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TO-MAY-TO,
TO-MAH-TO

PLUS:

**Trends You
Can Use**

**Road Trip:
Boston**

**Community
Event
Planning**

TODAY'S SPECIAL:

ITALIAN UP CLOSE

TIMELESS LESSONS IN
HOSPITALITY, SIMPLICITY
AND SMARTER OPERATIONS

*Drew Keane
Executive Chef*

JUMP TO IT

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ITALIAN DISH

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JAKE PETERSON

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FOOD FANATICS® is the go-to source for the foodservice industry and anyone truly passionate about food, the people behind it and improving the bottom line. Founded in 2012 and redesigned in 2025, the print publication and online magazine is a US Foods publication produced by The Specialists.

ABOUT US FOODS With a promise to help its customers Make It, US Foods is one of America's great food companies and a leading foodservice distributor, partnering with approximately 250,000 restaurants and foodservice operators to help their businesses succeed. With more than 70 broadline locations and approximately 90 cash-and-carry stores, US Foods and its 30,000 associates provides its customers with a broad and innovative food offering and a comprehensive suite of e-commerce, technology and business solutions. US Foods is headquartered in Rosemont, Ill. Visit usfoods.com to learn more.



WE
ON
FIRE



CHEF ANDREW GJELOSHI SLINGING DOUGH. READ MORE ON PAGE 32

EDITOR'S RANT

HEY - WE'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE.

FEWER PEOPLE ARE DINING OUT. COSTS ARE RISING. SKILLED, STEADY LABOR IS HARDER THAN EVER TO RETAIN. IT'S A STRESSFUL TIME. BUT THIS ISN'T NEW. WE MADE IT THROUGH A PANDEMIC AND, WHETHER WE REALIZE IT OR NOT, WE'VE ALREADY GOT A FEW TRICKS UP OUR SLEEVES.

CHEF ANDREW PFLUEGER OF TOSCANOS ITALIAN GRILL IN WASHINGTON STATE TURNS LEFTOVER FOCACCIA INTO BREADCRUMBS FOR HIS CHICKEN PARM. ANDREW GJELOSHI OF RIVER OAKS PIZZERIA SAVES DOUGH SCRAPS FOR GARLIC KNOTS. MICHAEL SARACINO, JR., OF BARTOLINO'S IN ST. LOUIS ALWAYS FOLLOWS HIS GRANDFATHER'S ADVICE: NEVER TURN CUSTOMERS AWAY IF THEY ARRIVE EARLY. AND DEFINITELY DON'T RUSH THEM OUT IF THEY'RE HAVING A GOOD TIME.

THESE EXAMPLES HAVE A FEW THINGS IN COMMON: RESOURCEFULNESS, KEEPING THINGS SIMPLE, AND SHOWING TRUE CARE AND HOSPITALITY. THIS IS THE ITALIAN WAY, AND WHAT THIS ISSUE IS ALL ABOUT. TURN THE PAGE - WE GOTCHU.

-FOODFANATICS@USFOODS.COM

EVERY ISSUE WE HIT YOU WITH A #CHALLENGE.

LAST TIME, WE ASKED: WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE ITALIAN DISH?



1. JUSTIN LARGE

HEAD OF CULINARY | ONE OFF HOSPITALITY
@oneoffhospitality

"Baked clams, bracirole, bistecca alla fiorentina, pizzochieri with braised rabbit, any kind of parm...the list goes on."



2. SEAN DWIGANS

CULINARY DEVELOPMENT MANAGER |
REESER'S FINE FOODS

"Homemade pasta and pesto sauce. We have a huge garden and I grow my own basil!"

VIST PAGE 8
FOR MORE
TRENDING SAUCES



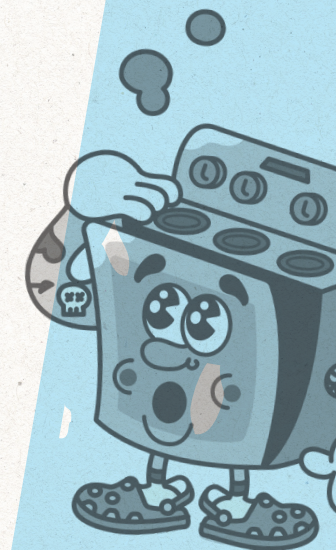
3. MICHAEL PONZIO

DIRECTOR OF CULINARY OPERATIONS |
ABBVIE @chefmichaelponzio

"Meatballs are my favorite. But that's common. If I had to pick another I would say pasta carbonara or pasta Amatriciana."



MEATBALLS
SOUNDING GOOD?
MAKE 'EM! SCAN HERE
FOR RECIPE



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NEXT ISSUE'S
CHALLENGE?

WHAT
BOOSTS
YOUR
WINTER
BUSINESS?

ANSWER ON SOCIAL AND TAG
#USFOODSCHALLENGE

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STUFFED OLIVES



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CHERRIES

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HOT PLATES

BUZZWORTHY BITES BLOWING UP MENUS



SHOP THIS
SECTION
ON MOXē



ITALIAN CUISINE IS FIRE!!!

From Calabrian chile and stracciatella to globally inspired pasta mashups, wood-fired pies and over-the-top desserts, these are the Italian flavors and formats heating up menus right now.

TRENDY ITALIAN DESSERTS; STUFFED PASTAS; TWISTS ON CHICKEN PARM; STRACCIATELLA AND MORE!

PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY THE SPECIALISTS

AMIAMO QUESTE...SAUCES!

WE LOVE SAUCES, AND THESE ITALIAN ONES ARE TRENDING HARD

USE THESE
SAUCES TO
FLAVOR WINGS
AND PASTA,
DRIZZLE OVER
PIZZA, OR AS
DIPPING
SAUCES

5.

ITALIAN SALSA VERDE

a rustic, chunky mix of
parsley, olive oil, capers,
anchovies and garlic

6.

AGRODULCE

red wine vinegar reduced
with sugar or honey and
studded with dried fruit

1.

CALABRIAN CHILI

(A PASTY BLEND OF SOUTHERN ITALIAN
CALABRIAN CHILES, OLIVE OIL, GARLIC
AND SOMETIMES VINEGAR)

2.

BASIL AIOLI
(MAYO INFUSED WITH
BASIL AND GARLIC)

+105%

forecasted 4-year
menu growth TK

3.

