

Featured Chef: Jesse Sarres

Written by Arizona Foothills Magazine

Featured Chef Jesse Sarres of The Pinnacle Dining Room at Sierra Pointe Retirement Community in Scottsdale.



Photography by Jackie Mercandetti

How did you get your start in the restaurant business?

When I was 14 years old, my mother made me get a job washing dishes at the restaurant where she served. It was at the airport in Ludington, Michigan, a real dive. I worked part time and full time in the summer. One year later I moved up to prep cook and for 18 years this is all I've done since.

What is your favorite Valley restaurant, besides your own?

I really enjoy Pita Jungle or Havana Cafe. The atmosphere is hip, urban, the wait staff wears no uniforms and has no restrictions. My favorite types of cuisine are Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and vegetarian.

What is your favorite dish at your restaurant?

Pollo Cubano, a stewed chicken with black beans, pineapple, green olives, tomatoes, garlic, spices with grilled flatbread and fried plantains.

What is the most memorable meal you've ever had?

One warm summer evening I enjoyed dinner with culinary colleagues and our instructor in Barcelona. I had a pineapple sorbet served in a carved out pineapple. It was the best dessert I've ever had. It was so simple but the dish and evening were memorable - good people, lots of talking, great laughter.

If you could have anyone visit your restaurant, who would it be?

I'd like my friends and family from Michigan to visit Sierra Pointe. Scottsdale is a long way from Ludington, Michigan.

Name three ingredients that you have at home at all times.

Kosher salt, chalula, and tamari (premium soy sauce). I'm a casual kind of guy!

What is your favorite bottle of wine or cocktail?

Leinenkugel Sunset Wheat beer.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I enjoy shooting pool, working in my yard and cooking poolside in the summer.

For more information about Sierra Pointe Retirement Community visit www.sierrapointe.com.