Samantha Helmold

Dr. Orloff

Profile/Personality Sketch

18 March 2013

Volt: The Mr. Bryan Voltaggio

Being nominated for a coveted James Beard Award (the highest honor for food and beverage professionals working in North America) as Best Chef Mid-Atlantic in 2010 and being named Chef of the Year by both the Washington, D.C. – Bryan Voltaggio, owner of VOLT in downtown Frederick, brings customers from all over Maryland to sit at his tables to eat some of the most delicious foods ever.

 Born and raised in Frederick, Maryland, Voltaggio, 37, began cooking with his grandfather at a very young age. “There are so many pictures of me in the kitchen as a young boy cooking with my grandfather; he was a chief in the military.” Having grown up in the deep-rooted agriculture community of Frederick, Voltaggio was raised to help in the family garden. “Bale hay and pull vegetables from the ground, I can remember when the neighbors would gather at my parents’ house to shuck for creamed corn.”

VOLT was the first restaurant that Bryan Voltaggio opened, back in 2008. He opened it in the beginning of the economic downturn in a non-foodie, no name town. He was also a contestant on Season Six of Top Chief. He wasn’t sure if there would be a restaurant to come back to. “I’ve said before Top Chief gave my restaurant the exposure it needed to put Frederick in the spotlight. I knew if I could get them here I could keep them coming back.” Voltaggio was a finalist in 2009 on the show.

Being on the more popular restaurants and having a well-known name, Voltaggio says it’s an honor being known as one of the greater chiefs in Frederick, Maryland. “Maryland and the great Mid-Atlantic has one of the longest growing seasons in the country and it’s a privilege to have access to this bounty, especially from the Chesapeake, every day.” Voltaggio takes pride in his home state and home town, being born and bred in the area.

Votaggio’s menus for VOLT are additionally driven by fresh, seasonal offerings, and the chef is an advocate for meats, seafood, and produce that are locally sourced, sustainable, and organic. Voltaggio says, “Oftentimes, I see that my food has changed someone’s mind about an ingredient or a dish. They may have disliked something as a child and grew up eating ingredients that turned them off. I love watching a diner fall in love with something that I created all over again or perhaps for the first time.”

Mr. Voltaggio has collaborated with the flying-dog brewery to create Backyard Ale and his brother, Michael, in a partnership with Sonoma in which they both bring professional culinary technique into ordinary homes or regular cooks. They released a cookbook in 2011 called, “VOLT ink.”

Having a love for cooking with Chesapeake seafood and local-grown meats, Voltaggio says it’s one of his biggest pleasures and most favorite thing to cook. Working alongside, Hilda Staples – another owner of the restaurant, Graeme Ritchie – Chef de Cuisine, and Johna Ritchie – General Manager, together they work to make the everyday lives of diners extraordinary with the experience they give at VOLT.

Being known as one of the greater chiefs in Maryland, Bryan Voltaggio says that his wife and children eat well, especially since he says that his wife is an excellent cook as well.

To be the best, you have to think like the best. When giving advice on any aspiring chief, Voltaggio says that, “Aim to achieve what you would expect to be unachievable. It is all about pushing beyond what is just ‘normal’.”