VODKA SAUCE
tomato sauce
infused with vodka

+37%

forecasted 4-year
menu growth*

4.

PEPERONATA

SWEET
PEPPERS,
ONIONS,
TOMATOES
AND GARLIC
STEWED IN
OLIVE OIL
AND
BLENDED



SHOP THIS
SECTION

WINNING WING
FLAVORS FOR FALL

+22%
LEMON
PEPPER

+48%
HONEY
GARLIC

+12%
GARLIC
PARM



HOT HANDHELD

WOOD-FIRED PIZZA

After a surge in the mid-2010s, Neapolitan pizza has grown on menus 34% in the last four years, with 7 out of 10 consumers saying they're interested in trying authentic, regional pizza styles

SAUCE STATS: DATASSENTIAL, JUNE 2026



LA DOLCE VITA IRRESISTABLE ITALIAN DESSERTS



BOMBOLONI

Pillowy Italian doughnuts
filled with sweet cream,
chocolate or fruit preserves



ZABAIONE

Traditional Italian custard-
like dessert made with egg
yolks, sugar and Marsala wine



PISTACHIO CANNOLI

Crispy, tube-shaped Italian
pastry shells filled with
vanilla-spiked, sweetened
ricotta cheese, rolled in
chocolate, pistachios and
powdered sugar

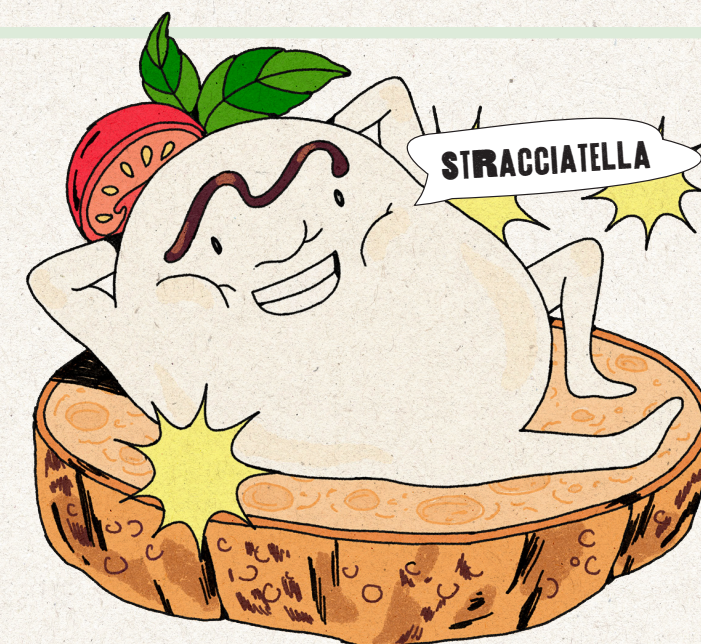
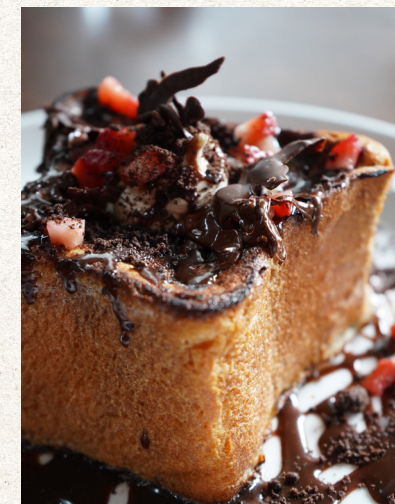
59%
OF CONSUMERS SAY
THEY LOVE OR LIKE
PISTACHIO FLAVOR

TOP THIS TOAST: TIRAMISU FRENCH TOAST

FROM DELIZ
ITALIAN, CHICAGO

HEY SIRI,
WHAT IS TIRAMISU
FRENCH TOAST?

Sure! Tiramisu French
Toast from Deliz Italian
in Chicago: a giant cube
of custard-soaked
brioche griddled until
golden, then filled
with whipped espresso-
spiked mascarpone
cream and topped
with Nutella sauce,
chocolate shavings
and fresh strawberries.



SAY CHEESE!

STRACCIATELLA: This super soft, melty, ooey-goey cheese is made with burrata and can be used for anything from bruschetta to ice cream. We're not making it up. It's been up by 134% on menus over the last four years.

ITALIAN DESSERTS: ADOBE STOCK STRACCIATELLA: KAITLIN BRITO PISTACHIO STAT: DATASSENTIAL

STUFFED PASTA

These stuffed pastas are all the rage right now. Here's a guide to some familiar and unfamiliar shapes and fillings



RAVIOLI

"THE SQUARE"

STUFF IT WITH:
BASIL & BURRATA



CARMELLE RANKED
NO. 1 ON DATASSENTIAL'S
GEN Z "LOVE IT" LIST

#1

CARMELLE

"THE CARAMEL CANDY"

STUFF IT WITH:
TRUFFLED
RICOTTA OR
MASCARPONE



TORTELLONI

"THE RING"

STUFF IT WITH:
LOBSTER, CRAB,
OR BRAISED
SHORT RIB



AGNOLOTTI

"THE PILLOW"

STUFF IT WITH:
SEASONAL
SQUASH,
WILD MUSHROOMS



With sage brown
butter, toasted
hazelnuts and smoked
ricotta salata! →

ON THE MENU @ DELIZ ITALIAN
STEAKHOUSE: **SQUASH AGNOLOTTI**

WANT TO UP YOUR PASTA GAME?
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PASTA SHAPES: ADOBE STOCK



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ONE CLASSIC, FOUR WAYS

BY AMELIA LEVIN

CHICKEN PARMESAN—it's a staple on many Italian-American menus nationwide, with roots back to southern Italian eggplant parm. Lore goes that Italian immigrants adapted the dish after arriving in the U.S., where chicken was more affordable and readily available. Nowadays, the comfort food has grown in even more popularity because of its affordability—for both operators and guests. Most versions start and end the same way—pounded out thin, then the creativity can begin!

MAKE IT FASTER:
SCAN FOR OUR ITALIAN SEASONED
BREADED CHICKEN CUTLET



THE CHICKEN
PARM FROM
DELIZ ITALIAN
STEAKHOUSE,
CHICAGO

NOW SHAKE IT UP!

SOME INSPIRATION TO GET YOU STARTED

1
**FRY
IT!**

At **RIVER OAKS** in **MYRTLE BEACH, S.C.**, the chicken parm gets a quick dip in the deep fryer, then a wash of housemade marinara and layer of parmesan and mozzarella before it's broiled until bubbly.

