

Good Food Revolution

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Chef Michael Steh of Reds

This is the first in a series of chef and producer profiles of individuals making a difference in the good food movement in Southern Ontario. Recently, Chef Steh brought his signature charcuterie to the [Good Food Media Launch Dinner](#).



Chef Michael in portrait and in action with his signature charcuterie. Photo: [Jo Dickins](#)

Michael Steh is the executive chef of [Reds Bistro & Wine Bar](#). Steh's individual style has elevated reds' reputation as an exciting wine and dining destination. He has been heralded as one of Toronto's rising young chefs, and is a committed supporter of local producers and farmers. Chef Steh's culinary start began on one in rural Oshawa where he tended to fruit orchards and livestock. Raised by Slovenian-born parents, he had the privilege of learning him first-hand how to press wine, can fruit and smoke meat – methods he deploys today to make reds' kitchen distinct. Chef Steh acknowledges these early experiences, and time-honoured European traditions as the backbone of his culinary talent. Before settling at Reds Bistro, Chef Steh has worked in renowned restaurants such as Canoe, Biffs, Susur and Splendido.

GFR: What's brought you to the forefront of your profession? What makes you a great a chef?

Michael Steh: I love what I do so much. Cooking is an art form, and it is the best form of art because it affects all the senses. Smell, sight, touch, and even hearing that sizzling. I have a strong philosophy about the experience of eating. Food has always been a big part of my life. Growing up, my parents had a two acre fruit and vegetable orchard that we grew all our own products on. We did everything ourselves from preserving, making wine, curing charcuterie to killing our own chickens. Ten years of working on a vegetable and dairy farm gave me the experience, work ethic and passion that allows me to understand and define great food. My history has taught me to respect food by using the best sustainable products in the peak of season. I teach these same practices to all the cooks that work with me. I teach them to value and respect where something comes from because if you understand that, then you will know how to prepare it. As a result, I have a capacity to make food taste great and that ultimately is what makes me a great chef.

GFR: Why do you think food is such a significant and important element of culture?

MS: It is the foundation of culture! The type of food we eat, how it's prepared, the seasonings, products, techniques all describe a culture. Food becomes a tradition or a staple when it starts to form its own culture like turkey and Thanksgiving or chocolate eggs and Easter.

GFR: What is your culinary nemesis?

MS: Chefs that put names of producers on their menu's and they don't even use their product.

GFR: What about fast food? What's the best thing you can cook at home in 20 minutes?

MS: An awesome Thai chicken curry with coconut rice and green curry sauce.

Find out more about Michael Steh at redsbistro.com.

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