.m. To reserve your place, RSVP online at robertmorris.edu or call 312-935-6918.

LEARNING ARENA EXPANDS FOR CULINARY STUDENTS

Under the watchful eyes of their chef instructors, culinary students constantly find themselves putting their skills to the test. But the chance to demonstrate their acquired talents has jumped from the frying pan of the classroom kitchens to the fire of extracurricular events – and these opportunities for getting involved and succeeding are only becoming more prevalent as time goes on.

Chef instructors **BRYAN FLOWER**, **JEFF SING** and **LAURETTE STEFANI** have been integral in arranging for students to hone their skills in different ways, both on and off campus.

Before the holiday break, students at the Chicago campus got involved baking 650 Christmas Cookies with Cooks for a Cause for a charity concert. They baked all day long and Chef **BRAD HINDSLEY** provided lunch. At the DuPage campus, culinary students created a gingerbread village for the delight of all students and staff at that campus. They also became involved in a food eating competition called Grease Bowl 2009 that coincided with the Superbowl.

At the Orland Park campus, Chef Bryan Flower and students fended off the cold winds of January by becoming involved in the annual Orland Park Chili Cookoff. They were soon gearing up for the Ninth Annual South Suburban Chef's Auction in February. Chef Bryan also reported that, "When we have the "A La Minute" class at the Orland Park campus, we invite the Orland Park Police and Fire Departments for breakfast. Anywhere from 50 to 70 arrive for a free breakfast to test the students' speed skills." And when summer rolls around, the OP students will be preparing for the annual BBQ cookoff. MMMM...can you smell the ribs sizzling on the grill???

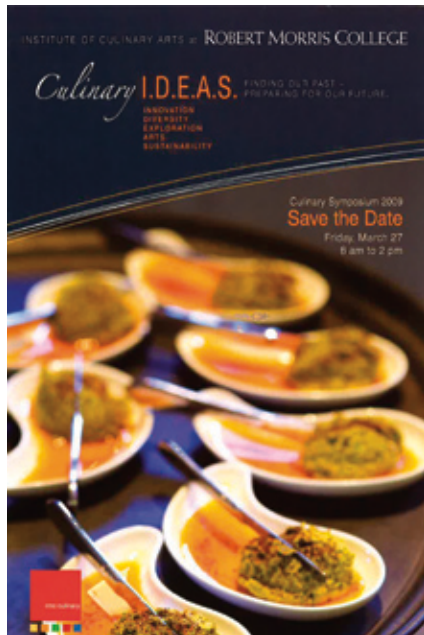


In December, faculty and students baked over 650 Christmas cookies for a charity concert.



The G
culinar

IDEAS: SECOND ANNUAL CULINARY SYMPOSIUM SET FOR MARCH 27TH



Once again, the Robert Morris College Institute of Culinary Arts is set to showcase the latest in culinary innovations with its second annual symposium, set for March 27. Titled *IDEAS: Innovation, Diversity, Exploration, Arts and Sustainability*, – *Finding our Past, Preparing for our Future*, the day-long event will feature sessions on timely issues and challenges for today’s culinary world.

High profile chefs and food professionals will speak on such subjects as sustaining a business in today’s economy, building a successful professional kitchen, leadership opportunities and challenges for women chefs and preserving a wide variety of foods.

Key note speaker this year is **JEFF STRATTON**, McDonald’s Corporate Executive Vice President and Chief Restaurant Officer. Other distinguished culinary professionals conducting sessions are Chef **GALE GAND**, Tru Restaurant; Chef **CARRIE NAHABEDIAN**, Naha Restaurant; Chef **MICHELLE GARCIA**, The Bleeding Heart Bakery; Chef **SHELLEY YOUNG**, The Chopping Block; **PETER TESTA**, Testa Produce; **ROBERT C. MARSHALL**, vice president, operations, McDonald’s; Chefs **ALLISON AND ROB LEVITT**, Mado Restaurant; Chefs **RYAN HUTMACHER** and **JILL HOUK**, Centered Chef Food Studios; **LARA FIELD**, University of Chicago; Chef **MYK BANAS**, Chicago Marriott; **RALPH AYLWARD**, Boelter; Chef **GAIL HUESMANN**, **CAMILLE STAGG**, food author and journalist; Chef **DAN MCGEE**, Dan McGee Restaurant and Catering; **RANDY VICKERY**, Wyncroft

Wines; and **CHEF NATHAN CHAPPELL**, The Michael Fields Agricultural Institute.

Chef **JENNIFER BUCKO** Lamplough, associate dean of the RMC Culinary Institute and **AMY KECK**, director of purchasing and facilities, and a team of faculty and kitchen managers have taken on the leadership roles in organizing the symposium. In following with the Robert Morris College philosophy of bringing the latest in trends, issues, technology and needs of a specific career field, Chef Lamplough has created an event for students, staff, alumni, faculty and supporters that helps to provide the most current information and practices available. “Our culinary curriculum consistently strives to incorporate the best and the newest for our students,” Chef Jen explained. “We want each annual symposium to top the last one by enabling each attendee to learn something that they can immediately apply to their studies and eventually, their careers.”

In addition to the sessions, there will be a student cake decorating competition, a culinary expo and a job fair. Chefs Gale Gand and **MICHELLE GARCIA** will judge the cake competition.

“We want each annual symposium to top the last one by enabling each attendee to learn something that they can immediately apply to their studies and eventually, their careers.”