2
**PAN-
COOK IT!**

At **NORTHSIDE BISTRO** in **RALEIGH, N.C.**, the breaded chicken cutlet gets pan-fried in butter until crisp, then returned to a San Marzano tomato sauce built in the same pan. It all gets baked in the oven with parmesan until fork-tender.

3
**OVEN-
SEAR IT!**

At **TOSCANOS ITALIAN GRILL** in **PUYALLUP, WASHINGTON**, the chicken's breaded with ground up, leftover house-baked focaccia, then seared in the oven and finished with fresh marinara, parm and mozz.

4
**TABLE-
SIDE IT!**

At **CARBONARA** in **ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA**, Chicken Parmesan gets a dramatic tableside finish. The sauce and cheese, cooked separately in a skillet, gets slid right over the crispy chicken cutlet just before serving.

FOODFANATICS.COM 13



Pizza TOWN

Great pizza has a universal power to draw patrons – especially when premium ingredients make it unforgettable. With Margherita's bold, craveable flavors, operators can make any town a pizza town.

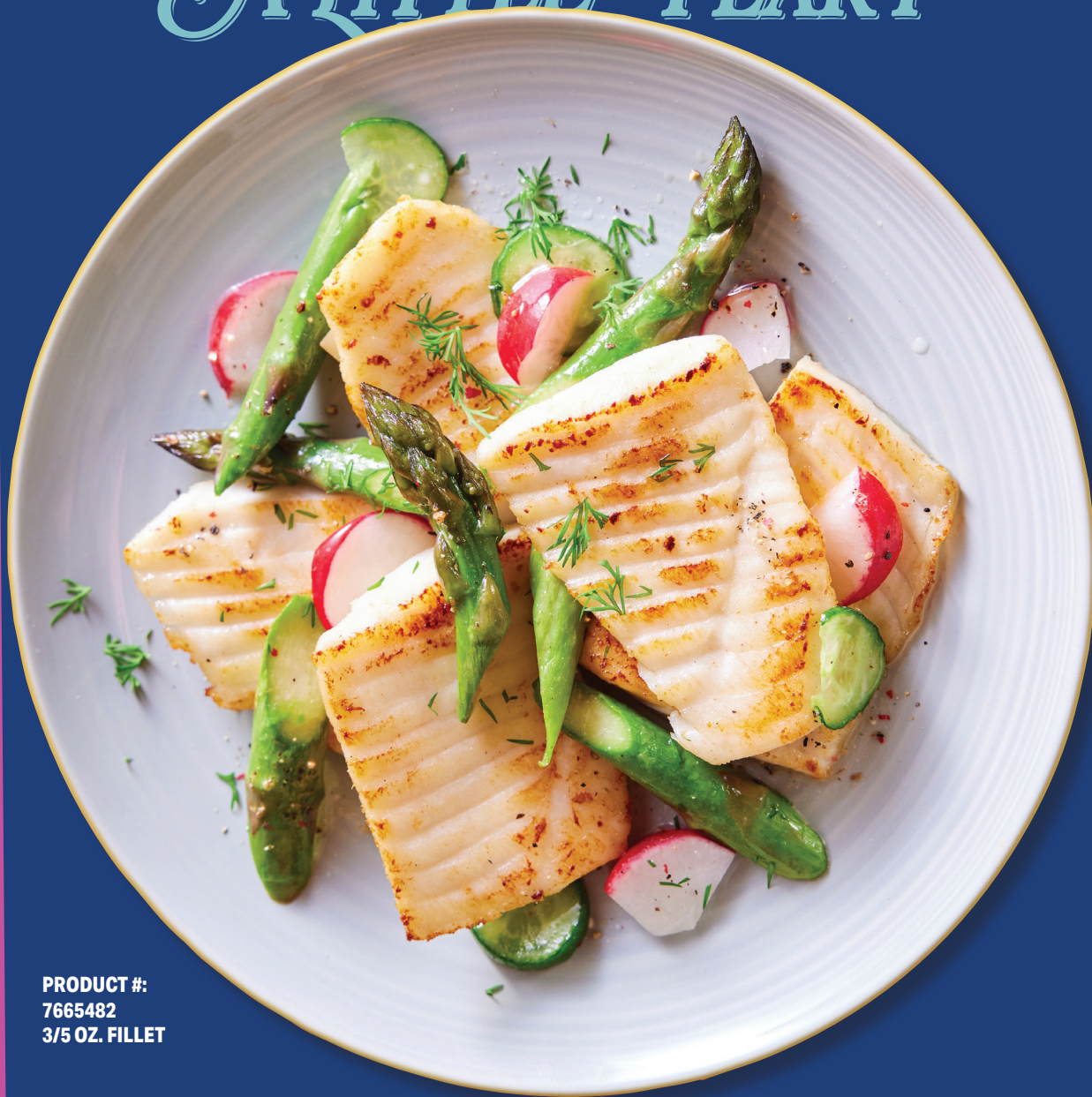


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PASTA GOES GLOBAL!



FROM JAPANESE WAFU COOKING TO KOREAN AND MEXICAN INFLUENCES, PASTA IS STRETCHING FAR BEYOND TRADITIONAL ITALIAN FLAVORS.

Chefs are swapping classic garlic-and-tomato combinations for ingredients like miso, ramen-inspired broths, gochujang, kimchi, galbi, roasted poblanos and even enchilada sauce, creating globally inspired dishes that still feel familiar and comforting.

+42%

GROWTH IN NON-ITALIAN SPAGHETTI PREPARATIONS ON U.S. MENUS OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS.

..... WORLDLY SPAGHETTI SAMPLES ACROSS THE U.S.A.



GREEN SPAGHETTI
ANIMALES,
MINNEAPOLIS
with creamy poblano sauce and cotija



RAMEN BOLOGNESE
PASTARAMEN,
MONTCLAIR,
N.J.
with ramen noodles beef ragu, tomatoes, dashi, miso, soy sauce and parm

PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY THE SPECIALISTS GLOBAL SPAGHETTI STAT: DATASSENTIAL

BLACK GARLIC

Dark, dramatic and undeniably eye-catching, "Italian nero" is making a statement on menus. Squid ink brings sexy appeal to pasta dishes while black garlic brings the umami bomb. Both help operators by giving guests something to talk about—and a reason to come back.

