



at home with... The Great Chefs of Westchester



Great Chef Anthony LaBriola

"My family and my Italian heritage have always been an integral part of my life in the kitchen," says Chef Anthony LaBriola, of Caffé Regatta Oyster Bar and Grill in Pelham. Chef LaBriola attributes his desire to become a professional chef to his family's influence and chose to study at The Culinary Institute, "because it had the best reputation...you can gain ten years of experience in two years of schooling. It was an intense and incredible experience in every way."

Following graduation, Chef LaBriola honed his skills in the city, working at *The Marriott Marquis*, *The Four Seasons Hotel* and well-known restaurants like *The Park Avenue Café* (Chef David Burke), *Le-spinasse* (Chef Gray Kunz) and *the Gotham Bar and Grill* (Chef Alfred Portale).

"Every great chef has something to teach, whether you have worked for them or just read their cookbooks. The Chefs that I worked for left great impressions on me, along with Charlie Trotter, Thomas Keller and Jean Georges Vongerichten. Besides being very influential to



the food industry, and chefs to be, they have inspired others to strive and keep focused: to cook from your heart and never give up. These chefs have elevated the whole profession for future chefs and introduced a celebrity aspect, as well."

"My favorite food to work with is the most versatile: fish. It's visually appealing and it makes a better final impression and impact than meat or poultry. Fish offers a greater variety of textures and flavors than any other protein. A piece of perfectly cooked fish with great fresh accompaniments can be an amazingly healthy and satisfying dish."

"Creating a menu can be a real challenge. I believe that you must always have classic dishes that everyone knows and has a basic understanding of what it might taste like. My basic

philosophy of cuisine is that it should be kept simple and fresh. My most popular dishes here are the Crab Cakes, Seafood Sprig Rolls and the Raw Bar. I have structured my menu so that I can be creative with my specials. My signature dishes are Lobster-Crab Ravioli, Everything Crusted Tuna, Cream of Wheat & Cayenne Crusted Sea Scallops, Fried Blue Point Oyster Caesar Salad."

"When it comes to cooking itself, I can pass on one thing I know for sure: ingredients are everything! More important than profound culinary ideas or masterful technique is the commitment to using only the best possible ingredients. If you start with the finest, freshest, purest tasting ingredients, it is genuinely hard to go wrong. Sophisticated cooking techniques and creativity are bonuses, but the foundation of truly fine cuisine is rooted in the foodstuffs themselves."

"I think that the most challenging aspect of running a restaurant is building a community of regulars, when owning a restaurant in a suburban area, without the influx of commuters and tourism. You tend mostly to rely on your community and surrounding communities. If you own a restaurant, and you are fortunate enough to persuade someone to give it an initial try, you'd better make a great impression and win the first round. I think most businesses are better at coddling regulars than they are at focusing on first-timers; both are crucial to any business."

While it is obviously important to keep your steady clientele happy, life depends upon auspicious beginnings. My goal is to earn regular repeat business from a large number of people. If one can accomplish this, regardless of what business you are in, you have built a solid foundation for your business."

Caffé Regatta Oyster Bar & Grill

133 Wolf's Lane, Pelham, NY

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Private Parties & Catering Available

Tues., Wed., Thurs. 5-11pm; Fri.-Sat. 5pm-12am;

Sun. 4pm-10pm; Sunday Brunch: 10:30am-3:30pm

cafferegatta.com

Favorite Recipe

Warm Bluepoint Oysters With Leeks and Osetra Caviar

4 Leeks, white parts only. Sliced into ¼-inch rounds.
1 Tablespoon Canola Oil
1 Tablespoon finely minced Shallots
1 Cup White Wine
½ Cup Heavy Cream
¼ Cup Unsalted Butter, cut into pieces.
Pinch of Cayenne Pepper
Coarse Salt & freshly ground White Pepper, to taste.
20 Bluepoint Oysters, or substitute Wellfleet, Kumamoto or Malpeque Oysters
1 heaping Tablespoon of finely minced Chives
2 Ounces of Osetra Caviar
Fresh Chervil Sprigs for garnish
Seaweed or coarse Sea Salt, for serving

In a saucepan of boiling, salted water, cook the leeks for about 6 minutes, until very tender. Drain and plunge them into ice water. Drain again and set aside.

In a small sauté pan, heat the oil over medium high heat and cook the shallots for about 4 minutes until softened. Add the wine and cook for about 6 minutes until nearly evaporated. Add the heavy cream and bring to a boil. Cook for a few minutes until the cream reduces slightly. Reduce the heat to low and whisk in the butter, a piece at a time, until the sauce is rich and slightly thickened. Season with cayenne, salt and pepper. Cover and set aside to keep warm.

Working over a bowl, to catch the juices, hold oyster firmly in the palm of your hand, using a towel to protect your palm. Insert an oyster knife into the hinge at the pointed end of the oyster. Work it in, using steady, even pressure. Pop open the shell, then move the blade around until you cut the muscle that attaches the top of the shell to the oyster. Remove the top shell. Slide knife under the oyster, finding where it is attached to the bottom shell, and cut through. Reserve the deep, bottom shell and discard the top shell. Wash and dry the reserved bottom shells.

Add the reserved leeks to the cream sauce and cook over medium heat for about 2 minutes. Add the oysters and reserved liquid, and cook for about 1 minute, until just heated through. Toss in chives.

Using a slotted spoon, spoon some leeks onto clean, dry shell. Set an oyster on top of the leeks and spoon a little more sauce over the oyster. Garnish each with a few grains of caviar and a sprig of chervil. Repeat until all shells are filled; should have 20 filled shells.

Chef's Tips:

Gadgets: There are a lot of things you perceive that you need. Hotels have the budget to spend on exotic equipment, but you mostly need basic restaurant equipment: pots, pans and a stove. All tools & gadgets are equally important in all professional kitchens, but no restaurant can run successfully without teamwork. Each member of the team has a role to play, and must play it well, or there can be no ultimate victory. As the leader, I take total responsibility for what is served at *The Regatta*, therefore, it is up to me to set the game plan: to articulate my vision and keep the team focused and at all times, to maintain the goal of excellence.

Staple Ingredients: Staple ingredients for a chef are: olive oil, garlic, onions, some sort of stock: vegetable, chicken and fish.

The Chef says....

"When you acknowledge, as you must, that there is no such thing as perfect food, only the idea of it, then the real purpose of striving toward perfection becomes clear: to make people happy. That's what cooking is all about!"