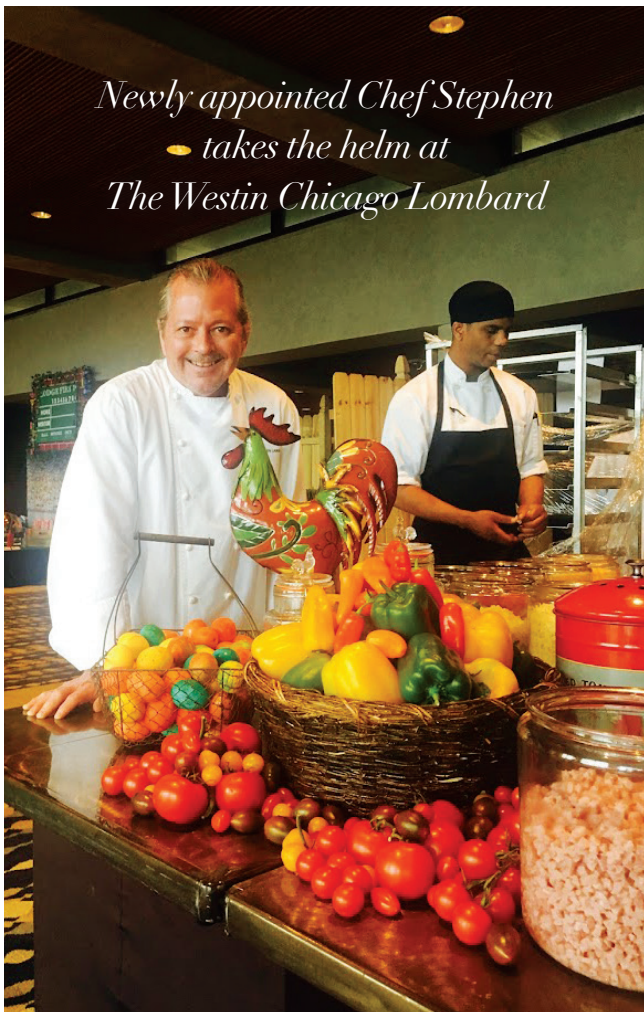


Feeding His PASSION

*Newly appointed Chef Stephen
takes the helm at
The Westin Chicago Lombard*



Executive Chef Stephen Langlois

What is your background?

Before joining Westin Chicago Lombard, I was the Chicago Bears' Executive Chef at the Chicago Bears Halas Hall training facility in Lake Forest. I prepared daily food for football players, coaches, scouts, and front office staff. I used my culinary skills and hospitality experience uniquely.

Before my current position, I was the Executive Chef at the Hyatt Lodge in Oak Brook. I managed culinary and stewarding operations for the two restaurants, the expansive banquet area, and more. I also pioneered the farm-to-table movement and redefined regional American cuisine in Chicago as Executive Chef and creator of Prairie Restaurant. In fact, I wrote the popular cookbook *Prairie: Cuisine from the Heartland*.

I graduated from the Culinary Institute of America and received an A.O.S. in Culinary Arts. I received the Richard L. King Award from the Culinary Institute of America for the student "voted most likely to succeed."

Why did you become a chef?

I started cooking when I was only 13 and worked at a local seafood restaurant near our summer home in Maine. During that time, I learned how much food inspired me and how much I was passionate about it. Every day, you can learn something new about food, whether it's a new cuisine, dish, or cooking method. Having the opportunity to create memorable dining experiences and connect with people through the power of food is what makes working as a chef so rewarding.

What are three kitchen tools you cannot do without?

I use my chef's knife the most. I love its handle. It's well-balanced and versatile enough to chop, slice, and make fine cuts. The microplane is my second favorite kitchen tool. The grater can be used to finely grate garlic, ginger, citrus zest, and cheese. Finally, stainless-steel kitchen tongs are indispensable to me. I use them to move pans around the stove, grill meats and vegetables, and execute that last twirl of pasta on the plate just before it goes out.

Is there a chef you admire?

Julia Child introduced classic French cuisine to the American public. She provided helpful tips and advice on cooking French food. I met Julia years ago at a food and wine event we both attended in California. She was very friendly and cheerful. She changed Americans' minds about food and encouraged more women to become chefs.

Any industry trends you are seeing?

