

Behind the Scenes: Green Chefs

Posted on

The breakfast buffet is bursting with color, and the 4-course evening menu impresses with exciting combinations of ingredients, and regional specialties feature on the menu. We love to be presented with creations prepared by professional chefs during a visit to a restaurant or hotel to gain insights into unique cooking traditions and simply enjoy. Preferably in organic quality, fresh and regional. But who actually imagines all this? And who makes sure that everything is prepared at the right time? We asked our Green Pearls® partners, who are in charge of the philosophy behind the food selection and what is most important in a sustainable kitchen.

Satya Beeknoo - Zeavola Resort

“I pledge to honor and pass on cooking, culinary culture, and the constant evolution.” This is what Satya Beeknoo said when he was appointed a “Disciples Escoffier International” member.

The international organization brings together 25,000 selected chefs and professionals from over 26 countries. Its aim is to promote and preserve culinary culture and tradition.

Satya Beeknoo is the chef and spirit of the kitchen at the Zeavola Resort on Kho Phi Phi Island. Here, as a master of Thai cuisine, he prepares traditional dishes authentically and to the highest standards. His international gourmet dishes are also among the world’s best. The celebrity chef follows a completely sustainable approach focusing on regional products and short supply chains. He has developed numerous ideas to constantly optimize kitchen processes, save resources and avoid waste. The whole team benefits from his knowledge and has embraced his sustainability philosophy and passed it on to suppliers, farmers, and fishermen. Beeknoo has also broadened the range of vegan dishes.



Satya Beeknoo

Hannes Pignater - ADLER Lodge RITTEN

The chef at ADLER Lodge RITTEN is Hannes Pignater. Before moving to Oberbozen, the nature lover and family man worked for five years as head chef at the ADLER Lodge on the Alpe di Siusi – after stints abroad and successful competitions that earned him the gold medal at the Professional World Championship in St. Gallen and the silver medal at the Culinary Olympics in Erfurt. Now he has moved his Mediterranean-Alpine culinary art to the Ritten. And in a kitchen that brings him even closer to his guests – the open room concept in the ADLER Lodge allows them to watch him create the six-course evening menu with his team. He sources most of his ingredients, such as the goat cheese or first-class fish from the mountain lakes, from the surrounding area. “The local products have priority,” says the 38-year-old South Tyrolean. “But radically regional is not my thing. If the mozzarella from Napoli is better than the South Tyrolean, then I have an easy decision.”

“Topfen” (similar to quark) with green celery and grapes, Schüttelbrot (traditional flatbread) risotto, whitefish fillet with peas and ham or Calamarata, farmer’s sausage with fennel and sheep’s cheese – are all skillful refinements of South Tyrolean classics; artfully and lovingly arranged. Just the sight of the plates brings a smile to the guests’ faces. Which, in turn, fills Hannes’ heart with joy.

Viola and Mamma Piera - Relais del Maro

A day at Relais del Maro begins with Viola. Viola is the chef, but she is the master of the famous breakfast buffet, which she prepares herself early in the morning. From eggs and bacon to fruit salad, cheese, cold cuts, and fresh bread. It is her two hands that work for the guests of the Ligurian Albergo Diffuso. She mixes, prepares, bakes, garnishes, and aligns with her motto: nothing is thrown away! And when breakfast is over, what’s leftover is made into a tasty lunch! However, Viola learned many of her skills from Mamma Piera. Mamma Piera, the mother of hotel manager Elena Scalambrin, is the head chef and someone who lets very few people in on her secrets of Ligurian culinary traditions. The recipe for the delicious tomato sauce always used for bolognese, pasta, and pizza at Relais del Maro comes from her.

Piera is not only a hard worker but also a master pastry chef: all the cakes for afternoon tea and breakfast are created by her. The same goes for the roast beef, the light desserts for lunch, and the many jams. Together, Viola and Mamma Piera are an unbeatable team.



Hannes Pignater



Viola and Mamma Piera

Massimo Cvek - Maslina Resort

Massimo Cvek takes over as the new chef at the Croatian 5-star boutique hotel Maslina Resort with the end of the winter break. The 31-year-old focuses on local products and the diversity of Croatian cuisine. Reduced ingredients, prepared with a “wow factor,” is his mission – “It doesn’t take much to make people happy. A dish like lobster tail with buttermilk, leek oil, and potato foam consists of only four ingredients – and tastes wonderful.”

The further expansion of the resort’s own organic garden is also one of his labors of love, featuring classic flavors such as thyme, sage, cherry tomatoes, and fennel. But also some more unusual ingredients, such as wild asparagus, dandelion, or wood sorrel, whose edible pink blossoms are perfect for decoration, will soon be found here.

Cvek has already come up with a specialty for his guests: he has started to pickle and ferment the typical pines for the Hvar island landscape. Another project is his own pork salami, cured in sugar and seasoned with spices and wild herbs from the garden. “I want our guests to experience the island with all their senses.

Massimo Cvek worked in upscale restaurants and hotels on cruise ships and yachts for many years. During his training, he worked in the Michelin-awarded kitchens of Le Manoir aux Quat’Saisons in Oxfordshire, Thorntons Restaurant in Dublin, and Restaurant Ikarus in Austria.

David Rawe - Mawell Resort

“For me, cooking is much more than “just” cooking. It’s about making people happy. As chefs, we can do just that with our work – and every day anew.

The greatest appreciation for us is when guests come up to us and say: Wow, that was delicious, really fun to eat!" This is the enthusiasm, David Rawe, chef at the Mawell Resort and whose whole life has been shaped by cooking, speaks. For it's not only at work that he is concerned with the texture and preparation of fish, meat, vegetables, and fruit.

He also spends a lot of his free time in nature: fishing, collecting wild garlic in spring, or mushrooms in autumn. Cooking something great from foods that can be found everywhere is what excites him. What can the nature around us provide us with, and when? In his opinion, sustainable cuisine should mainly deal with this question. Whether vegetable or animal, respect for the products is also essential to him.

Just as the interplay of individual flavors and components as a whole leads to a taste experience, cooking itself is absolutely a team sport. Fully respecting colleagues, each with their individual strengths, is paramount for Davis Rawe. The "old" days of shouting and throwing pans in the kitchen are long gone – at least at Mawell.

Whether from a small Thai village or from South Tyrol, with Ligurian roots or from maritime Croatia – very different personalities with very different stories work and innovate in the kitchens of the Green Pearls® partners. However, they all have one thing in common: respectful treatment of nature and its resources.



Massimo Cvek



David Rawe