LIKE IT?
GET IT!
SCAN HERE



*"If they leave
feeling like they
had something
unique and memorable,
they're much more
likely to come back."*

—FOOD FANATICS®
CHEF ROBERT KAUFMAN

WHAT?

Black garlic, a naturally fermented ingredient used in Asian cuisines, has crossed into Mediterranean cooking as a savory pairing for pasta.

HOW?

Add pre-minced or mash whole black garlic into a paste for creamy sauces, risotto aioli, compound butter or oil for dressings and drizzles.

WHY?

Both squid ink and black garlic create that "wow" factor in form and flavor to stand out from the competition.

WHO'S DOING IT GREAT AND WHERE.

ROAD TRIP!

BOSTON



CHEF JASON SANTOS

"The food scene here has really evolved, and I think it just keeps getting better. Younger chefs are coming up, which is great. And there's a little bit of everything. I have a love of Asian food, and it's really starting to kick in more here, which I'm psyched to see."

—Chef Jason Santos, owner and chef of Buttermilk & Bourbon, Butterbird, Ghost Light Tavern, Citrus & Salt

THE VETERANS:

Buttermilk & Bourbon

160 Commonwealth Ave.

"Hell's Kitchen" celebrity chef Jason Santos' flagship restaurant opened in 2017, serving creative takes on Southern cuisine with a strong New Orleans influence.

MENU FAVES:
BUTTERMILK FRIED CHICKEN,
SIGNATURE WARM HONEY GLAZED BISCUITS

Crazy Good Kitchen

268 Newbury St.

Known for its stacked burgers, indulgent sandwiches and chef-driven comfort food, Crazy Good Kitchen has grown from a local favorite into a small but expanding restaurant group.

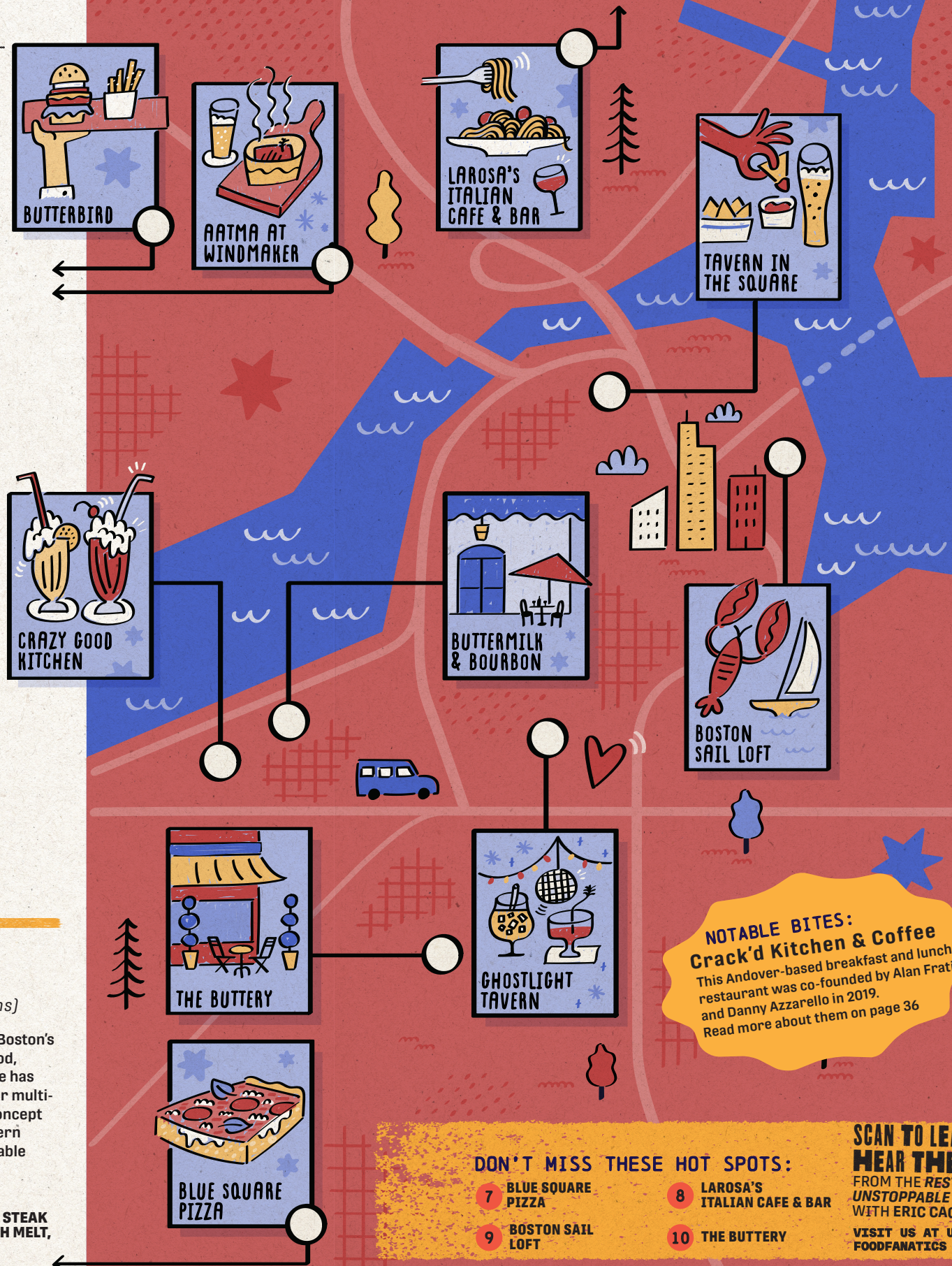
MENU FAVES: DOUBLE TROUBLE BURGER,
BUFFALO CHICKEN FRIES

Tavern in the Square

(multiple locations)

Founded in 2004 in Boston's Allston neighborhood, Tavern in the Square has grown into a popular multi-unit concept. The concept blends elevated tavern fare with approachable American classics.

MENU FAVES:
BANG BANG WINGS, STEAK AND CHEESE CRUNCH MELT,
FISH + CHIPS



THE NEW-COMERS:

Ghost Light Tavern

Opened in late 2025, Chef Jason Santos' newest concept is a two-story "high dive bar" serving elevated comfort food, including smash burgers, tacos, empanadas and Nashville hot mozzarella sticks, alongside nightlife and live entertainment.