My culinary identity is characterized by seasonal and local food, and I am excited to incorporate this at the Westin Chicago Lombard. I prepare well-balanced menus emphasizing natural foods that use leaner and healthier cooking techniques. My cooking style is dependent on fresh, local, seasonal, and sustainable ingredients. The demand is higher than ever for properly prepared, healthy, and nutritious foods. In addition, vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, and organic options are quite common, and the chef must consider them. Increasingly, people are willing to try new foods and flavors, so globally inspired dishes are on the rise. And, of course, comfort foods never go out of style and offer a nostalgic and familiar experience. ■

NEW BBQ on the BLOCK

*Catching up with Dan Moody,
Smokeshow Master Pit Partner
and Chef Partner, Scott Harris
Hospitality Corporate Chef*

PHOTO BY
ERIC KLEINBERG



Why did you decide to become a chef?

My first job was making pizza; since then, I have never strayed from the restaurant industry. I took culinary classes while in high school, which fortified my decision to pursue a degree at Kendall College in Culinary Arts. While attending school, I took every opportunity to work at various restaurants. When I graduated, I started at Scott Harris Hospitality's Davanti Enoteca. It opened my eyes to a whole new world of Italian food. It was life-changing for me.

What are the characteristics of Texas-style BBQ?

One of the main characteristics of Texas BBQ is smoking large cuts of meat with a simple rub - not a heavy BBQ sauce. Brisket is the prime example of Texas BBQ that is almost always seasoned with just salt and pepper (the more pepper, the better to increase the nice bark on the exterior). Let it smoke low and slow, and it will be a beautiful and delicious meal.

Name the three kitchen gadgets you can't do without.

The three items I rely on most are a stand mixer with grinder attachments, a sausage stuffer, and a robocoupe. Sausage making has been my side passion, and I hope to expand on it throughout the years with Smokeshow BBQ in Naperville. Also, a robocoupe is a versatile tool for making sauces, dressing, prepping vegetables, and shredding cheeses.

Will you incorporate any menu trends at Smokeshow?

Wagyu beef and A5 Kobe are amazing products as they are, but we will focus on other areas to enhance our brand at Smokeshow, utilizing heritage breeds when possible and local farms.

Also, we plan to offer vegetarian and vegan options off the smoker, including our signature BBQ jackfruit or an array of other smoked vegetables - with more options to come.

At the end of 2023, what do you think you will be most proud of regarding the opening of Smokeshow?

I have always had a passion for BBQ. Playing with my smokers in the backyard and working on my rubs and sauces over the years has been a passion of mine. Opening Smokeshow allows me to showcase my skills for our newest concept at Scott Harris Hospitality. By the end of the year, I will be most proud of developing a new restaurant brand that diversifies our portfolio and the opportunity to demonstrate my talents. We can't wait for the community to come out and give us a try! ■

VIVA ITALIA

*Catching up with
Pete Deruvo Executive Chef at
Francesca's Restaurants and Mio Modo*

PHOTO BY
PHOTO BY ERIC
KLEINBERG



How did you decide to become a chef?

I have always loved food, people, and different cultures, even from a very young age. The opportunity to become a chef gave me the peace and desire to create, cook and develop myself.

Do you have any most memorable moments that impacted your decision to have a career in hospitality?

When I was younger at Al Forno, I had an amazing opportunity to cook for the one and only Julia Childs. It was an honor and privilege. My head chef looked at me and said, "What you are feeling now is how you need to treat every guest that walks through the door, providing the same level of pride and service." I will never forget that moment and put my best effort into the craft of my cooking to serve my customers.

Being a chef, do you have a favorite food?

I love all kinds of food, but Italian is my favorite. The food, cooking process, and culture are a true passion of mine. Their interpretation of regional cooking and how it differs across the country is intriguing and beautiful.

Can you share what makes Francesca's Restaurants stand out from others?

Scott Harris founded Mia Francesca's on Clark based on the fundamentals of cooking and service, using fresh, simple Italian cookery. Each Francesca's location continues with that legacy today.

What can customers expect from Francesca's Amici when they visit the restaurant?

Customers can expect a fantastic experience based on food, service, and overall sensibility of what great simple Italian food can offer. You can't go wrong with anything on the menu, but some of my personal favorites to prepare are the Ossobuco di Agnello, Broccoli ala Pugliese, and the Risotto Contadina.

Do you have any words of inspiration for anyone considering becoming part of the hospitality industry?

Learn from the best. Find mentors and push yourself to absorb what they are doing and how they are doing it. Put your authentic personality into your work; you will go far and have a very fulfilling life. ■