

KEATON HOPKINS, Executive Chef/President - Cucina39



Company website: www.cucina39.com

Company focus: We are a traditional regional Italian cuisine product that caters to grocery stores, delis, and hotels.

Latest accomplishment: Recently our all natural gluten free sauce was featured in the Washington Post.

How you celebrate success: I spend time with family and friends.

What's "next" for your business? Grow. We are getting ready to introduce a new product, traditional lasagna. All the details of this dish are prepared in the traditional Italian fashion.

Company you most admire and why: Bare Naked. They are a granola company based out of CT. These two young people wanted a healthy snack, worked really hard and created a product and company because of something they love. That really inspires me.

Most important characteristic for a CEO: Being a leader, staying focused everyday, teaching your philosophies and helping everyone grow and work as a team.

You're inspired by: Positive feedback. "It tastes too good to be out of the jar". That inspires me to make our business stronger.

Biggest challenge: In this weak economy, convincing stores to take our products and put it on their shelves.

One "lesson" learned: You recognize your strengths and weaknesses, it is important to find people that strengthen both. Surrounding yourself with those people will help you succeed.

Favorite quote: The only way to know how a customer sees your business in to look through their eyes.

Best business advice received: Manage your expenses.

Best business book: Winning by Jack Welch

Proudest moment: Getting the opportunity to go to the school of regional Italian cuisines in Italy and being able to come home and use what I have learned.

Childhood ambition: To be a celebrity chef.

First paying job: I was a line cook.

How did you break into the industry? I told the owner of a McLean restaurant my culinary dream, he gave me a job and I worked my way up to where I am today.

Favorite hobby: Golf

Tech gizmo you can't live without: Blackberry

Favorite place to conduct business: In the kitchen!

Favorite DC area restaurant: I Ricchi's. It reminds me of the food I ate in Italy.

Favorite vacation spot: Charleston SC

Where would you most like to visit? Italy

If you could drive any car... 2009 BMW 328 IL

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