

• A Chat WITH Chef. •

Q. What inspired you to pursue a culinary career and become a Chef?

A. *I always wanted to be a Chef. From very early on I was most inspired by my own family-in particular, my mother. I began when I was very young helping her prepare family meals. Dinnertime was always very important in our home and my parents always made a point of having the family sit down together for meals. This is something that I have an even deeper appreciation for now that I have a family of my own. These sit-down dinners became powerful memories for me, and as I got into cooking more, I really liked the creativity I could bring to them.*

Q. For you, what are the key qualities needed to become a Chef?

A. *In my opinion...discipline, organization and leadership. It's a given that all Chef's have an enduring passion for creating mouth-watering dishes but being a Chef goes beyond this. You must have an impeccable work ethic and be VERY hardworking. The profession demands long hours that include both holidays and weekends. Equally important is self-motivation. You have to be constantly seeking out new ingredients, and foods and staying up with what is current and in demand.*

Q. How do you stay up to date on new foods or trends?

A. *Chefs like myself are never content to cook the same dishes over and over again. Instead, we are curious about new developments in the culinary world, unusual flavor combinations and ingredients we haven't yet heard of. To satisfy this curiosity, I read a lot—magazines such as Saveur. There is also a wealth of good information that I curate from the Internet.*

And of course I dine out (but honestly I don't get to do as much as people might think). You want to find dishes that speak to you and use the resulting excitement to achieve similar goals. Another chef's meal just may get you rethinking some ingredient or a specific culinary tradition.

Q. Who is your favorite Chef?

A. *I'd have to say Daniel Boulud. I love the way he has stayed up with the times and updates his food.*

Q. What is your biggest accomplishment?

A. *Of course getting the Executive Chef position at the Harvard Club!*

Q. What have been some of your best memories at the Club?

A. *I really like planning the special dinners that tie to our programs and events. The recent Victorian themed dinner for Sherlock Holmes' 163rd Birthday allowed for a lot of culinary creativity. Looking ahead, I'm excited about preparing a Spanish themed main dining room menu to complement the Goyescas recital on February 24th. Also the crawfish boil for Mardi Gras on February 28th. As a wine enthusiast, I always welcome the popular wine themed dinners. I love meeting the members whether its getting their feedback on what they would like to see on the menu or participating in programs like our annual Summer Cooking Classes. This past year, I was auctioned off at the Annual Dinner which served up (no pun intended) a lot of laughs and fun.*

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Q. What resolutions have you set for yourself for 2017?

A. *I'm not really one for resolutions, but if I had to pick something that I always try to do, it would be to get better every year. I'm always seeking out new culinary techniques and this year I'd really like to focus on the Middle East and Asia. In particular, really learn more about the new ingredients and foods that are coming out of those regions.*

Q. Many members are looking to eat healthier in 2017, what are your top 3 tips to making a favorite recipe healthier?

A. *Recipes can be made healthier by making some very simple substitutions.*

- *Instead of using butter or certain dairy products, try yogurts and different milk products such as soy milk.*
- *Substitute in healthy oils and try using more stocks such as vegetable stock.*
- *I'd also recommend learning about herbs and spices and incorporating them more for additional flavor.*

Q. What does eating healthy look like for you? What is your favorite healthy meal?

A. *Healthy eating for me is usual a balance of vegetables and protein with flavor being at the forefront. Bitter greens, wild mushrooms and polenta is definitely my favorite, but I like most Mediterranean inspired dishes as well as authentic Ramen.*

Q. Where do you start when planning a healthy menu?

A. *I start with seasonal items. First I'll select the vegetables that are in season, next I choose the protein and last but not least, I pair a starch. Seasonal winter vegetables that I'm currently working with are all of the squashes as well as braising greens such as kale, escarole and the chicory. Citrus is starting to come into season now as well.*

Q. What new healthy options may we expect on the Club menu?

A. *Enhancing our menu to include healthy options is an on-going Club mission. All of our ingredients are extremely high-quality and well sourced. We've been working with a cooperative farm in upstate New York to source much of our produce in peak season. To keep it interesting we are using more flavor enhancing spices from different regions of the world. We've recently added fresh press juices to our breakfast menu such as carrot, spinach and cantaloupe. All of our a la carte options are made to order so we can satisfy any dietary need. We also have gluten free and heart healthy selections indicated on the menu.*