Gingerbread Village created by the culinary students at the DuPage campus.



Chef Gale Gand
of Tru Restaurant.

THE MARY MOORE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD SUPPORTING FUTURE CHEFS

Each year, select students in the RMC Culinary program have the opportunity to receive a scholarship funded from the **MARY MOORE** Culinary Scholarship Fund. This generous gift is made possible through the efforts of Mary Moore's family and the connection through RMC faculty member, **ELLEN MANNOS**, Mary's daughter.

Ellen wears many hats as a registered nurse, instructor, and career management coordinator at the Chicago campus. As a representative of the Fund, she has found that the opportunity to provide these scholarships is a fitting example of Mary Moore's spirit.

"Mary's motto when it came to cooking was: 'first follow the directions, then push the limits and have faith in your palate,'" Ellen explained. "And the mission of the Fund is to extend the opportunity for qualified students to continue their culinary and hospitality studies at RMC and proudly master their art through creativity, passion and excellence." With the addition of the Bachelor of Professional Studies in Advanced Culinary Arts, RMC students will take that mission to the next level.

This year, **KIMBERLY TINSEY** of Country Club Hills, **RUSSELL LOWE** of Chicago Heights and **MICHELLE CIMINO** of Elk Grove Village each received scholarships from the Mary Moore Foundation.

The Robert Morris College Institute of Culinary Arts is grateful to the Mary Moore Scholarship Fund for its support of its students. Contributions to the Institute to fund scholarships are greatly appreciated. Interested sponsors can contact **MARYBETH HEDMARK**, student advisor, for additional information at 312-935-4872.



Kimberly Tinsey of Country Club Hills with Russell Lowe of Chicago Heights.



Ellen Mannos, Michelle Cimino and Nancy Rotunno.



CREATING A PASTRY KITCHEN

One of the most popular sequences of study at the Robert Morris College Institute of Culinary Arts is Baking and Pastry. To enhance the atmosphere for future bakers and pastry chefs, the culinary kitchens at the Chicago campus have a new wing dedicated to pastry.

"Learning baking and pastry requires that each student becomes an artist in the kitchen," explained executive director **NANCY ROTUNNO**. "It takes an individual with a serious approach, a fine touch, patience and an appreciation for a truly beautiful result. It is only fitting that the environment where they learn these skills complement the process."

The pastry kitchen has its own banks of ovens, refrigerators and large counters for preparation and completing the minute finishing touches. "It really is an artists' studio for our culinary students," she continued.

The Chicago campus is the first culinary setting to add on a pastry kitchen.



ROBERT MORRIS COLLEGE

401 S. STATE STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60605



800-RMC-5960

www.robertmorris.edu

Editor: Nancy S. Donohoe, 312-935-6715

ndonohoe@robertmorris.edu

CONTINUED FROM COVER »

A fois gras dish for an appetizer that changes weekly, brown butter sable fish for an entree, a key lime confection for dessert, are just a few of the items to be found on the menu. “The management encourages me to try different things.” And sometimes he discovers one of his experiments turns out to be a hit. In the past year, Hotel Baker has offered a regular calendar of entertainment in the Rainbow Room, which also brings in lots of patrons to the restaurant.

While Brent is enjoying his culinary freedom at Rox City, he feels he has put

in the necessary time, education and effort to attain his chef status. For any up and coming student of culinary arts, he feels it is important to “make sure this is what you want to do. I worked for six years in the business and tried to learn every aspect of the restaurant business. I washed dishes as a 13-year old, discovered I belonged in culinary school, worked banquets and of course, learned a lot from my teachers. I was very pleased with my experience at Robert Morris College and I’m thinking about the bachelor’s degree in culinary, too.”



Down the road, Brent hopes to do a cookbook someday on single portion cooking. “I have a lot of ideas for it, like French wild game dishes – upscale cooking for sure. And I’ll dedicate it to my grandmothers.” After all, cooking definitely runs in the Fiedor family.

Chef Aisha Cooks Southern Caramel Cake

Cake

- 3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, sifted before measuring
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 6 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Frosting

- 3 cups packed light brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons corn syrup
- 3 tablespoons butter
- dash of salt
- 3/4 cup cream
- teaspoon vanilla

Sift the sifted flour and baking powder into a bowl. In a large mixing bowl, cream the butter until light, and then gradually add the sugar, beating until creamy. Add the eggs, one at a time, and beat well after each addition. Stir in the flour mixture, a little at a time, alternately with the milk, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Stir well after each addition, but do not beat. Stir in the vanilla extract. Pour the batter into two pre sprayed oil cake pans. Bake in a preheated 300° oven until the cakes spring back when lightly touched near the center with a finger, about 35-45 minutes. Cool layers 10-20 minutes in the pans, then turn out onto cake racks to cool completely.

Frosting:

In large saucepan, combine ingredients and mix well to blend. Bring to a boil; cover and cook 3 minutes. Uncover and cook to 238° on candy thermometer or until softball forms when dropped in cold water. Cool for 3 minutes. Beat until thick and spreadable. It should begin to lose its glossiness. Spread on layers and over sides of cake.

As you frost the cake, the frosting might become too stiff. Add a little hot water whenever necessary to make it spreadable. Dip knife or spatula in hot water to smooth frosting out if needed.

Makes enough for a 2 to 3 layers.