Bravo By The Sea

Opened in 2024, Bravo By The Sea is the newest addition to restaurateur Nick Panagos' growing North Shore restaurant group, which also includes Bravo Gloucester and Bravo Squared. Located on Gloucester's scenic waterfront, the restaurant showcases wood-fired pizzas, sandwiches, fresh local seafood and pasta dishes.

Aatma at Widowmaker

Aatma brings bold Indian flavors to Boston's South Shore through a unique residency inside the popular Widowmaker Brewing. Founded by Chef Keith Sarasin, the concept blends traditional Indian techniques with modern presentations, offering dishes such as tandoori specialties, curries, kebabs and creative small plates designed for sharing.

NOTABLE BITES:
Crack'd Kitchen & Coffee
This Andover-based breakfast and lunch restaurant was co-founded by Alan Frati and Danny Azzarello in 2019.
Read more about them on page 36

DON'T MISS THESE HOT SPOTS:

- 7 BLUE SQUARE PIZZA
- 8 LAROSA'S ITALIAN CAFE & BAR
- 9 BOSTON SAIL LOFT
- 10 THE BUTTERY

SCAN TO LEARN MORE AND HEAR THEIR STORIES

FROM THE RESTAURANT UNSTOPPABLE PODCAST WITH ERIC CACCIATORE

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LOOKING FOR FRESH SANDWICH INSPIRATION?
Here are three popular breads with trending Italian-inspired proteins, sauces
and flavor combinations for new, craveable creations.

CIABATTA —————> CHICKEN MILANESE



PRODUCT #245670

STUFF IT: Chicken Milanese with Checca (fresh Italian tomato sauce)

MENU INSPO: Chicken Milanese with panko-crusted chicken breast, fresh arugula, housemade Italian checca salsa with fresh tomato, basil, garlic, EVOO finished with shaved parm and lemon*

+ **66%**

CHICKEN MILANESE
PREDICTED 4-YEAR
MENU GROWTH*

HOAGIE —————> CHICKEN PARM



PRODUCT #3129723

TOAST IT: Chicken Parm with Vodka Sauce

MENU INSPO: Chicken Parm with Vodka Sauce Sub with breaded chicken, fresh mozz, parm and red pepper flakes smothered in vodka sauce on a sub*

+ **281%**

VODKA SAUCE
PREDICTED 4-YEAR
MENU GROWTH*

SOUR REUBEN THICK SLICED —————> PANINI



PRODUCT #9219981

PRESS IT: Caprese with Pesto Aioli

HAVE LEFTOVER SOUR REUBEN SLICES? Cube it for a panzanella salad with fresh tomatoes!

Panzanella: +46% last year on Italian menus

+ **43%**

PESTO AIOLI
PREDICTED 4-YEAR
MENU GROWTH*

+ **59%**

**CALABRIAN CHILE IS UP 59% ON MENUS NATIONWIDE.
BONUS POINTS: ADD CALABRIAN CHILE TO ANY OF THE ABOVE!**

SOURCES: DATASSENTIAL SANDWICH TRENDS, 2026; (PANZANELLA) DATASSENTIAL, 2025;
(CHICKEN MILANESE MENU) CALIFORNIA PIZZA KITCHEN; (CHICKEN PARM) QUICKCHECK

The Italian Way

BY
AMELIA
LEVIN

FROM HOSPITALITY AND SCRATCH COOKING TO SEASONALITY AND WASTE REDUCTION, ITALIAN RESTAURANTS CONTINUE TO TEACH LESSONS EVERY OPERATOR CAN USE.

Chef Drew Keane plates Cacio e Pepe, a simple recipe that uses only a few ingredients

Photograph by Sam Grant for Food Fanatics®

In a key scene from the 1996 film “Big Night,” brothers Primo and Secondo find themselves at odds over a customer. The guest complains there isn’t enough seafood visible in his risotto, then asks for a side of spaghetti and meatballs.

The family behind Bartolino's



“The core principles: quality ingredients, simple preparation, genuine hospitality and a commitment to using every ingredient to its fullest potential.

Those lessons have helped Italian restaurants survive for generations.

They can help operators of any concept thrive today.”

It’s a classic battle between the artistic chef and practical business manager. Primo (Tony Shaloub), the chef, is horrified.

Authentic Italian food doesn’t work that way, he insists. Secondo (Stanley Tucci), the restaurant’s front-of-house manager, sees things differently. The brothers are struggling to keep the lights on, and he’s more concerned about keeping customers happy than winning a culinary argument.

The tension between authenticity and adaptation has played out in Italian restaurants across America for generations. But the core principles—they remain the same.

1. GENERATIONS OF HOSPITALITY

For **MICHAEL SARACINO JR.**, third-generation operator of **BARTOLINO’S** in St. Louis, hospitality starts with remembering where the business came from.

“Grandpa came over in 1954—he had four boys, they got involved in the restaurant business, and now they’re all in their mid-to-late 60s. It’s the third generation that’s kind of taking over the torch, but we’re obviously always remembering where we started from.”

Chef Angelo Maserin (left) of Salumeria 104 in the early days of the restaurant



Scan to read the full hospitality story

2. QUALITY FIRST

Italian cooking isn’t about complicated techniques or expensive ingredients. It’s about letting quality products speak for themselves.

“Italian cooking is about fresh ingredients and very simple preparation,” says **CHEF/PARTNER ANGELO MASERIN** of **SALUMERIA 104** in Miami and South Florida. “If we’re serving fish, it needs to be a good fish and prepared with simple ingredients. I’m not limited to my region or the north region, but we’re going all around and trying also to go with the seasonality.”

EXECUTIVE CHEF DREW KEANE of **GIBSONS ITALIA** in Chicago agrees.

“A dish could have just three ingredients and still be super delicious,” he says. “Pasta aglio e olio is delicious and it’s just olive oil, garlic and butter.”

“TO SAY THAT WE DON’T HAVE ARGUMENTS, I’D BE LYING TO YOU. BUT AT THE END OF THE DAY, WE’RE ITALIAN. WE’RE ALL FAMILY.”

—Michael Saracino J.R., Bartolino’s

Cioppino from Sogno di Vino - a classic example of a simple dish with quality ingredients



3. WASTE NOT

Italian cuisine has long embraced the idea of using every part of an ingredient. That mindset feels especially relevant as operators continue to battle rising food and labor costs.

