

# The Passionate Foodie

October 13, 2009

Online

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2009

## Culinary Creativity: Chef Jacob Zachow



(Check out my [Introduction](#) to the *Culinary Creativity* series.)

**Chef Jacob Zachow** was raised on a farm in rural upstate New York where he developed a deep respect for nature and learned to value food in its natural state. By using the freshest ingredients possible and cooking them perfectly, Jake “*keeps it simple and makes it great.*”

Jake began cooking at age 13 and decided early on to pursue a career in culinary arts, learning Garde Manager, banquet management and administration at the **Otesaga Hotel** in **Cooperstown, NY**, after which he was Executive Chef at **The Vines Restaurant** in **Oneonta, NY**. While Jake’s specialty is rustic Italian cuisine, pairing fresh ingredients with citrus and deep spice blends, he spent three years learning classical French cooking under **Executive Chef Jim Palmeri** at the **Mohonk Mountain House** in **New Paltz, NY**, where Jake was Chef Garde Manager and then Chef de Cuisine. Jake moved to **Boston** in the Spring of 2008 and is now at the helm of **Bella Luna Restaurant**.

### **How important is culinary creativity to you? Why is it important?**

*Culinary creativity is very important to me because it allows chefs to define what we do as an Art form. Even just in the way we assemble our ingredients in a recipe. It is important because it is what will mold the industry and take it to the next era of cooking.*

### **What are your most significant inspirations for your culinary creativity? What makes those matters so inspiring?**

*The most significant inspirations to my culinary creativity would be the season, weather and the ingredients available. What makes these so inspiring is how I perceive them and relate them to past events in my life. It could be the aroma of a bakery on my way to work in the morning, the smell of cinnamon and cloves that reminds me of fall in NY and stimulates me to make Pumpkin Mascarpone Cheese Cake...or in the summer it could be a trip to the beach that gives me the idea to deconstruct Clam Chowder getting all of those aromas on the plate.*

### **Where do you get your ideas for new recipes/dishes?**

*Ideas for new recipes stem from a few ingredients at my hand. When I create a recipe or feature for dinner it develops from ingredients that I have already brought into the restaurant. Then I begin to evaluate flavors and textures in my head balancing sweetness, salt and spice.*

### **What is your process of creating a new recipe or dish?**

*The process of creating a new recipe stems includes what I said in the previous question. Once I have combined all of the flavors in my head I then construct it on the plate and evaluate it myself. The next step I adjust any flavors that need to be and make it for the rest of my kitchen staff and Sous Chef. Letting them weigh in on what could be improved upon. During this time I also document all my ingredients on my chef pad.*

**Do other members of your staff assist with creating ideas for new recipes/dishes?**

*Yes, as I said above they help me in the final stages of a recipe. Sometimes I also consult my Sous Chef in the beginning asking him how he thinks flavors will blend. Its important to understand that as a chef you are never truly done learning and that your staff are what will make you or break you.*

**How do you test new recipes/dishes?**

*Testing new recipes is done in three stages. First I make it for myself. Next I make it for my staff. Third I run it as a Nightly Feature. Ultimately the customer will be the one that decides whether it is a successful recipe.*

**What is the most difficult part of culinary creativity?**

*The most difficult part of culinary creativity is when there is a lack of it. When you have to go out in search of the stimulants that will get your brain flowing with excitement again.*


**Do you ever experience "writer's block," an inability to be creative, and if so, how do you deal with it?**

*Yes of course, it happens to everyone. Worst case scenario I relate to trade magazines. Looking at the current trends and what is coming up in the future.*

**Relate an unusual or interesting anecdote about the creation of one of your dishes.**

*Sometimes in the creation of a dish something you envision develops into something completely different ... but better.*

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Posted by Richard Auffrey at 6:00 AM 

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