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Contact: Jennifer Boozer
(404) 237-2060 x 3025
jboozer@buckheadrestaurants.com

Chelsea Hinds
(404) 237-2060 x 3049
chinds@buckheadrestaurants.com

GARY DONLICK

Executive Chef, Bistro Niko

Longtime Buckhead Life Restaurant Group Chef, Gary Donlick, has been hand selected to head the kitchen of the newest BLRG restaurant, Bistro Niko. Donlick's two decades of experience in the kitchen, classic French training and passion for time-honored cooking techniques make him the perfect selection for the creative bistro menu at Bistro Niko.

"Starting from scratch with the Bistro Niko menu has been exhilarating," Donlick said, "We've studied and tasted a lot of menus at French restaurants here in the States and in Paris on a week-long research trip." Donlick is no stranger to French techniques, ingredients or flavor profiles. After graduating from the prestigious Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, he worked closely with French Master Chef Girard Vulien for five years at 103 West in Atlanta in various positions absorbing the high attention to detail that true French kitchens demand.

Donlick's passion for French food stems from the long history of culinary techniques being integrated into French culture. "Each region has its own specialized dishes, with an emphasis on local ingredients. Outside the metropolitan areas there is just such a distinct difference in regional cuisine, it makes the country very unique," explained Donlick.

Donlick moved to Atlanta and began working for BLRG in the kitchen at Chops Lobster Bar, the Atlanta steakhouse continually rated as one of the top in the nation. Then in 1997 he took over as the Executive Chef at 103 West, the glamorous fine-dining continental restaurant. In 2001 he became the Executive Chef at Pano's & Paul's, the flagship of BLRG, long considered an Atlanta institution for luxury dining with its four-star, four-diamond, and Nation's Fine Dining Hall of Fame status. Since then Donlick has kept the long-time regulars coming back for the Creative American menu at Pano's & Paul's with his impeccable execution of menu favorites and delicious new dishes designed to both excite and comfort.

Donlick is excited to get to work in Bistro Niko's kitchen. "For so long I've been focused on fine-dining which has such a specific audience, I'm really looking forward to cooking in a restaurant that will be a little more casual and appeal to an even wider group," Donlick commented. His new menu at Bistro Niko promises to have a classic French charm with a modern Parisian twist – meaning lighter – using more American ingredients.

Donlick's style emphasizes the importance of preparing food that people are excited to eat. His specialty is his ability to create great dishes from the best items available at any given time, and stresses that simplicity reveals great flavors. Donlick's new kitchen at Bistro Niko will emphasize the professionalism in French cooking including carefully selecting and handling the ingredients for each dish from sourcing to plating.

Donlick participates in many civic and charitable events as part of his commitment to the industry and the community. He and his wife, Kim, reside in Alpharetta with their daughter Katelynn. In his leisure time, he enjoys organic gardening and managing a family horse farm in Athens, GA.

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