At **SALUMERIA 104**, Masarin transforms charcuterie scraps into ravioli filling. "The reason why we have ravioli on the menu is to make use of our prosciutto Parma and mortadella scraps," he says. "We stew them in the oven for a filling for the ravioli. This is in line with Italian culture, which is never waste anything and recycle as much as you can."

"ITALIAN COOKING HAS ALWAYS BEEN RESOURCEFUL. ANY SCRAP THAT'S EDIBLE DOESN'T BELONG IN THE GARBAGE."

—Chef Adam Pflueger, Toscanos Italian Grill, Pallyup, Washington



The Pasta Nero at Sulumeria 104



Cacio e Pepe in progress

4. MODERN TECHNIQUES AND TWISTS

Respecting tradition doesn't mean standing still.

"If I hire somebody new and they have a way to do something better than what I've been doing since the early '60s, I'm all ears," says Saracino Jr. "That's how you get better. You always have to have a sponge brain and be open and willing to learn."

Keane has also found ways to modernize classic techniques. He makes a "pasta glue" by overcooking pasta and pureeing some of it with the starchy pasta water for a paste that he'll add to the pan when making delicate, egg-based sauces for cacio e pepe and carbonara.

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Let the
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Cacio e Pepe photograph by Sam Grant

"THE RESTAURANTS THAT ENDURE COMBINE TRADITION WITH DISCIPLINE, HOSPITALITY WITH CONSISTENCY AND AUTHENTICITY WITH A WILLINGNESS TO EVOLVE"

5. SEASONAL, LOCAL INGREDIENTS

In Florida, Masarin incorporates regional seafood and tropical produce. "We have a great base of farms down in Homestead, about 40 minutes from Miami, but mostly tropical fruit," he says. "For seafood, stone crabs and spiny lobsters are two favorites here in South Florida."

At **SOGNO DI VINO**, seasonal ingredients drive dishes like a rotating burrata appetizer.

"The burrata changes throughout the year because it's such a great canvas for seasonal ingredients," Ali Turner says. "In the fall we serve it with dried apricots and arugula."



The cacio e pepe from Salumeria 104



The staff family at Sogno di Vino

6. STAY TRUE TO YOUR BRAND

The most successful restaurants—Italian or not—know that sticking to your core favorites and your brand always works best.

At **BARTOLINO'S**, toasted ravioli remains a signature appetizer. At **TOSCANOS**, it's Martini Clams, a towering dish served in a giant martini glass. At **SALUMERIA 104**, staples like bolognese and cacio e pepe remain untouchable.

Says Turner of **SOGNO DI VINO**: "We have to always ask, 'Does this make sense for who we are?' If someone wants to put chorizo on a pizza, we'll talk about how to make that fit our style. In this case, it might become a Calabrian chile and Italian sausage pizza instead."

Still hungry?
The full story is available online. Scan the code to read it and learn more



LESSONS FROM ITALIAN RESTAURANTS THAT CAN BENEFIT ANY OPERATOR

ONE

BUY THE BEST INGREDIENTS YOU CAN AFFORD.

Focus on quality where it matters most. Upgrade your pasta, olive oil, cheese or tomatoes, and let those ingredients shine.

TWO

KEEP IT SIMPLE.

Food doesn't have to be complicated. Resist the urge to add ingredients just because you can.

THREE

MASTER THE TECHNIQUE.

Simple dishes leave nowhere to hide. A great cacio e pepe depends more on execution than ingredient count.

FOUR

WASTE NOTHING.

Save vegetable trim for stock, turn bread into breadcrumbs and repurpose charcuterie scraps in soups, sauces and fillings.

SLICED TO MEET YOU.

Glenview Farms® Sliced Cheeses bring consistent flavor, dependable coverage and grab-and-go convenience for burgers, sandwiches and melts.

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photos provided by Salumeria 104 and Sogno di Vino

The latest stuff. Because we love stuff.

GEAR CHECK!



WITH BBQ MASTER
JOE DIAPICE

ON THE GO WITH JOE

Chefs and operators are being asked more and more to bring their food outside their four walls. From backyard BBQs at private homes to food festivals, farmers markets, demos, pop-ups and larger-scale offsite catering events. BBQ master, caterer and content creator **JOE DIAPICE** swears by his Cam Gobox® Food Transporters. Here are three ways he uses them when feeding and serving on-the-go.



1 FOR RESTING AND HOLDING SMOKED MEATS.

"It's so important to let brisket, pork shoulder and other slow-cooked meats when they come off the smoker so the temperature comes down and lets the juices redistribute. Ribs might only need an hour, but larger briskets might need a minimum of two hours up to six."

2 FOR AVOIDING SOGGY MESS.

"The built-in shelving system has grooves to hold the lips of hotel pans so you don't have to stack food directly on top of each other in an open carrier. This is great if you're transporting a delicate cake or have macaroni and cheese with the cheese melted on top."

3 FOR KEEPING COLD FOOD COLD.

"It's super important to keep cold food at the right temperature when serving outside. I have my freezer ice packs ready to go and just slide them at the top of the unit on one of the shelves and I'm ready to go. I use the cold carriers for coleslaw, banana pudding, macaroni salad, potato salad."

EXTRA!

BY FOOD FANATICS® CHEF
MIKE LATARSKI

"I LOVE THESE TABLETOP FOOD BARS FOR POP-UP TACO AND NACHO BARS, LOADED BAKED POTATO BARS, BBQ SANDWICH BARS, HOT DOG AND BRAT BARS, BURGER AND WING BARS, MEDITERRANEAN BOWL BARS, SALAD BARS AND CHILI AND PASTA BARS!"





River Oaks' Andrew Gjeloshi with the pizzeria's signature calzone at the Surfside location.

TODAY, WE'RE MAKING: **CALZONES**

Andrew Gjeloshi of River Oaks Pizzeria in Myrtle Beach, S.C., learned how to sling dough and bake New York-style pies from his father, an immigrant from Kosovo who worked as a baker in the Little Italy area of the Bronx in the '80s. Gjeloshi is a proud second-generation pizzeria co-owner with his brother who helped expand the business south. He shows us how to make River Oaks' famous calzones and meat- and cheese-stuffed rolls (similar to stromboli).

INSPIRED??? SHOP INGREDIENTS HERE AND GET ROLLING ->



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BOBBY ALTMAN FOR FOOD FANATICS®

LET'S COOK THIS!!!

