Walt Disney World News

Noted Chefs From Around the Globe Creating Magic in Walt Disney World Kitchens

Chef Robert Adams, executive chef Magic Kingdom - Adams oversees the culinary team in Magic Kingdom. His training was in Central Florida restaurant kitchens, and he helped open Orlando's venerable Le Coq Au Vin. Adams has been with Disney since 1983, and helped open more than 40 restaurants in the parks and resorts.

Chef Jens Dahlmann, executive chef Epcot - Dahlmann classically trained in European kitchens and worked for Cunard and Seabourn cruise lines, traveling in Southeast Asia and the Mediterranean. He also worked for Le Cirque 2000 in New York City and Cafe 'L Europe in Palm Beach, Fla., before joining Disney in April 2004. He was chef de cuisine at both Flying Fish Cafe at Disney's BoardWalk and California Grill at Disney's Contemporary Resort before taking the helm at Epcot, where he directs a team of chefs in Future World and World Showcase restaurants.

Chef Lenny DeGeorge, executive chef Resorts Food & Beverage - DeGeorge grew up in his family's catering business, then studied at Johnson & Wales in Providence, R.I. After graduation he headed to Walt Disney World Resort to hone his skills in Magic Kingdom restaurants. At Artist Point at Disney's Wilderness Lodge, he focused on the cuisine of the Pacific Northwest.

Chef Todd English, Todd English's bluezoo – Celebrity chef, restaurateur and TV and radio personality, English opened his first Florida restaurant, Todd English's bluezoo, at the Walt Disney World Dolphin in 2004. Bluezoo's signature "dancing fish" grill features fresh seafood roasted over an open rotisserie.

Master Pastry Chef Erich Herbitschek, Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa – Herbitschek was born in Austria and studied at Mollard Pastry School in Vienna, the "city of sweet dreams." After working in resorts in the United States, Philippines, Japan and Hawaii, Herbitschek now oversees a staff creating breads and sweets – 1,200 loaves of bread on an ordinary day. And his wedding cakes are legendary.

Chef Scott Hunnel, Victoria & Albert's – Chef Hunnel started his career as a dishwasher in a Chicago restaurant, and today is at the top of his game with Central Florida's only AAA Five-Diamond restaurant, Victoria & Albert's in Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa. He graduated from Chicago's Joliet Culinary Program, and has been with Disney since 1998. Hunnel and his culinary team prepare modern American cuisine with the best-of-the-best from around the world.

Chef Gary Jones, culinary dietary specialist, Walt Disney Parks & Resorts – Jones has been an integral part of the Food & Beverage Operations team for 24 years. Initiatives focus on providing healthy options, expanding menu offerings for children, and developing new ideas for guests' special dietary needs.

Chef Tim Keating, Flying Fish Cafe – Keating oversees a talented staff in the on-stage kitchen at the award-winning restaurant. The New Jersey-born chef began his culinary career in his early teens and mastered his craft at several top California hotels. He is a founding member of the Chefs Collaborative, a nationwide group that supports local farmers and inspires their customers to choose nutritious and sustainable foods. Flying Fish Café at Disney's BoardWalk features seasonal cuisine with influences from around the globe.

Chef Roland Muller, chef de cuisine Walt Disney World Product Development - A native of the Alsace region of France, Muller began his cooking career at age 14, classically training in France. He moved to California to be part of, he says, “the American food revolution” and also to learn English. Muller worked at Disneyland Paris before coming to Walt Disney World Resort in 1997. Today he’s chef de cuisine for Walt Disney World Food & Beverage Product Development.

Chef Tim Oakley, chef de cuisine Disney’s Wilderness Lodge Resort. Oakley oversees teams in the kitchens at both Whispering Canyon Cafe and Artist Point. He attended the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y., and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst where he graduated with bachelor’s degree in hotel, restaurant and travel administration in 1995. Oakley spent his entire career at Disney’s Hollywood Studios at The Hollywood Brown Derby Restaurant and Mama Melrose’s Ristorante Italiano before making the move to Wilderness Lodge.

Chef Brian Piasecki, chef de cuisine California Grill - Toledo, Ohio, native Piasecki says he always felt at home in the kitchen, and did most of his training at Disney’s apprenticeship program, working in some of the top Walt Disney World kitchens. Today he’s chef de cuisine at the award-winning CaliforniaGrille at Disney’s Contemporary Resort.

Chef Phillip Ponticelli, chef de cuisine Cítricos, Disney’s Grand Floridian Resort & Spa – Ponticelli studied at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y., then headed first to the South Pacific, then to Switzerland to further his training. Coming back to America, he worked in Washington, D.C., and joined the Disney culinary team in 1996. He has worked at several Disney restaurants, including California Grill, Mama Melrose’s Ristorante Italiano and Narcoossee’s. Ponticelli describes Cítricos’ cuisine as “American style with heavy emphasis on Mediterranean flavors and ingredients.”

Chef Wolfgang Puck, Wolfgang Puck Cafe – Austrian-born Puck received his culinary training in France, and today oversees a food empire that includes restaurants in major cities around the world. He is the author of several cookbooks, including *Adventures in the Kitchen with Wolfgang Puck*. Signature dishes at his restaurant at Downtown Disney West Side include thin-crust pizzas and Chinois Chicken Salad.

Chef Michael Pythoud, executive chef Disney’s Hollywood Studios and Disney’s Animal Kingdom - Pythoud oversees the culinary staff at Disney’s Hollywood Studios. A native of Neuchatel, Switzerland, he says he knew he wanted to be a chef at age 6 and began an apprenticeship at age 15 in a Swiss restaurant. His career took him from Switzerland to the Philippines, New York City and Disneyland Paris.

Master Pastry Chef Stefan Riemer, Parks & Resorts Food & Beverage Concept Development & Standards – Riemer was born in Berlin, Germany, and apprenticed in pastry kitchens at age 16. He graduated from Culinary Pastry School in Brunswick, Germany, and started working around the globe – Switzerland, Indonesia and India were stops along the way. His favorite medium is chocolate – Riemer says he bakes every single day and spends his free time trying out new desserts.

Chef Bruno Vrignon, Les Chefs de France, Epcot – French-born Vrignon, long associated with the three French chefs who operate the Epcot restaurant – Paul Bocuse, Roger Verge and Gaston Lenôtre – trained with Bocuse at his legendary restaurant in Lyon, France. Vrignon has been chef at the Epcot World Showcase restaurant since it opened in 1982. Signature dishes include classic French onion soup, coq au vin, and *marmite du pêcheur parfumée au safran*, a traditional Mediterranean seafood casserole

Chef Ed Wronski, Director, Food & Beverage Product Development, Walt Disney Parks and Resorts - A native of Detroit, Wronski graduated from the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y. He first joined Disney in 1976, left to pursue other opportunities, then returned to the company. He spent five years at Tokyo Disney Resort, and returned to Walt Disney World Resort in 2003.

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