

Food for Thought

People · Products · Purpose

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“Know what sparks the light in you. Use that to illuminate the world.”

— Oprah Winfrey

Earning while learning

Local chef prepares apprentices to excel in the culinary field

Josh Kelly is chef and lead mentor for Opus Culinary Program, a unique 8-week on-the-job training experience that includes serving lunch in an elegant dining room and catering for special events.

ARE YOU A COLORADO NATIVE?

I'm from Upstate New York, but I've been here 17 years now.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO COLORADO SPRINGS?

After I finished college, my sister was living out here as a runner at the Olympic Training Center. I came out here to stay with her for two weeks, and I've been here ever since. I went back and forth for a while opening a restaurant back home, but I just didn't love it as much out there as I do here, so I ended up coming back. This is home now.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR WORK WITH THE OPUS CULINARY PROGRAM:

I've been hiring people in this industry for a long time, so this project is near-and-dear to my heart. We are getting all kinds of people from all walks of life into the hospitality industry and giving them a jump-start on their future careers. They are paid to be here, the standards are very high, and the meals we serve are sold at full price. So we all work together to put out really great stuff. It's an earn-and-learn program, so the students are rewarded for their work. Every two months we bring 10 more people into the industry to fill roles that are badly needed. Within the first two weeks on the job, I was fielding calls from chefs interested in our students, and they have gone to a wide variety of businesses, from food pantries to the Broadmoor.

TALK ABOUT THE MENTORING ASPECT: I didn't realize I would take so much joy in it. It's been so rewarding to see people fall in love with what they're doing and enter the same career that gave me everything I've ever dreamed off. After those eight weeks, it's kind



Josh and his team have prepared spectacular dishes like this Callicrate skirt steak with bright chimichurri at Opus Creative Kitchen, located inside Bancorp Plaza at 1 S. Nevada. The dining room is open to the public for weekday lunches, grab-and-go breakfasts and special events. Callicrate beef and pork are prominently featured. Learn more at CommunityCulturalCollective.org.

of sad to see them leave. But that's also a testament to the good job we've done.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE CUT OF MEAT AT RANCH FOODS DIRECT?

The Town Center location cuts a pork chop for me that's like a Tomahawk steak, with the whole fat cap left on it. It's my favorite thing in the world. It's such a good pork chop.

Colorado Springs native prioritizes local sourcing

When Chef Dustin Archuleta was challenged to create a new Callicrate pork chop recipe for the Side Dish with Schniper newsletter, he came up with a sweet and savory mustard sauce that is equally good on salmon or roast chicken. (Recipe bottom-left on the following page.) Here's more about Dustin's career as a chef and why he's a Ranch Foods Direct enthusiast.

WHAT'S YOUR IMPRESSION OF RANCH FOODS DIRECT? I love it.

I love everything I've gotten there. I love the beef bacon. All of the Wagyu products are awesome, but I also love the duck, chicken and pork, anything in the store. We actually get the same fresh mushrooms from Austin Brinker as the store carries. I've been working with him for almost five years now. So, to see the Ranch Foods Direct store getting products from local vendors, it's awesome. It's everything I would hope to do myself as a chef at a restaurant.

YOU'RE ALSO FAMILIAR WITH AHAVAH FARM, WHICH OFFERS WEEKLY DISTRIBUTION AT PEAK TO PLAINS FOOD HUB. HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THEM?

I was a CSA member at Ahavah Farms even before I took on my executive chef role. I'm into regenerative farming. I do a lot of gardening at my house and use regenerative practices in my own yard. It brings these sandy soils back to life! My wife and I have been living at our current place for four years now, and we just keep adding to the soil quality. It's amazing to get out the shovel and see the difference. So I love to support people who use regenerative practices.

DESCRIBE YOUR CULINARY JOURNEY: I started working at Taco Bell when I was 14; there was always a job for me in kitchens. When I was 18, I got a job at Jose Muldoon's downtown and kind of fell in love with the whole full-service dining scene. I've always liked creative things, but I never really thought of food as creative until I got a little further in my career. After my wife and I had triplets, we moved to Arizona for awhile to be closer to her family. After staying home with the kiddos for four months, I got a job at Nonna, in Scottsdale, and the chef there showed me how to be, not just creative, but how to

do all things really well. Coming back here after a year and half, I was looking for a spot where I could chase my chef dream. After two months at Urban Steam, I was promoted when the previous chef left. Now, at District Elleven, we have certain signature dishes on our menu, but I also get to create food where I take inspiration from the seasons.



