

Taste of the Town

Mez Chef offers casual menu with international inspiration



COMPILED BY LEIGH DYER
PHOTO BY GARY O'BRIEN

Name: Kline Kovaceski

Occupation: Corporate Executive Chef, Mez Restaurant and EpiCentre Theaters

Family: "My mother and father are in Macedonia, and my brother lives in Australia. It's been awhile since I've been back to see them, but they are very much looking forward to visiting me at my new home of Charlotte."

On how Charlotte compares to other cities he's worked in: "There is an energy and excitement here that I have not seen since the late 80's and 90's in Miami, when we created the 'new world cuisine.' Everyone in Charlotte, from the employees to the suppliers to the customers, is ready for a new dining scene, and Charlotte is poised to become a major player. I have dined on the East Coast, where technique is appreciated, and on the West Coast, where the emphasis is on local fresh ingredients. People here desire both, as well as a creative approach to cooking."

Inspirations for the menu at Mez:

"A collaboration with (developer) Afshin Ghazi, and his vision to create a casual but exciting menu with flavors from around the world. We didn't want to limit ourselves to one region."

On using organic, locally-produced food: "I am still new to the area, but I am working on establishing relationships with local suppliers and farmers. While cooking in the Bay area, I saw that customers will support menus that support local farmers. Organic prices are higher, but the only way we can get them to come down is to purchase more organic produce. So this is high on my agenda of things to get done."

Most memorable meal: "I hosted and prepared a dinner saluting the Four Diamond Top 40 Restaurants in Florida at Crystal Cafe, Miami Beach. All of the top chefs, sommeliers, restaurant managers and so forth were there, with every dish under extreme scrutiny and being served to the best of the best. It came off great, but it was the most difficult thing I have ever accomplished."

On volunteer activities: "This has always been important to me wherever I've lived. I realize that getting involved in the community is a great way to learn more about Charlotte. I've already heard about some great opportunities, and I look forward to helping out wherever I can."

More info: www.klinekovaceski.com