WITH CHEF
ANDREW GJELOSHI,
AT RIVER OAKS
PIZZERIA



STEP ONE

WORK THE DOUGH

"Flour a 6- or 8-inch dough ball and then I like to make dimples lightly with my fingertips to loosen it up. I might give the dough a quick toss from one side to the other or give it one or two stretches to form a flattened, round shape. I don't like to crush all the air out and rip through it." For rolls, form a 10-inch rectangle.



STEP TWO

ADD YOUR FILLINGS.

"Keep your cheese in the center. We add the mozzarella, ricotta, and then we do a little more mozz over the top. You could also add some pepperoni, sausage or other filling." For rolls, add toppings left to right, leaving space along the edges like a border.



STEP THREE

FILL AND SEAL

"Fold one side over the other to create a half-moon shape. Use your pizza cutter to press down lightly around the edges to seal it nice and tight, then go around the edges with the cutter to cut off the excess." For rolls, carefully roll up from left to right, seal the edges and make a few diagonal cuts for steam vents.



STEP FOUR

BAKE AND SERVE

"Bake for 10 to 12 minutes at 500 degrees. When the calzones come out, brush them lightly with high quality extra-virgin olive oil, or you could use butter. We serve our calzones and rolls with our homemade red sauce on the side." For rolls, slice the baked log into 2 inch hand-held portions, perfect for dipping.

BUILDING BETTER KITCHENS

THREE TOOLS LEADERS CAN USE RIGHT NOW TO BUILD TRUST, LISTEN BETTER AND STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATION

WITH CHEF SCOTT WITTKOPF, CEC



ONE: START WITH A BRAIN-STATE CHECK-IN

The Brain States framework helps leaders recognize when employees may be struggling and adjust their approach accordingly. As stress increases in Alarmed and Fearful states, thinking becomes less rational and the brain can't think rationally. Recognizing when someone is struggling prevents bigger problems later.

EXECUTIVE CHEF SCOTT WITTKOPF of Inspiration Kitchens as worked in some of the industry's most demanding kitchens, from Michelin starred restaurants to luxury hotels.

Recently, Wittkopf attended a Building Better Kitchens workshop hosted by Catalyst Kitchens, a national network of nonprofit culinary training programs that use foodservice as a pathway to employment and economic mobility.

"I think there's a desperate need in the industry for this," he says. "Many owner-operators think that financial motivation is first and foremost for people. But if you want a committed employee, someone who will weather the storm with you and help you build something, creating a supportive kitchen is way more important."

TWO: HUG BEFORE YOU SOLVE

When tensions rise, many managers instinctively jump into problem-solving mode. The workshop's HUG framework encourages leaders to slow down and focus on listening first by Hearing, Understanding and Giving Back before offering solutions.

THREE: FOLLOW THE THREE R'S

After employees feel heard, move into the Three Rs: Regulate, Relate and Reason. The framework helps de-escalate conflict before moving into problem-solving and accountability. Wittkopf says the short time investment pays off in reduced conflict and stronger relationships.

"IF YOU WANT A COMMITTED EMPLOYEE...CREATING A SUPPORTIVE KITCHEN ENVIRONMENT IS WAY MORE IMPORTANT."

CATALYST KITCHEN PHOTO COURTESY OF CATALYST KITCHENS



CATALYST KITCHENS' BUILDING BETTER KITCHENS WORKSHOP IN MAY 2026 AT SILVERFORK IN CHICAGO (THAT'S OUR EDITOR SEATED THIRD FROM RIGHT!)

MENTAL MISE en PLACE

LEADERS WHO TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES ARE BETTER EQUIPPED TO SUPPORT THEIR TEAMS. START WITH THESE THREE PRACTICES, THEN DO THEM AS A WHOLE TEAM:

1



MORNING CENTERING

Take five minutes before service to set intentions, visualize the shift and ground yourself before the day begins.

TEAM MISE: Set up stations and take a few quiet, deep breaths together as a group.

2

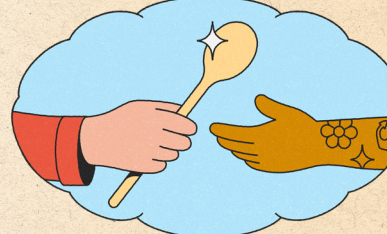


PRE-SERVICE CHECK-IN

Do a quick mental scan: How am I feeling? What do I need? What does my team need from me today?

TEAM MISE: Post the Brain States chart and use it as a daily, team check-in tool.

3



ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Recognize your limits and make choices that preserve your ability to lead effectively throughout the shift

TEAM MISE: Cross-train staff for every position so there's always a backup when someone needs a break.

FYI:

CATALYST KITCHENS IS A NATIONAL NETWORK OF NONPROFIT CULINARY TRAINING PROGRAMS



'TIS THE SEASON

GIVING BACK



ALAN FRATI AND
DANNY AZZARELLO

FOUR TIPS FOR BUILDING LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY

Giving back can feel like one more thing on an already full plate. But thoughtful community partnerships are more than goodwill—they're smart local marketing that builds loyalty, introduces new guests to your food and strengthens your connection to the neighborhood.

"WE HAVE A CREDO...AND ONE OF THE PRINCIPLES IS 'GIVE BACK.' IT'S SOMETHING THAT WE TRY TO LIVE EVERY DAY."

FOR ALAN FRATI AND DANNY AZZARELLO, founders of Crack'd Kitchen & Coffee, community involvement is part of the company's DNA.

"We have a credo—our defining principles—that Danny and I created 10 years ago before we even opened our first location," Frati said. "We have it painted on the wall in our restaurants, and one of the principles is 'Give Back.' It's something that we try to live every day."

Here are their tips for getting involved—just in time for the holidays.

1 THINK LOCAL

AF: "Our restaurants are each in their own independent communities so we don't choose one national organization to work with on behalf of all our restaurants."

2 START WITH THE SCHOOLS AND YOUR LOCAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

AF: "Reach out to the school district first because that travels to the households. Attend community and networking events. When we first opened, we said yes to everything. We went to all the events and handed out business cards every time."

3 DONATE FOOD, NOT CASH. AND BUDGET FOR IT

DZ: "We've never given out cash donations. Our giveaways are always through product because that's what you really want to do—have more people try your food."

4 DON'T BE SHY—TELL PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR ACTIVITIES

DZ: "We don't just donate and walk away. If we're partnering with an organization, we'll help promote the event through our social channels because the more people who show up, the bigger the impact."

