

# Chef Richard

***We were excited to connect with the Executive Chef for the Hyatt Regency Phoenix. Check out what Chef Richard Preston had to say about his restaurants, cooking, and what made him know he wanted to be a Chef!***



***Where can people find your delicious creations?***

The hotel I work at is the Hyatt Regency Phoenix. We have several outlets to dine in. Compass Arizona Grill, Barrel & Bushel, and B&B Market. We also run "Copper Square Kitchen" which is our catering company.

***How long have you been the Executive Chef at the Hyatt Regency Phoenix?***

I have worked at this property for 4 years but have worked for Hyatt hotels for 20 years.

***What is the best part of being a chef?***

The people you meet and the joy you bring people with food!

***What are the most challenging parts about being a chef?***

The long hours and working all the holidays and special occasions. I have missed many milestones in my family's lives including my brother's wedding. Still one of my biggest regrets.

***When and how did you know that you wanted to be a chef?***

My first job in a kitchen was when I was 14 years old. I had taken something from my father and sold it. My father bought the item back and told me I needed to get a job and pay him back! At 14 my only job option was part time in fast food, so Wendy's it was. This is not where I fell in love with cooking, but it was my foot in the service/food industry. My second job was when I was 16 and it was at a place called *Stage west*, a dinner theater in Calgary Alberta. I saw one of the line cooks working the kitchen line like a magician, he was so calm and cool, he had the swagger of a rock star and all the servers (girls) loved him! I knew at this moment that this is what I was going to do! Thanks to incredible mentors and leaders who pushed me and led me down the right path, here I am 28 years later and still doing what I love!

***Did you go to culinary school? What was your educational path?*** I went to Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (S.A.I.T) and took the culinary arts program from 1994-1997. Funny side note, I failed food sciences in high school. If only they could see me now ☺

***What advice do you have for someone who is thinking of becoming a chef?***

If you want to be a Chef you have to work hard, dedicate yourself to the craft, respect the product, and have humility. Being a Chef is a very rewarding career and can pay very well, but it takes years of blood sweat and tears to make it to the Executive Level. If you do not love it, find something else to do.

***What is your favorite meal to prepare?***

My favorite thing to prepare is the thing that makes you smile. I love bringing people together to enjoy good food and company. Your company is as important as the food itself!

***Pork is one of our favorite foods. What is your favorite way to cook pork?***

Pork in my opinion is the most versatile meat to prepare. The meat takes on flavors like no other meat. So brining, marinating, smoking or simply seasoning with salt and pepper, will allow you to bring out the best in the meat. From *snout to tail*, there is not a bad cut of meat on the pig. Most people do not realize that the whole pig is edible! From pickled pigs' feet, stewed pigs tails, headcheese, or chicharrones, nothing goes to waste. My favorite cut to cook is the belly. The belly is the cut that bacon is from. In its raw uncured state, it is just pork belly. My signature pork item is a 72-hour pork belly. Two days in a cure/marinade, 12 hours on a smoker, and 12 hours pressed under considerable weight. I then slice and cook on a skillet or BBQ to order and serve with a bourbon BBQ sauce. Yum!