

Assignments Restaurant



Sure, you can get Caesar salad prepared tableside for two at any of the higher-end restaurants in town—for \$25 plus another \$40 (just for starters) for a single slab of steak. Or, you can visit Assignments Restaurant, run by students of the International Culinary School at The Art Institute of Colorado, where tableside preparations include Caesar salad for \$4.50 and steak Diane for \$19. No, this isn't Elway's, but the chefs in training create a charming experience for patrons from start to finish.

Since 1992, the School of Culinary Arts has trained more than 4,300 chefs—all of whom were required to work in the restaurant. Those chefs are now working in the industry all over the country says Chef Instructor Stephen Kleinman, CEC, AAC. "Whether I go to a restaurant in Manhattan or San Francisco, people know me," Kleinman says, describing encounters with former students. Although he claims to be a "hippy from the '60s," Kleinman apprenticed in Europe, attended a culinary academy in San Francisco and had the opportunity to cook at the prestigious James Beard House three times. He admits that his experience lends him credibility, but it's his warm, easygoing,

approachable style that leads to his success as a teacher.

"Some of the best restaurants in the world serve tableside; chefs are more grounded this way," claims Kleinman, who would never be mistaken for a snob. "By having the students come to the front of the house—serving as waitpeople and preparing dishes tableside—we break a lot of barriers.

colored walls, faux cherry furniture and kitschy cafe artwork, this is a spot that welcomes intimate conversation with friends and family.

A perusal of the menu, while munching fresh bread and savoring a glass of wine, tempts you with its carefully planned variety. "The menu is all designed to teach cooking methods," says Kleinman. "It covers 80 to 85 percent of what students have been learning in class—saute, grill, braise, make vinaigrettes, cook vegetables, bake and make desserts." In a twist on "You have to know the rules to break them," Kleinman insists that students need to first learn the basics before they can go on to create their own dishes.

For our "test dinner," an amuse bouche, a crab-stuffed mushroom cap, arrives followed by an appetizer of chorizo-stuffed prawns wrapped in applewoodsmoked bacon. The tableside Caesar preparation is a wonderful ritual that tastes as good as it looks. Entrees, all under \$20, include grilled trout, sweet and sour spareribs, spinach lasagna, seared duck breast, flatiron steak, steak Diane prepared tableside and pesto-crusted lamb chops. We opted for a suc-

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Address 675 S. Broadway, Denver

Reservations call 303-778-6625 or visit www.opentable.com

Hours Wednesday through Friday, 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. and 6–8 p.m.

THE RESTAURANT

Assignments Restaurant, tucked back by the Quest Diagnostics lab off South Broadway near Alameda Avenue, seats 71 at its handful of booths and tables. The blissful quiet, a welcome change from the typical hot spot, is interrupted only by solicitous servers dressed in chef attire. Despite decor that is on the edge of institutional with its cream-

culent trout and tender spareribs, and notice that a \$10 macaroni and cheese entree makes Assignments kid-friendly for special occasions.

THE GOALS

The purpose of this unique restaurant is to give students practical experience so they can hit the ground running. "The goal is to make the students comfortable, thinking on their feet, getting ready for reality,"

says Kleinman. He wants students to be able to read tickets, perform, and recover and learn getting valuable front-

of-the-house and business experience in addition to cooking.

Five to seven students work in the kitchen at one time. Students work toward an associate of applied science degree in culinary arts or a bachelor of arts degree in culinary management.

With degree in hand, the school places 99 percent of its students. While many students are placed at country clubs and

resorts that prefer formal training, chefs from all over town—Panzano or Jax Fish House—have trained at Assignments

as well. Or try O's Restaurant, whose recent media darling chef Ian Kleinman is not just a former student but Stephen Kleinman's son. Make a reservation, and maybe the next celebrity chef to hit town will whip up a tableside bananas Foster for you.

Kelly Kordes Anton is the editor of *Colorado Expression* magazine and the co-author of various books on publishing technologies, including *Adobe InDesign How-Tos: 100 Essential Techniques*.

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CAESAR SALAD

2 cloves garlic

Taste kosher salt

2 anchovy fillets, chopped

1 coddled egg

1/2 lemon

1/2 Tbsp Dijon mustard

1/4 cup red wine vinegar

3/4 cup virgin olive oil

1/4 tsp Worcestershire

Romaine lettuce heart, washed and dried

1/4 cup croutons

1/4 cup Parmesan cheese

Taste cracked black pepper

Grind together the garlic and salt. Add the chopped anchovies. Stir in the egg and lemon. Add the vinegar, olive oil and Worcestershire sauce, and whip briefly. Pour

over lettuce and toss with croutons, Parmesan and black pepper.

CHORIZO-STUFFED PRAWNS

3 prawns, butterflied

3 Tbsp chorizo sausage

3 slices bacon, blanched

1 bunch parsley, fried

2 oz morita mayonnaise

(recipe follows)

1/2 oz olive oil

Heat oven to 350°. Stuff the butterflied prawns with chorizo. Wrap a piece of the blanched bacon around each prawn and place in the oven. Cook until the chorizo is done. Place the fried parsley on a plate and place the prawns on top. Drizzle with

the morita mayonnaise.

MORITA MAYONNAISE

1 pint mayonnaise

1 tsp morita powder

1 Tbsp lemon juice


Salt and pepper to taste

Mix ingredients and serve.

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RestaurantProfile

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CAESAR SALAD
2 cloves garlic
Taste kosher salt
2 anchovy filets, chopped
1 coddled egg
1/2 lemon
1/2 Tbsp Dijon mustard
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
3/4 cup virgin olive oil
1/4 tsp Worcestershire
Romaine lettuce heart, washed and dried
1/4 cup croutons
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese
Taste cracked black pepper

Grind together the garlic and salt. Add the chopped anchovies. Stir in the egg and lemon. Add the vinegar, olive oil and Worcestershire sauce, and whip briefly. Pour over lettuce and toss with croutons, Parmesan and black pepper.

CHORIZO-STUFFED PRAWNS
3 prawns, butterflied
3 Tbsp chorizo sausage
3 slices bacon, blanched
1 bunch parsley, fried
2 oz morita mayonnaise (recipe follows)
1/2 oz olive oil

Heat oven to 350°. Stuff the butterflied prawns with chorizo. Wrap a piece of the blanched bacon around each prawn and place in the oven. Cook until the chorizo is done. Place the fried parsley on a plate and place the prawns on top. Drizzle with the morita mayonnaise.

MORITA MAYONNAISE
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Salt and pepper to taste

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