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CHEF CHANTEL DARTNALL BELIEVES YOU ARE ONLY AS GOOD AS THE LAST PLATE YOU SEND OUT OF THE KITCHEN #CHEFOFTHE DAY #DINEJOZISTYLE @MOSAICATORIENT



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Food JoziStyle No Comments

Name: Chef Chantel Dartnall

Establishment: Restaurant Mosaic @ the Orient



Q. How would you describe your style of cooking? What inspires you?

A: My style of food is passionate, feminine and botanical. I have always been inspired by the father of botanical cooking Michel Bras. His restaurant is on the top of the Aubrac plateau in Laguiole France, about four hours from Paris in the middle of nowhere. You get there by driving along long, winding roads in the country side. One salad has 29 different vegetables. You can feel you're starting to glow with health after eating it!



I am also inspired by the setting of Restaurant Mosaic which is situated in the Francolin Conservancy with an abundance of wildlife, birds and indigenous plants. I am passionate about using organic and seasonal produce and endeavor to render "nature on a plate".

Q: Describe a typical day in your restaurant?

A: As we serve breakfast to our stayover guests the first person to arrive in the kitchen at 06:30 puts the croissants and pain au chocolate in to bake. The rest of the team will start to arrive soon after and we have a morning ritual where we each hug one another to say good morning. Once everyone is busy with their prep and the kitchen is set up for breakfast, I will head into the garden to pick some garnish and see what is new and interesting in the garden.



Our guests enjoy sleeping a bit later as it is so peaceful, so breakfast service seldom finishes before 11, thereafter it is a quick scrub down and then we get set up for lunch service. I personally go out to each table to welcome the guests and explain the menu. By the time I have finished with the last table and get back into the kitchen the first amuse bouche is already starting to leave the kitchen and service is in full swing. Depending on the pace of our guests we usually finish lunch service at about 16:00 – 17:00 and by then we all grab a quick few bites of our staff lunch and everyone gets back to prepping to get ready for dinner service.

At 17:30 we all scrub down and set up again so that we have an hour to do the final preparations before dinner service starts at 19:00 ... and everything starts all over again. By 23:30 everything starts to wind down and we pack up and clean up the kitchen. Depending on who finished service first that person would start preparing staff dinner (I know!!!) and at about 00:30 we have a bite to eat and head to bed.

Q: What have been your proudest moments as a chef?

A: There are the obvious ones like twice being named South African Chef of the Year First in 2009 and then again in 2014, However, I am also proud of how Restaurant Mosaic has matured, mentored and grown its staff in the decade the restaurant has been in operation. It is all about passing the passion and the knowledge forward.

Q: What has been your biggest learning curve?

A: When I arrived in London as a young inexperienced commis chef in the busy Chez Nico kitchen, I was literally chucked in the deep end and had to learn how to swim very quickly. It didn't take long to learn that the quicker and the more perfectly you performed the tasks you were given the greater the respect of the teams became for you, and eventually I was one of the team. This taught me that no matter how hard any task may seem if you practice and persevere it all becomes easy in the end.



Q. What are your favourite ingredients?

A: Butter, olive oil, cream, mushrooms, fresh herbs and lemons!

You will never find tripe in my kitchen! I have never been a big fan of offal.

Q. What is your favourite dish that you enjoy cooking?

A: At home it is pasta with a creamy mushroom sauce. In the restaurant kitchen it would be the dishes that we are cooking for that particular seasonal menu. That being said I have always loved working with fish and seafood of which there are plenty examples in our new Tabula Rasa menu.

Q. Five people (dead or alive) who you would like to cook for?

Obviously my hero the father of botanical cooking Michel Bras, to hear what his impressions are about my interpretation of Botanical cuisine

The great legend Auguste Escoffier, as he was the founder of nouvelle cuisine

Audrey Hepburn as I totally love her style

Gustav Klimt as I truly admire his art and would love the opportunity to meet him.

My grandfather who passed away when I was 22. He always spurred me on to pursue a career as a chef but he passed away before I opened Mosaic in 2006 and never got to taste my food at the restaurant.



Q. What trends / challenges are restaurants facing in 2017?

A: They are almost the same thing! Diners want seasonal produce and to know where it comes from. When it comes to sourcing my produce it is important to focus on sustainability and sensibility. More focus is being placed on the sourcing, origin and consistency of ingredients – the ingredients themselves being seen as the ultimate dictator of the quality and success of the dish.

It is very important for any chef to create a strong bond with his or her suppliers especially the farmers, and the best way to do this is to personally visit the farms where the fresh produce is grown or the animals are raised. Chefs need to have intimate knowledge of their suppliers. We as chefs need to support our local farmers who focus on sustainability, farm free range and organically in spite of the fact that their produce might be a bit more expensive.

Q. The #1 thing that annoys you in restaurants?

A: A lack of consistency. The saying that you are only as good as the last plate you send out of the kitchen was drilled into me at every service in every kitchen I have ever worked in. Nothing except "perfection" was allowed to go out of the kitchen.

Q. Any final thoughts you'd like to share?

A: It is all about passion. I put my heart and soul into every dish I create.