

Featured Chef: Jose Garces

Written by Interview by Melissa Larsen

Featured Chef Jose Garces of Distrito at The Saguaro.



How did you get your start in the restaurant business?

I learned to love cooking at a young age in my parents' kitchen, guided by my mother and grandmother. When I realized that I could actually make my living cooking for other people, I knew it was the career for me. I attended culinary school at Kendall College in my hometown of Chicago, and after working for other chefs for a number of years, I opened my first restaurant, Amada, in Philadelphia in 2005.

What is your favorite Valley restaurant, besides your own?

FnB in Scottsdale.

What is your favorite dish at your restaurant?

I love our Mexican barbacoa, or barbecue, dishes. It's a real treat to be able to cook outside for so much of the year, and nothing flavors food quite like smoke and flame. The Cochinita Pibil, a Berkshire pork shoulder with achiote-pineapple barbecue sauce, is a particular favorite of mine.

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

For my birthday several years ago, the entire staff at Amada got together and bought my wife and me dinner at Thomas Keller's Per Se in Manhattan. It was an unforgettable night, especially because the incredible generosity of my team made it possible.

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

I have always been fascinated by the ocean, so perhaps Jacques Cousteau could come by and share some of his stories.

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

Arbequina olive oil. Sea salt. Potatoes.

What is your favorite bottle of wine or cocktail?

I'm a whiskey lover. Lately, I've been loving Four Roses Single Barrel – served simply on the rocks, it is the perfect way to end the day at Old Town Whiskey.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I love to cook, even when I'm not at work, especially with my son and daughter. I also enjoy spending time on my family's farm in Bucks County, outside of Philadelphia, exploring the 40-acre grounds on foot or on our four-wheeler.

For more info about Distrito at the Saguaro, [click here](#).