

## Kitchen Confidential

An Italian master brings a taste of Old World cuisine to Downtown Brea

bask table | by marcus young



Chef Peter Serantoni

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Venice-born chef Peter Serantoni is the culinary mastermind at Brunos Italian Kitchen in Brea, a place where classic Italian comfort food collides with some of his family's favorites. Here, bask asks the talented toque to put it all on the table.

You grew up in a cooking clan, but how did you make the leap from your family's kitchen to the restaurant business?

It was not a long disconnect. My father and grandmother cooked from the early morning to late [at] night, and it was never not a full-course, home-cooked meal—it was full-blast every meal, every day, 365 days a year. I never had a question about what I was going to do with my life. I worked with my dad in my teens, then got a formal hotel restaurant education for the next four or five years.

When it comes to food trends—like nouveau cuisine, which was popular at the time you received your formal education—do you like to follow or lead?

It was not that I was focused on [nouveau cuisine], but it was just what was going on at the time. In my older years, I've been a little more cautious of jumping on the newest trend or flavor of the month. Some trends survive the test of time because they're meaningful and make sense.

Any trends you can live without?

'Farm-to-table.' I don't want to put anyone down because I like farm-to-table cuisine, but spending tons of time in Italy [you see that the] only way to get the food from the farm to the table is to go to the market.

How about the one kitchen ingredient you can't live without?

Olive oil.

So, you're starving, with only 15 minutes to cook. What do you make?

Oh boy. Well, one would be a quick little carbonara with things I always have in the house: pancetta, eggs and Parmesan cheese.

Any advice for an aspiring chef?

If I was telling my kid what to do in the restaurant business, I'd say, 'Go straight into it: Get into a restaurant that offers an apprenticeship. You can always get into squeeze bottles and little squiggles, but you need to get the fundamentals.'