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# FOOD FANATICS™

Sharing the Love of Food—Inspiring Business Success

## LIFE OF PIE

This dessert has  
a story to tell PAGE 7





### Role Play to Get It Right

"A great server doesn't just understand the progression of the meal, but has the desire to make someone happy. Part of it is the constant messaging—these are the things that are going to make your customer happy.

We try to do a decent amount of role playing at pre-meal every day to try to envision situations and different ways to deal with them. It's quite embarrassing in pre-meal to have someone "spiel the table"—when you greet the table and talk about specials—if they're awkward and there are lots of pauses. If you're embarrassed in front of your co-workers, while it's a bit of a harsh method, it really forces you to get it right. At the end of the day, they have to go to a table with confidence and the desire to please customers. And if they don't do that, we all end up with egg on our faces."

### Michael Leviton, chef-owner

Lumière, Area Four and soon-to-open A4 Pizza in Greater Boston

Age: 47

**Backstory:** Seven-time James Beard Award nominee; worked with Joyce Goldstein at Square One in San Francisco, Daniel Boulud at Le Cirque and Eric Ripert at Le Bernardin in New York

"If my waiter says to the customer, 'Did you enjoy everything?' it means they haven't been paying attention to the table in the first place. If they didn't enjoy the meal, you better find out why.

—José Gutierrez of River Oaks

### A Face Says 1,000 Words

"When I started working with French cuisine, there were many [employees] who were very good, many who were average. Today is no exception. There are so many who are incredible, and some who just plain shouldn't be in the industry.

[Servers] are our ambassadors. If the food is great but the service is terrible, [customers] won't come back. For example, I train my waiters to watch the expression of customers when they put the plate in front of them. If they don't have an expression, then you have to wait until they take the first bite. That first bite tells you everything about the customer that you need to know. When you take a bite, your face is going to say whether you like it or not.

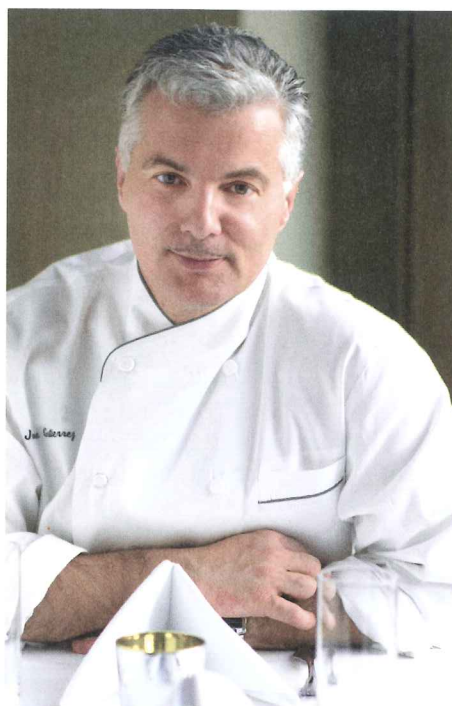
If my waiter says to the customer, "Did you enjoy everything?" it means they haven't been paying attention to the table in the first place. If they didn't enjoy the meal, you better find out why. The waiters need to constantly be on the lookout for the facial expression of the customer."

### José Gutierrez, chef-owner

River Oaks, Memphis, Tenn.

Age: 55

**Backstory:** Trained with Paul Bocuse; worked at Restaurant de France at the former Meridien Hotel in Houston; Chez Philippe at The Peabody hotel and Encore Restaurant and Bar in Memphis



### Show Off Your Food

"I say, bring back the 'cart' as a service element. The cart can be whatever is seasonal and whatever the team loves at the moment. This allows diners to see what is being served, learn about it and watch the action. Gary Danko (in San Francisco) has an amazing cheese cart.

I have always wanted to do a tomato cart—push the cart around and show diners as you slice the heirloom and garnish with whatever they like. We don't have a cart because space is an issue at a neighborhood restaurant like Campo (100 seats). We do, however, show the food to our guests. We sell heirloom tomatoes like that on the menu now (garnishes include sea salt, extra-virgin olive oil, balsamic and more). We sell about 250 pounds of heirlooms a week (during the season).

Our staff is trained on menu and farms extensively because we want them to be an extension of the kitchen.

In the winter, we carve Bistecca Fiorentina or dry-aged porterhouses for two people. We display truffles to shave on risotto or other special additions to a dish."

### Mark Estee, chef-owner

Campo in Reno, Nev. and Mammoth Lakes, Calif.; Burger Me! in Truckee, Calif. and Reno, Nev.

Age: 41

**Backstory:** Campo named one of Esquire's Best New Restaurants of 2012; 2013 James Beard Award Semifinalist; Best Chef: West; Hyatt Hotels