

Featured Chef: Joey Maggiore

Written by Interview and photos by Debby Wolvos

Featured chef Joey Maggiore, Chef and Owner of Cuttlefish.



AFM: Give us your perspective as the son of Tomaso Maggiore, who has owned Tomaso's in Phoenix for over 30 years.

JM: I was born into the restaurant business. My father is a master chef and has owned restaurants his whole life. So as a little boy, normal kids play with cars; I played with knives and tomatoes. I always cooked. I didn't have a choice. It's like the mafia. Even if I wanted to be let out, they wouldn't let me out.

AFM: What dish do you associate with your childhood?

JM: My favorite dish was risotto con seppia which is a squid ink risotto with cuttlefish and prawns, and we serve it here at Cuttlefish. It was my favorite dish growing up and that's where the name Cuttlefish came from for the new restaurant.

AFM: What is in your refrigerator at home that you like to eat?

JM: Top ramen. (The entire family at the table laughs.)

AFM: Do you cook at home?

JM: No time.

AFM: Your beautiful wife cooks?

JM: No, her cooking is so bad the flies even chipped in to buy a screen door--just kidding. Actually, we don't have time. We are always at our restaurants, and if we are not at our own restaurants we are checking out the friendly competition.



AFM: Who are your mentors?

JM: My father for cooking and my mother for money. My father made all the money and my mom learned how to keep it. So between both of them it was perfect. My wife Christina is like my mom in that aspect--she is frugal and she keeps me in line if I spend too much money.

AFM: You have three kids?

JM: Yes--Giulina, Melina, and Tomaso, who was named after his grandfather.

AFM: Where is home?

JM: We moved here about four months ago to open five more restaurants, but we still have our home in California.

AFM: You describe your Italian influenced food as sustainable, organic and fresh.

JM: Exactly. We're bringing our fish in fresh every day that we can--six days a week. I get it Fed Ex'd to our door and it comes from California, New England--from everywhere. We get our organic produce from seven different vendors. It's an invoice nightmare for my wife but certain growers specialize in certain produce and we try to get the freshest ingredients possible.

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AFM: Tell us about featuring environmentally conscious seafood from Verlasso.

JM: We partnered with Verlasso Salmon. They are out of Patagonia, Chile. It's the only farmed salmon that is sustainable and rated green by the Monterey Bay Aquarium "Seafood Watch" program. The goal is to support healthy oceanic ecosystems. We get it flown in four days a week and its just amazing.

AFM: What's your favorite fish?

JM: My favorite fish is monkfish. We don't always have it on the menu. It's unique and we serve it osso bucco style.

AFM: You are so busy. If you could take two weeks off, where would you go?

JM: To bed.

AFM: What is the most overrated ingredient combination?

JM: Salted caramel.

AFM: What is most important quality of a chef?

JM: Consistency. Period. You can be a fantastic chef and cook the best meal, but if you can't perfect it every day, what good are you?