

Featured Chef: Comer Smith

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Featured Chef Comer Smith of Asia De Cuba at Mondrian Scottsdale.



Photography by Erica Montgomery

How did you get your start in the restaurant business?

I started off as a dishwasher at 13 and worked my way up the ranks. By the time I was 18, I graduated to sous chef at a local seafood restaurant that was very French. I then studied all over the world and that is how I got to where I am today.

What is your favorite Valley restaurant, besides your own?

I would have to say NOCA. They have a good thing going on there. It is refreshing to walk in and see the chef working the line at night—actually cooking not just expediting. I think chefs should cook.

What is your favorite dish at your restaurant?

My favorite dish would be our rack of lamb, very good flavor profiles going on there: smoky, earthy, sweet. It is a very solid dish.

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

It would have to be my first real foodie experience when my parents took me to Magnolias in Charleston, S.C. I had fresh softshell crabs—my mother did not think I would like them but I ate them and loved them. It was then that I got the cooking bug.

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

That is a tough one. My grandmother passed away before she could see my accomplishments in the kitchen. but I know she would have a huge smile on her face if she could see me now. So if I could bring her back for just a day that would be the most important guest I could have.

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

Let's see...butter, onions and pork. What else?

What is your favorite bottle of wine or cocktail?

2006 Nickel & Nickel Cabernet—big and bold. What do you like to do in your free time? Spend time with my lovely wife, play with my small zoo that I have at home and experiment with new cooking techniques and the occasional dollar bowling.

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