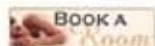



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CHEFS

in the City

Keith Kowalski - Black Cat Café

by Tara MacDonald

Chef Nelson Borges - Merlot
Allow us to introduce Nelson Borges, chef at Merlot.

From the beginning!

For **Merlot** executive chef **Nelson Borges**, becoming a chef was a natural progression. **Borges** was born in a little town in northern Portugal. At a time when microwave insta-meals were unknown phenomena, cooking was more of a lifestyle than a necessity. To prepare a meal took patience, tradition and resourcefulness. Food was a blessing and the kitchen an institution. It was in this atmosphere that the love of fine food first took its roots in Nelson Borges. Not long after Nelson was born, his father left Portugal where he was a professional soccer player. He immigrated to Canada in hopes of providing a better life for his family. The family soon followed bringing their culture and cuisine with them.

Waste not, want not!

Having experienced the effects of poverty first hand, the **Borges** family never forgot the importance of maximizing available resources. Pigs, chickens and rabbits were all routinely slaughtered in the family garage. Whether it was for lard, broth, sausage or stew - nothing was wasted. Looking back, **Borges** laughs. Admitting that as a child, the practice of slaughtering meat in his family garage would often embarrass him in front of his classmates, nowadays he sees these traditional methods of preparing and curing meat as integral aspects of his cultural heritage that he hopes to pass along to his infant son.

Venturing out!

At the age of eighteen, **Borges** ventured out of his hometown of Leamington, Ontario - Tomato Capital of Canada. **Borges** found his new home in Windsor. He enrolled in St. Clair

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Chef Nelson Borges, Merlot

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College's culinary arts program and got a job as a station chef for "The Other Place," Windsor's finest dining establishment. From there, **Borges** went on to work in Atlanta, Georgia where his cousin had opened up a steak and seafood restaurant. It didn't take long before **Borges** was back in Canada though, having gotten a position at the prestigious Sheraton Hotel in Toronto. Not liking the hustle and bustle of big city life, **Borges** applied for a transfer. His new destination brought him back to his roots in Lisbon, Portugal. He lasted three weeks before he finally quit, realizing that he needed to delve further into his culture which he could not do working for a large international hotel. It was at this point, after quitting the Sheraton, that he obtained a position at a local restaurant focusing on authentic Portuguese cuisine. Eventually, life and family brought **Borges** to Ottawa. And lucky for us! Merlot is definitely among Ottawa's shining stars of the restaurant industry with its beautiful design and mouth watering cuisine.

The Chef's Table

Chef Borges is all about making the meal an experience. This philosophy is what led to the idea for "The Chef's Table." Located between two magnificent wine cabinets, The Chef's Table is elegant and sophisticated. Seating between six to twenty people, this table can be reserved for events or parties. When you sit at this table, you have the opportunity to enjoy a third of the menu items at one seating. This is an excellent opportunity to try a little bit of everything at a steal of a price. Making the meal festive, the dishes are set out on lazy susans for you to share with your friends. Adding a personal flare, the Chef attends each meal, helping you choose portions to taste, explaining the dishes and offering suggestions on which wines best compliment your selection. **Borges** loves hosting the Chef's Table because it gives him a chance to share his knowledge with his guests and take part in their enjoyment of the meal.

Share and Share Alike

Borges' desire to share and propagate his culture and his love of fine food is a huge influence on his work. Often incorporating his Portuguese heritage onto his menu, **Borges** even uses some of his old family recipes that were passed down from his grandmother. A fine example would be the cold Portuguese sausage soup. Made with Choruso, a traditional Portuguese sausage, this dish didn't take long to become a hit with Merlot's clientele.

What's in a meal?

You won't find sprigs of rosemary or cinnamon sticks on **Borges'** plates. While he agrees that presentation is important to a dish, **Borges** insists "if you can't eat it - don't serve it!" because at the end of the day, it's "all about the flavour". This brings us to ingredients... Part of Merlot's secret to creating fabulously delicious meals is in the ingredients they use. Every season at Merlot offers a different perspective not only in the beautiful view from the top of the Hotel Marriott but also in the food. Striving to use as much local produce as possible, **Borges'** menu reflects the value he places on using fresh ingredients.

Take a look at this amazing recipe, from **Nelson Borges!**
We definitely want you to try this at home...

Merlot
100 Kent Street
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