

LIFE & FOOD



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2009
THE TENNESSEAN

CHEF DU JOUR

Chef lets Italian roots show

**Dustin Rupoli, Executive Chef
Barefoot Charlie's**

125 Saunders Ferry Road
Hendersonville, 431-2859

After working in restaurants during high school, including the Brown Palace Hotel in downtown Denver, Colo., chef Dustin Rupoli entered the Culinary Institute of America in New York at just 18 years of age.

These days, he says he finds inspiration from his customers and their positive feedback. But meals prepared with his aunt in Colorado also play fondly in his food memory bank. The pair would cook six courses for about 15 family members, flying in fish from Seattle.

"We're from an Italian family, so cooking was always an important thing," he said. "It wasn't just hotdogs... We're talking spaghetti and meatballs like you would expect if you were in Italy."

Favorite ingredient?

"It's always changing," he said "I love seasonal seafood and vegetables."

His favorite dishes on the menu at Barefoot Charlie's these days include the blackened fish tacos and shrimp scampi appetizer.

If you could cook for anyone — living or otherwise — who would it be, and what would you prepare?

"Gordon Ramsay (acclaimed British chef and star of Hell's Kitchen). I'd prepare something classically French."

Do you listen to music in the kitchen?



BILLY KINGSLEY / THE TENNESSEAN

"This is Tennessee. I love my country music."

What could we always find in your home refrigerator?

"Not a lot. But I always try and have butter pecan ice cream."

If you could choose your final meal, what would it be?

"Surf and turf. Bone-in rib eye steak, grilled lobster tails, spaghetti with tomato-basil sauce."

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