

Behind the Apron

A CULINARY
EXPERIENCE WITH
CHEF LARRY GERSTEIN

STREETSCAPE: *What inspired you to become a chef?*

CHEF LARRY: My mom refused to feed me, it was more of a survival thing. Mom, I am kind of kidding. The truth is I have fun cooking. I remember as a kid when my parents would go out on Saturday nights I looked forward to making cakes, brownies and cookies. Later on I would create more elaborate meals experimenting with Mexican and Italian dishes, which had its challenges since I grew up in a kosher home. As you can see, I have been a foodie for a long time and feel very fortunate to now get paid for doing something I truly have fun doing. It doesn't get better than that!

STREETSCAPE: *What is your background?*

CHEF LARRY: I've done everything, absolutely everything, in the food business. Dishwasher, busboy, cook, waiter, manager, director, and owner. From 15 years old through a degree in Hotel Restaurant Management from Denver University to jobs with big restaurant organizations like the Levy's, in Chicago, and Gilbert Robinson in St. Louis. Ownership is what I still needed to accomplish and I made that happen with Larry G's, a 50's Diner, Custom Catering, a corporate catering specialist, and then currently to Championship Catering, focusing on wedding and events. I stopped briefly to get my Masters Degree, thinking there might be something else I could do, but realizing, 3 years later, that I am still a foodie, it's what I do best, and it's who I am.

STREETSCAPE: *At what restaurant can our readers taste your creations?*

CHEF LARRY: Well, let's see... I was the caterer for the Rams for 13 years and the Cardinals for 15 years, I currently cater for the Ambush and am the VIP and backstage caterer for Hollywood Casino Amphitheater/ Riverport. So, if you were any type of ball player or musical talent you may have sampled my food. Otherwise, being invited to an event at many of St. Louis's great venues like Third Degree Glass, Butterfly House, The Barnett, or Casa Loma Ballroom may offer you the opportunity. Bottom line, the best way to sample my product.....hire me.

STREETSCAPE: *What kinds of foods are you for mostly known?*

CHEF LARRY: Personally, I am a comfort food kind of guy and that probably comes across in many of our signature dishes, beef pepperloin, carved tenderloin, stuffed chicken, champagne chicken, pastas, and potatoes. But, I have fun creating new dishes to please all palates and satisfy my client's individual taste.

STREETSCAPE: *What is your specialty?*

CHEF LARRY: First, and foremost, customer service. I really do pride myself on our customer service, but our made-to-order table side dishes are very popular and fun to offer. Since people have differing tastes dietary restrictions, or may just be picky eaters, this style of services can make everyone happy.

STREETSCAPE: *What are the newest hottest trends in fine dining?*

CHEF LARRY: I believe it is using words I don't know, and food that I have know idea how to pronounce and spending way more than I should for it and then leaving hungry. I believe in knowing what you're eating and you should not pay an arm and a leg. Its food. It should look appetizing, taste even better and be at a price you can afford.

STREETSCAPE: *Do you have a favorite recipe that you would like to share with our readers?*

CHEF LARRY: I put out a newsletter twice a month with featured recipes. You should join my newsletter at championshipcatering.com or check out my recipes on line. I would rather give you recipe advice... make it your own. If there are ingredients you don't like, leave them out. If there is something you think would make it tastier, put it in. Bottom line you are going to eat it so put in what you like. *Bon appetite!*

