

Featured Chef: Taylor Domet

Written by Interview and photos by Debby Wolvos

Executive Chef Taylor Domet of North Italia.



AFM: You joined Fox Restaurant Concepts three years ago. How has working with Fox changed you?

TD: The best thing that Fox has been able to continue to give me are great opportunities to strengthen my skills on a multi-restaurant level. Having now worked in four different concepts (Olive & Ivy, The Arrogant Butcher, Modern Steak, North Italia), it's been fun developing food for different styles of cuisine. My most recent role as Brand Chef for North has been a challenge that I've been wanting for a long time, the chance to run multiple restaurants, and all in different cities. If I had to boil it all down to what the most valuable tool that Fox Restaurant Concepts (FRC) has given me, it's accountability to run a successful and profitable restaurant. We hold our executive chefs and general managers to the fullest accountability to run their restaurants like they own it, and it really pays off in our company's ability to grow so rapidly.

AFM: Originally from Tucson, you are a proud Arizonan through and through. Describe the tattoos.

TD: It always starts with a small one..... My right arm is really my "piece de résistance" in paying homage to my home state of Arizona. I have the Arizona flag streaking up my entire forearm, the flag is meshed up with a Saguaro cactus, and multiple dessert blossom flowers. Both of my feet are inked up as well; my very talented sister Jess drew them both up for me, and her fiancé tattooed them (Black Rose in Tucson). I feel like tattoos always tell someone's story, and for me they remind me of who I am, and where I have been in my life. One of my favorite, but smallest, is my great grandfather's name in Arabic on my left arm; his original first name "Doumit" was changed to "Domet" and then made his last name at Ellis Island. He came over from Lebanon; it's the history of my family's last name.

AFM: You have a vast background in many different types of cuisine. Share a few brief highlights about your culinary experience.

TD: While attending the Scottsdale Culinary Institute, I started working at a Thai bistro in Gainey Ranch called Thaifoon. I was with that company for a total of four years, and quickly found myself in a sous chef role. Working at a young age with Thai, Vietnamese, and Pacific Rim cuisine gave me an opportunity to work with some ingredients that a lot of young chefs don't ever get the chance to experience. After that, I really fell in love with the food and the crew while working at Different Pointe of View (DPOV) under Ivan Flowers. Ivan allowed us cooks to create and execute tasting menus with almost anything we wanted to buy. I really was able to hone in my creative side at DPOV. Just before FRC, I spent four years working for my biggest mentor in my career, Michael DiMaria. Working as chef de cuisine for his restaurant Heirloom, I feel like I developed "my style" of food, and I had a blast building relationships with local farmers.



AFM: We hear that you are quite the singer. If you could sing for us, what type of music would it be?

TD: I can hold a tune with anything really. One of my favorite pastimes is making up lyrics to songs on the radio that relate to what I am currently doing. This keeps the mood pretty fun in the kitchen at times. Gotta love some John Legend, Lenny Kravitz, Chris Cornell, Justin Timberlake, Adam Levine -- all great vocalists.

AFM: You were a student at Scottsdale Culinary Institute. What was the best thing you did in school?

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TD: I feel old, that was so long ago...my favorite class was, hands-down, butchery. It still servers as almost a calming type of task for me while in the restaurant. There is serenity in butchering a nice piece of fish, and trying to hit 165 grams exactly.

AFM: What do you like to cook for your friends at home?

TD: I'm a simple home cook. I love making anything on the grill or a nice whole roasted chicken. Tacos are great, or crockpot cooking as well. It all depends on the crowd really. This past Thanksgiving I made prime rib!



AFM: Tell us about your puppy!

TD: He's such a character. His name is Rebel, he was born in early December. I have no need for an alarm clock anymore. At 6:15 a.m. every day he gets me up. He's a pitbull and American bulldog mix. It's amazing how smart he is for such a young age. He almost opened the sliding door with his paws the other day. It's been so fun having him from puppyhood.

AFM: What's your favorite dish at North Italia and why?

TD: It's hard to pick just one! I feel like we have some of the best artisan pizzas in town. Our crust is light, puffy, salty...just a great piece of pie. Other than that, I would say our ricotta gnocchi and short ribs. Savory beef short ribs, tender gnocchi pillows, and some citrusy gremolata to top it off. Mouthwatering.

AFM: Besides salt, pepper, olive oil and butter, what are your three must-have/go-to ingredients and/or spices to create your flavorful and interesting dishes?

TD: Chicken stock for sure, something that every chef uses on a daily basis for multiple things. Parsley is probably my favorite/most versatile herb. It adds a nice depth to anything you add it to. And lastly is lemons. You have to have acid to balance dishes, when life gives you lemons... make some food.



AFM: What is your "can't live without" cooking gadget?

TD: A smile, and a copious amount of passion.

AFM: Which chefs do you admire?

TD: Honestly, all of them. This is a very hard business to be in, and even harder to make a living and turn a profit. I appreciate everything that all my mentors have given me through my career, and I only hope that I am doing the same with all the cooks and chefs that work for me.

AFM: What is your idea of happiness?

TD: A perfect balance of your work life, and your personal life. I have been happier than ever with the woman I love over the past year, and it has truly spilled over into my professional life. Thank you, Krystal!

AFM: What would your last meal be?

TD: Probably some bomb pho or curry. I love me some traditional Asian food.