WHAT DO YOU WISH MORE PEOPLE KNEW ABOUT LOCAL FOOD? That local food is easier

than people think. They tend to think it's very difficult, and they have to shop at the farmers market. But places like Ranch Foods Direct and Bread and Butter Neighborhood Market downtown make it much more accessible to anybody daunted by the idea of shopping locally. It's a supermarket format, whereas keeping up with the farmers markets can be a little intimidating to some people.

ANY RECENT COOKING TRENDS YOU'RE REALLY INTO? The triple-seared

steak. You take a steak, sear it once, dip it in soy sauce, pat it off and then sear it again, preferably over wood coals, then dip it in saki and mirin for the

final sear. Mirin is a Japanese cooking wine that's more on the sugary side. So you're imparting salt, you're imparting flavor and you're caramelizing it. The mirin gives it a little glaze, a little sweetness. When I do dinner parties, I like to cook a whole giant piece of beef, maybe two and half inches thick, and cut it into chunks and serve it like a roast, instead of making a bunch of smaller individual steaks. It frees me up to enjoy my guests a little bit more. At District Elleven, we've been doing a take on meat-and-potatoes that I really love, with a brandy au jus, horseradish cream and watercress. We use the Denver steak from Ranch Foods Direct. It's nice to find meat of such high quality and to have a local butcher who will cut it just how we want it.

District Elleven, 218 N. Tejon, is part of Choice Restaurant Concepts, which also includes the adjoining Bird Tree Cafe and T-Byrds Tacos and Tequila.

Recipes

Top Sirloin Beef Bulgogi

Serves two

¼ cup soy sauce
1 Tbsp. sugar
2 Tbsp. dry sake
1 tsp. sesame oil
¼ tsp. black pepper
½ tsp. teaspoon salt
3 oz. chopped onion
3 oz. chopped green apple
2 tsp. chopped garlic
1 tsp. ginger paste
1 lb. thinly sliced Callicrate top sirloin

Add all of the ingredients except the beef in a food processor and purée. Pour this marinade over the beef and stir well to combine. Let it marinate for at least one hour, or as long as overnight.

To cook the beef, evenly space it on a very hot pan with Ranch Foods Direct beef tallow and stir until cooked through. Serve with steamed rice and Korean side dishes such as pickled cucumbers and onions.



Above, Supansa Banker's take on bulgogi, a Korean style stir-fry made with thinly sliced marinated beef.

CHEF DUSTIN ARCHULETA'S ANCHO HONEY MUSTARD SAUCE

Warm a small sauce pot on medium-low. Add a small amount of tallow or oil and two minced garlic cloves, and sweat until fragrant. Turn the heat to medium-high and add 1/2 c. white wine vinegar, 1/2 c. honey, 1 tbsp whole grain mustard, 1 tsp ancho chile powder and a scant pinch of salt. Bring to a simmer and reduce by a third, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl then add 1 1/2 tbsp finely chopped cilantro and 1 tsp minced shallot. Allow to cool to room temperature.



Supansa Banker is the owner-operator of Chef's Roots food truck and catering. She is originally from Thailand and came to Colorado Springs in 2012. She's a graduate of the Pikes Peak Community College culinary program and has cooked in many fine restaurants around town.



After Jane Drew and her husband Mike were featured in the February 2023 customer newsletter, the couple arranged to get two heifers from Callicrate Cattle Company to run on pasture land they own near Black Forest. When they picked up the pair this spring, they didn't know they were getting a bonus. "We named them Agatha and Christie," Jane explains. "Well, we noticed Agatha was getting pretty portly." At the end of June, Agatha delivered a calf. "We are thrilled to death. We got another girl," Jane said while flashing a photo on her phone. The calf goes by the name Sunshine. "Our little granddaughter named her that because she's such a happy gift to the farm," Jane says. The couple are excited to have their own home-raised beef in the future, but for now they continue to enjoy Ranch Foods Direct cowpool and individual cuts. "It's all we'll eat, because it's the best, and it's what we trust," Jane says. "It was my brother Doug who first told us about it. Every weekend he's there, getting a hamburger at the food truck and buying his meat for the week."

A ray of sunshine

Customer Update



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Good food ... that's good for you!

Natural Meat Market

Two retail locations in Colorado Springs!

Flagship store: 1228 E. Fillmore
719-623-2980

Food hub: 4635 Town Center Drive
719-559-0873

Retail hours at both locations:
Monday through Saturday 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Or shop online. Shipping available.
www.ranchfoodsdirect.com

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