



BoMA's First Executive Chef

Alex Rodriguez

BAR OF MODERN ART

TITLE: Executive Chef

AGE: 31

HOMETOWN: San Juan, Puerto Rico

EDUCATION: Hotel and Tourism School (San Juan)

PRIOR KITCHENS: 44 (New York), Savannah (Hartford), Rossi, New Albany Links

When was the last time you ate lobster-mango bruschetta inside a church-turned-restaurant (that also contains an art gallery, nightclub and exhibition space)? Yeah, we didn't think so.

Though it's still heavily under construction, the Bar of Modern Art—a conceptual venue based on East Broad Street—already has in-the-know locals buzzing. Wait until they hear about the food.

Rodriguez, a relative newcomer to Columbus, wants his cuisine to compliment BoMA's unique atmosphere and diverse dining crowd. "The whole concept is art. My input on the food is to try and recreate that art scene in the food," he

says. "Presentation is going to be huge, very visual—something that pops in your mouth." Like pumpkin seed-crust Mahi Mahi with roasted eggplant and coconut-curry lemongrass sauce, for starters.

A world-traveler by nature, Rodriguez takes cues from his trips abroad when planning a menu. "I like to know what people eat and find real flavors in a place I go and visit," he says.

As for his own creations—and the future of central Ohio fare—the sky is the limit. "I see a market in Columbus for new restaurants, new concepts," he says. "That's what I'm trying to accomplish—to bring something different here. It's a canvas."

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May 25, 2006

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SIMMERING STARS
meet the new faces of the COLUMBUS CULINARY SCENE



Next-GEN Chefs

the rising STARS of the COLUMBUS culinary scene

BY KEVIN JOY
PHOTOS BY WILL SHILLING

Unless you've been living under a Frigidaire these past few years, you know that young chefs—and their endless parade of smiley-faced merchandise—are, like, so hot right now.

Jamie Oliver is a sex symbol crusading for healthier school lunches. Rachel Ray's got Martha-level exposure without the drama. And reality TV shows *Top Chef* and *Hell's Kitchen* are more addictive than those Lean Cuisine microwavable panini sandwiches (no you shut up—they're delicious).

At the forefront of Columbus' ever-evolving dining scene is a similar group of young innovators. They are reworking old menus and creating new ones. They're mixing exotic cuisines and pushing boundaries. They hail from, uh, New Jersey, among other far-flung locales.

From pushing organic and locally grown ingredients to shunning mainstream advertising and traditional notions of management, their culinary creations are a treat for both the eyes and the tongue. Grab your appetite (and your wallet) and meet a few young cooks on the block.

Derek Michael RJ SNAPPER'S

TITLE: Executive Chef

AGE: 30

HOMETOWN: Dublin

EDUCATION: Le Cordon Bleu Culinary Program (Scottsdale, Arizona)

PRIOR KITCHENS: Abbracci Steaks & Italian, Giovanni's Ristorante (Beachwood, Ohio)

Derek Michael doesn't fear change. He's spent the past several months shaking up the old-school menu at RJ Snapper's, giving several traditional offerings such as stuffed flounder the boot to make way for funkier, flavorful fare.

"It's more of the Pacific rim, Euro-Asian thing with a little Hawaiian flare," he says. "There's a demand for this and nobody has tapped it yet."

So get ready for entrees such as sake-marinated Chilean sea bass and munchies like shrimp dumplings and the soon-to-be-ubiquitous fish tacos. A splashing of island-inspired pastels and contemporary bubbling water

tubes on the walls add to the establishment's newfound tropical attitude.

And in an effort to make the Short North restaurant more of a casual nightspot—and not just a fancy meal out when the 'rents are in town—the bar area has been doubled and features a new late-night menu.

You might think that's enough to keep Michael busy, but he's already at work on another secret restaurant project—which he hinted could focus on Southwestern fusion cuisine. "We're really close to making it happen," he says. With the right blend of spice, sweat and luck, he'll likely pull it off.

