

Chef Chat: Get to Know Chef Alex Stratta of Prado

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With more than 30 years of experience in the kitchen, Chef Alex Stratta (you may know him from his most recent posts as executive chef of ALEX and Stratta at Wynn Resorts in Las Vegas) has been named the new chef de cuisine at Omni Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Montelucia's Prado restaurant. Read on to learn about the Valley's newest addition to its culinary scene.

How does it feel being back in the Valley of the Sun? I'm very happy to be back. I loved my past 18 years in Las Vegas, but I always considered Scottsdale home. It'll be a great place to raise my 8-year-old twins, Marco and Bianca.

What did you miss most during your time away? I love the Sonoran desert as well as the relaxed attitude that people have in this area.

What about Prado appealed to you? I visited the Montelucia three times prior to ever thinking I'd end up creating a restaurant here. The appeal is in the potential that the restaurant has, as well as the resort. I'd be very happy to establish Prado as a top dining destination for locals and visitors.

What's in store for the summer menu? I'm creating a menu that is both seasonally inspired and on the lighter side with a focus on fresh vegetables, seafood, citrus, herbs and olive oil. It's very much in the spirit of the cuisine of coastal Spain.

What is in store for the restaurant as a whole? My goal is to reposition the restaurant as a top destination; a place where people can come for high-quality food, comfortable service and a convivial, relaxed atmosphere.

Are you introducing any flavors or ingredients that Prado guests may not be used to or have experienced before? I think more than flavors, my aim is to develop a following and culture which focuses on quality and straightforward cooking. I do not want to create an experience that is perceived as 'special occasion,' 'high-end' or 'fancy.' I want the cuisine to speak for itself in its approachability and style. There has been a boom of fantastic dining options in the Valley in recent years.

Have you had the chance to experience any new spots? Too many options; really remarkable! The landscape is practically unrecognizable, in a very good way. I'll probably hit the basics first; pizza, pasta, tacos, BBQ. I love Bootleggers, anything my dear friend Chris Bianco does. I like Lon's, elements. I want to try Sel; the place looks great and I have a good feeling it will make an impact. I don't know them but wish them great success!

As a participant on "Top Chef" and "Iron Chef America," do you see yourself returning to do more competition/reality television?

Quite honestly, I've never been a competitive person in any aspect of my life; I strive to do my personal best. I participated in the TV shows because I was asked to and because I thought it would be great for my kids to see daddy on TV. Yes, I'd love to be back on TV but more so for my kids to be able to tell their friends and be proud of me!

What ingredients should at-home chefs experience with during the spring and summer months? Experiment with spices, citrus zests, vinegars and olive oil. Spice rubs for BBQ or grill. Try to avoid cooking in the house; cook everything on the grill. It'll save clean-up time too!

With such an illustrious career, what are your proudest achievements? I guess it would be that in 2009 (I think!) I was inducted into the Las Vegas hall of fame. I didn't even expect that. Sinatra, Dean Martin, Steve Wynn, Siegfried and Roy and Alex who? I'll take it though.