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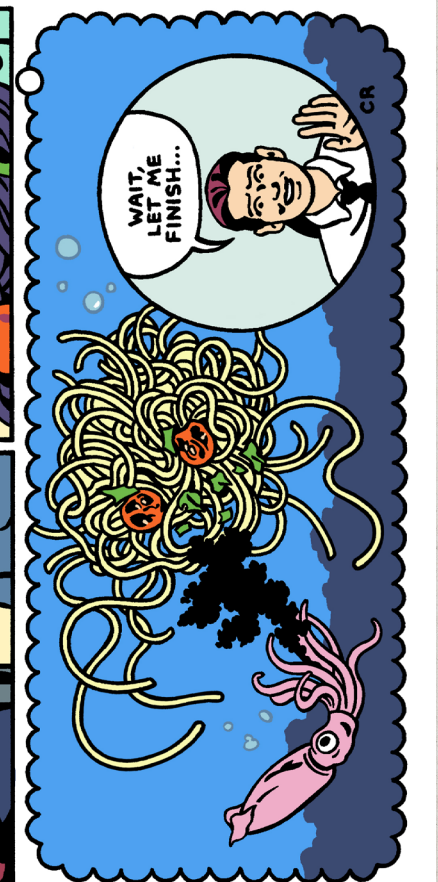
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THINK YOU'RE FUNNY?
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TO @US_FOODS
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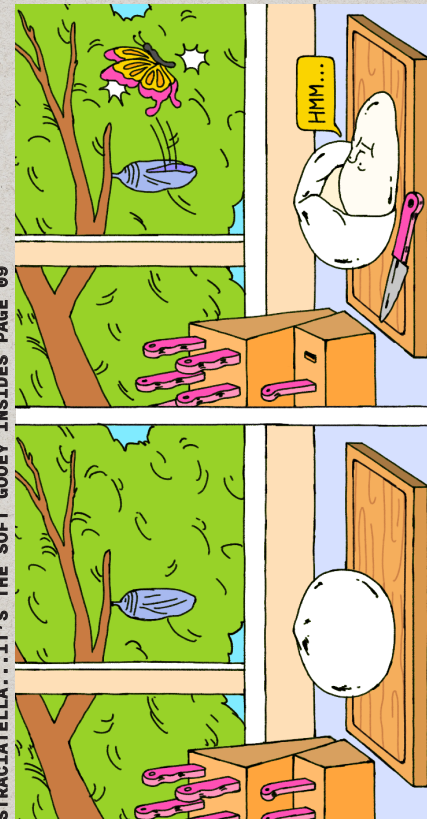
THE FUNNY PAGES

SQUID INK PASTA: CASEY ROONAN; STRACIATELLA: KAITLIN BRITO; PASTA SHAPES: JAMES YATES

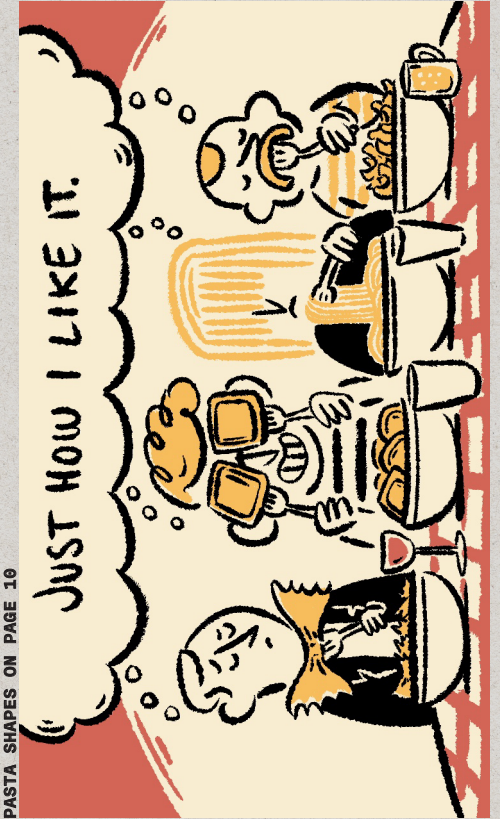
SQUID INK PASTA



STRACIATELLA...IT'S THE SOFT GOOEY INSIDES PAGE 99



PASTA SHAPES ON PAGE 19



SQUID INK: CASEY ROONAN; STRACIATELLA: KAITLIN BRITO; PASTA SHAPES: JAMES YATES

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BACK BURNER

SEPTEMBER 2026

FIVE Q'S 'CAUSE NO ONE'S GOT TIME FOR MORE

JAKE PETERSON

EXECUTIVE CHEF/CO-OWNER,
① DELIZ ITALIAN STEAKHOUSE,
CHICAGO



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DELIZ ITALIAN STEAKHOUSE.
AND YES, THAT'S A GIANT CRAB.

Chef Jakob Peterson's fine-dining background includes sous cheffing at Chicago's Michelin-starred Acadia, opening Acadia House Provisions in Maine and leadership roles with Etta upon returning to Chicago.

1. WHAT MADE YOU FIRST WANT TO BE A CHEF?

I told my parents I wanted to be a chef when I was 10 years old. I have a strong food history—my mom's side of the family opened the first grocery store in Redondo Beach.

2. FAVORITE FALL INGREDIENTS?

Definitely fall mushrooms, truffles and white Alba truffles we fly in from Italy. Even though mushrooms can be a pain because you have to clean them really well, especially the foraged ones.

3. FAVORITE KITCHEN EQUIPMENT?

Our Grillworks live-fire grill. Open-fire cooking gives our steaks a great crust and a great char, which translates to flavor. We like cherrywood for flavor, but it burns quickly, so we mix it with oak.

4. WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NEXT?

My mom always joked that the only side of the family that really matters when you're Italian is the Italian side. I've been cooking Italian for a long time, but I'm excited to branch out and bring in some more global influences and techniques from my days at Acadia.

5. FAVORITE ITALIAN DISH?

Right now, I'm pretty proud of our

WILD BOAR BOLOGNESE.

I cook it in stock instead of heavy tomato sauce and add wine and guanciale and serve it over tagliardi that we make. It's pure rustic Italian cooking.



WANNA BE NEXT?

HIT US UP ON SOCIAL AND TAG
#USFBACKBURNER @US_FOODS