



MELISSA MIOLA

Where are you from?

I grew up in Long Island, New York. I come from a large, loud, Italian-American family. My childhood was full of large family gatherings where my mother cooked an extraordinary amount of delicious food. My family moved to Scottsdale, Arizona when I was 15 in 2002. It wasn't an easy transition but eventually I came to love Arizona and have made it my home.

Why did you start cooking?

I don't know if there is a "why", I have always cooked with my mother. When I was little, I would help my mom with preparations. I mostly just enjoyed listening to disco and watching her work. As I got older I started taking over regular dinners, and then eventually holidays. Cooking has always been an expression of love and nurturing. This is something I hold dear and try to express with my cooking to this day.

How would you describe your style of cooking? What is your "signature" dish?

Having worked in fine dining almost exclusively, I have come to find that my personal style of cooking is something more laid back. I love cooking food that is simple but prepared expertly. I don't like manipulating ingredients too much, I'd rather let the product speak for itself. When you use high quality products the challenge is finding the best way to showcase them in their best light.

What is your experience in the kitchen?

Arizona Culinary Institute, Honors Graduate
Cafe Bink, Carefree, AZ - Lead Line Cook
Binkley's, Cave Creek, AZ - GM and Meat Cook
Second Story Liquor Bar, Scottsdale, AZ - GM and Expo
Ad Hoc & Addendum, Yountville, CA - Chef de Partie, FOH staff
Other:
Il Toco Catering, Phoenix, AZ - Catering Assistant
Bohemian Grove, Monte Rio, CA - Second Lead

What are some of your most rewarding culinary accomplishments?

Since I started cooking professionally, I have always strived to work for the best and always continue to be learning. I am very proud of working for Chef Binkley and Chef Gautier at the start of my career. Those chefs shaped my standards of excellence and showed me what is possible with extreme hard work and determination. Another experience I am proud of is working at Ad Hoc for the Thomas Keller Restaurant Group. Working for Chef Keller was a huge goal of mine. I am proud that I took the chance, moved to Napa, and was able to explore such an amazing opportunity for two years.

What do you enjoy most about being a chef?

Connecting with my guests is probably the best part of being a chef, that and making a living playing with food. There is no greater feeling than being able to see your guests enjoy



something you made. Another thing I love is being able to meet other professional chefs and learn from them and their experiences. Cooking really connects you to people all over the world. Good food unites all people.

What are some of your favorite restaurants (Local & Nationally)?

Locally, I'm in love with Tratto, Mowery and Cotton, Atlas Bistro and Chula Seafood. There are so many amazing restaurants that have opened in the last two years that I am dying to try. Nationally, Ciccio in Yountville, and of course Bouchon, Ad Hoc, and The French Laundry. Alinea, Cellar Door Provisions and Publican Quality Meats in Chicago. Tartine, Tartine Manufactory, and Lazy Bear in San Francisco.

Which Chefs do you admire and why?

Thomas Keller - For his standards of excellence, reverence of tradition, and leading the way in treating cooking as a true profession.

Rene Redzepi - For his incredible focus on sustainability and seasonality and changing the way we think of food. His experiments of fermentation and preservation open new possibilities on delicious food.

Lidia Bastianich - Her cookbooks taught me how to cook. She's maintained a cooking show and opening multiple restaurants across the country helping people fall in love with Italian cooking.

What is your Instagram handle and Facebook name? Instagram - @melissamiola
Facebook - Melissa Miola