

Stephen Bulgarelli Joins O'Charley's as Vice President of Culinary Development

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New Head Chef Says 'Expect the Unexpected'

Officials at O'Charley's Restaurants, a leading casual-dinning restaurant concept with 241 locations in 19 Midwest and Southeast states, today announced that Stephen Bulgarelli has joined the company as vice president of culinary development.

"Stephen is a major talent in the kitchen and, to paraphrase another great chef, will certainly take our menu 'up a notch,'" said Jeff Warne, O'Charley's concept president. "He will work closely with Larry Taylor, our chief supply chain officer, to source the freshest, healthiest ingredients and create dishes that will be served to more than 55 million guests a year."

Bulgarelli will be responsible for creating all of O'Charley's permanent menu items, as well as limited time only offerings. "There isn't a style of cuisine that I don't like," Bulgarelli said. "What I like best is mixing flavors from tried-and-true items with fresh, new vibrant flavors. The casual-dining segment is drowning in a sea of sameness; the fun part of my job is to create menu items that will further differentiate O'Charley's from the others in our segment."

When asked what to expect in upcoming menus, Bulgarelli responded, "Expect the unexpected. As we become more global, we are exposed to new tastes. Ten years ago, Asian fare was pretty much limited to Chinese food. Today, we have Thai, Vietnamese and Mongolian, to name a few. Mexican food remains popular, but diners have become intrigued with South American cuisine, and dishes, as well as cooking methods, from Brazil and Argentina are finding their way on to more menus. Mediterranean, including Spanish and Moroccan flavors, is another popular ethnic trend," he noted. "I have the pure pleasure of mixing and matching those wide-ranging tastes and adapting them for the American palate."

Among the food challenges Bulgarelli has created for himself are "re-inventing the baked potato," introducing new rice and risotto dishes, creating a wide range of hearty and satisfying soups, and introducing light and craveable desserts that add pleasure, not pounds.

Bulgarelli stressed that O'Charley's will continue to be the casual-dining concept leader in steaks and will continue offering its signature yeast rolls. "Our menu will be ever evolving, constantly changing and improving. We will create seasonal dishes to take advantage of the freshest ingredients and look for new trends and fusions that will attract a broader spectrum of guests to our restaurants. Underlying any new menu item will be price-value for our guests."

A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Bulgarelli most recently was senior director/executive chef culinary innovation for Carlson Restaurants Worldwide. He created hundreds of dishes annually, trained the culinary team on existing and new menu items and explored new cooking methods, procedures and equipment. Previously, he was executive chef/menu design for LSG Sky Chefs, where he developed new menu items for American Airlines International and Domestic Flagship Services. He was a sous chef at the upscale Cafe Pacific restaurant in Dallas and began his career as a sous chef with Ernie's Kings Mill Restaurant & Catering in Mt. Clemens, Michigan.

A popular spokesperson on a variety of food topics, Bulgarelli has lectured and appeared on numerous programs about food, including the popular Bravo Network program Top Chef. His recipes are featured in The Cheese Book, authored by Paula Lamberts. He is a member of the International Association of Culinary Professionals and the International Corporate Chefs Association.

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