

Featured Chef: Kody Harris

Written by Story and photography by Debby Wolvos

Executive Chef Kody Harris of Thirsty Lion Pub & Grill.



AFM: Tell us about the diversity of food and beer at Thirsty Lion.

KH: We are a gastropub in Tempe and our roots come from the Northwest. The first two Thirsty Lions are located in Oregon. We have 52 local craft, import, and domestic beers on draft. We offer a sushi bar, a brick-oven pizza station, and we do pasta, gourmet burgers and salads.

AFM: Describe your style.

KH: I'm the brand chef, so it's my job to open each Thirsty Lion and to work there until another one is opened. I believe in training people well and moving them up within the restaurant. It's all about creating a great team and being a good leader. The true sign of a great chef is if I'm not here and you come in and have a perfect meal, then I've done my job teaching my staff.

AFM: Name your favorite chef.

KH: Seattle chef Tom Douglas. I love the way he runs his kitchens and the way he promotes from within. He's taken Northwest cuisine and made it into a worldly thing. Lola is one of my favorite restaurants in Seattle. I also like Bobby Flay.



AFM: What's your idea of a great evening at home?

KH: I love to cook on Sundays. My partner, Janna, recently graduated from the Culinary Institute. She's the baker, and I'm the chef. I've been into smoking meat, and lately I've been hot-smoking whole chickens.

AFM: We see that at the restaurant, too.

KH: Absolutely. We smoke all of our own meat at the Thirsty Lion. Every day we braise our corned beef fresh. The smoker is going right now with chicken inside of it. We infuse craft beer into our food. Our fondue, for example, is made with a specific pale ale. The fish and chips are made with I.P.A. beer. Certain items come from the Northwest. We also use local products. Our extra virgin olive oil is from Queen Creek.

AFM: Who is your mentor?

KH: I would have to say my family in general. I come from a Greek family, so meat is lamb of course. My mother is an excellent cook. As far as a professional mentor, it would have to be Wes Curl. He is the VP of this company, and I've worked for him for 26 years. I started with him as a fry cook. He taught me the restaurant business.



AFM: What's in your fridge at home?

KH: I've got tamales and flour tortillas, I'm a diet Coke freak. Sometimes lamb. Always bacon.

AFM: What would you like to be served for your last meal?

KH: Three items that my mom makes: manicotti, an awesome marinated flank steak, and sausage sauerkraut with apple and caraway seed.

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AFM: You are a die-hard Cubs fan.

KH: I was raised in the 80's when cable came out and WGN. My mother's side of the family is from Chicago. We always took summer trips there. I always played sports as a kid. I love baseball in general. Not the American League though—I don't like the "designated hitter." When you go to Wrigley, you are hooked. And there's nothing like a Chicago dog.

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