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Acton chef Shane Waite is named as one of T.O.'s top 10

By Frances Niblock

When he's creating haute cuisine in the kitchen of Cru, Chef Shane Waite is pan-searing scallops, topping lamb shank with olive paste and pureed edamame, and offering parsnip soup garnished with a shittake flan topped with spiced persimmon puree.

When he's at home in Acton cooking for his family and friends, the menu includes blueberry clafoutis, homemade hamburgers and a cucumber salad.

"I like to keep it simple," Waite said on Monday, admitting in his salad days he used to "try harder to impress" with his cooking, but now at 35, he's happy with fresh ingredients and simple, but evolved recipes.

The Brampton-born Waite, whose mother grew up in Acton, moved here with his wife and young son 10 months ago, looking for a laid-back neighbourhood in a peaceful small town.

Dedicated clientele

During his eight months at Cru, an Art Deco restaurant in The Kingsway area of west Toronto, Waite has developed a dedicated clientele who love his modern take on classic French cooking. He recently was named one of the top 10 Toronto chefs.

Waite describes his cooking as a spin on French cuisine with lighter flavours and a North American presentation.

"I use a lot of other elements from Mediterranean cuisine, and I use a lot of Japanese ingredients, especially with the fish and the way that it's always lightly treated to keep things really bright and alive," Waite said.

While there will always be


Chef Shane Waite

food trends – slow-cooked Berkshire pork belly is the meat of the moment – Waite said food must be progressive and be modernized.

"Obviously, there are still guys who do the same dish for 20 years. The French are notorious for taking a dish and starting with one and not taking it off the menu, but perfecting it and making it better, so I think that's what I pride myself on," Waite said.

His love of cooking began with his mum, Patricia Sterritt, who was an avid

cook and gardener. Waite graduated from a chef co-op course at a Peel high school and then studied in top-flight restaurants around the world, including New York, London England, Belgium and closer to home, Langdon Hall and Canoe.

Worked free to learn

In some kitchens, he worked for free to learn from the best.

"I have to say, I have a son who is two-and-a-half, and if it hadn't been for my wife (Christina) supporting me emotionally – there are a lot of days that you want to give it up because it is tough when you have a family and you work these hours. She's made my career a lot more enjoyable," Waite said.

What makes a good chef?

"Passion, drive and common sense," Waite said, admitting that a chef's life

can be all consuming.

Quick facts

1: What is your favourite kitchen gadget/implement?

A: My 12-inch French knife is key, along with my high-speed blender for sauces and dressings, and my pasta machine.

2: McDonalds or Pizza Hut?

A: Pizza Hut. People tend to get brainwashed by big box food and there's so much more to food than that. Maybe every fourth or fifth time you go out to eat, go to a restaurant where they put really good ingredients in the forefront and it's not just about cost, but the dining experience.

3: What is your favourite comfort food?

A: Any kind of braised meat. Any inexpensive cut of meat like a lamb shank or pork belly or beef short rib that's cooked slow that's got a lot of aromatics in it.

4: Do you eat leftovers?

A: Sure. Again, braising is great for that. You can always save stuff for the next day. Even Mum's stew is still considered one of those leftover items.

5: What is more important – taste or presentation?

A: Taste – hands down, without question.

6: Is there any food you will not eat?

A: No.

7: What do you think of Vegans?

A: If your restaurant isn't really set up for it, it can be really difficult – we don't get a lot of it, but it's not something I pay a lot of attention to them...but I always try to work with it.

8: Do you get invited out to dinner at people's homes often, or are people too intimidated to cook for you?

A: Most people I know are pretty comfortable now. My sister came over tonight and I made a blueberry clafoutis and my sister made chocolate brownies. We had homemade hamburgers and a cucumber salad.



TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURE DUE TO EVENT

Notice is hereby given in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Act, S.O. 2001, and Town of Halton Hills By-law 2003-0032 regarding the following temporary road closure for the purpose of the following community event:

Leathertown Festival
Sunday, August 12, 2007
11:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Organized by: Acton BIA

Mill Street from Main
Street/Hwy 25 to
Fellow Street

If you require any additional information regarding this temporary road closure, please contact the Clerks Department at 905-873-2601 ext. 2350.

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