

CHARLIE TROTTER – FOUNDER AND CHEF OF ONE OF THE FINEST RESTAURANTS IN THE WORLD

Charlie Trotter's Restaurant is fifteen years old in 2002. Trotter is not only one of today's great chefs but also a successful businessman and a major contributor to humanitarian causes.

CHICAGO (August 2002) – 2002 marks the 15th birthday of one of the world's great restaurants. In 1987 Charlie Trotter's opened for business in a brownstone in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood, and introduced Chicagoans and visitors from around the globe to a new philosophy of cooking, and an entirely new restaurant experience.

For Charlie Trotter food and dining are matters of integrity and passion. Cooking is not a simple affair, or something to be learned by rote. On a disciplined framework, grounded in Western European tradition and drawing on Asian minimalism, he works elegant and sophisticated American improvisations, using sometimes surprising combinations to produce extraordinary results, in dishes which are never the same from one night to the next.

“Fifteen years is about a journey,” says Trotter. “I'm in the midst of the journey, and I never know when or where it will end. I don't feel like we've accomplished anything more than constant improvement and refinement of a decade and a half. If I ever feel that the growth has stopped, or if my heart isn't in it anymore, then I will simply have to find something else to pursue.”

The only predictable things about Chef Trotter's food are that it will change to match the ingredients available, that it will be of unequalled quality and flavor, and that it will be faultlessly served in beautiful surroundings. The only simple aspect of his success is his insistence on only ever using the purest raw materials at the height of their season,

and on allowing the flavors of these exceptional ingredients to sing forth without interference.

Charlie Trotter's enormous achievement was recognized as soon as he opened the doors of his restaurant a decade and a half ago, and ever since then the volume of the applause has continued to increase. In recent years he has been awarded the James Beard Foundation's *Outstanding Chef Award* for 1999, while the restaurant has been named Wine Spectator *Best Restaurant in the World for Wine and Food* in 1998 and *Best Restaurant in the United States* in 2000. Charlie Trotter's has been a *Relais Gourmand* member of the prestigious Relais & Chateaux group since 1995, and one of Traditions & Qualité's *Grandes Tables du Monde* since 1998.

In recent years Trotter's To Go, possibly the most upmarket take-out operation on the face of the planet, has offered food infused with the same culinary philosophy and using the same high quality, seasonal ingredients and organically-raised products. Trotter's To Go offers fare from the freshest salads and sandwiches to succulent roasts and braised meats, all prepared daily. Charlie Trotter also produces a line of packaged foods including sauces for entrées and desserts, and his signature citrus-cured smoked salmon.

Considering his improvisational approach to cooking, it is perhaps not surprising that Charlie Trotter is a lover of Jazz, nor that in his highly praised PBS TV show, *The Kitchen Sessions with Charlie Trotter*, Jazz is the underlying theme. The show, which launched in 1999, and which in its first season won the James Beard Foundation's *Best National Television Cooking Show Award*, emphasizes the spontaneity that Trotter espouses and which makes his cooking so exciting. In the show he encourages viewers to treat a recipe as a starting point for their own improvisation, and so create a cuisine which is essentially theirs alone. *The Kitchen Sessions with Charlie Trotter* is about to begin taping a new season in which Chef Trotter will once more share his kitchen, his culinary secrets, and his love of improvisation with the world. An accompanying book of the same name is available, with recipes specifically written for the home cook, including

suggestions for substitutions of ingredients to guide the reader forward to their own dishes.

Charlie Trotter has written a number of other cookbooks, including five gorgeously illustrated volumes featuring recipes from the restaurant, four of which are dedicated to the specific subjects of Vegetables, Seafood, Desserts and Meat and Game. Other books include *Charlie Trotter Cooks at Home*, in which the recipes are streamlined for the home cook, and *Gourmet Cooking for Dummies*, in which Charlie outlines the building blocks of great cuisine and leads the reader through them to simple but spectacular recipes and the art of menu planning. *Great Restaurants of the World: Charlie Trotter's* by Edmund Lawler was published in 2000, and gives a fascinating insight into what makes Trotter tick, and how he has turned his dream into a reality.

Chef Trotter is a consummately successful businessman as well as a chef. He is a strong believer in sharing the lessons he has learned and the wisdom he has acquired over the years, and frequently delivers speeches and provides consultations drawing on his experiences. *Lessons in Service from Charlie Trotter* and *Lessons in Excellence from Charlie Trotter* are the literary extension of Chef Trotter's speeches and consulting work. *Lessons in Excellence*, written by Paul Clarke, shows the reader how the level of concern with quality that resulted in success at Charlie Trotter's is essential to the success of any business, while *Lessons in Service*, by Edmund Lawler, focuses on the importance of providing the highest possible level of customer service.

Charlie Trotter's amazing cooking may be the reason why he is known to the world, but it is only one part of his life. His interest in helping others in significant, palpable ways is every bit as passionate as his drive for constant culinary improvement. Beyond sharing the entrepreneurial wisdom that he has acquired through running a successful restaurant, he has always supported a broad range of humanitarian causes both with practical help and as a creative fundraiser. In 1999 he founded *The Charlie Trotter Culinary Education Foundation*, which has to date raised almost \$300,000 for culinary scholarships. Charlie was recently named as one of only five "heroes" to be honored by

Secretary of State Colin Powell's charity America's Promise in recognition of his work through the Foundation, which is to be the beneficiary of a fund-raising dinner to be held on August 17th, where legendary Swiss Chef Fredy Girardet will emerge from retirement for one night only, to cook a meal for 65 guests in celebration of Charlie Trotter's fifteenth anniversary.

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In 2003 Charlie Trotter will spread his wings beyond Illinois and, indeed, beyond the United States, to open a restaurant in London. The location for this new restaurant will be The Hospital, a state-of-the-art facility for music, art and film professionals currently under development in a converted Victorian hospital in fashionable Covent Garden. The Hospital is a collaborative venture between Paul Allen, co-founder of Microsoft, and Dave Stewart, better known as one half of the Eurythmics.

Over the next fifteen years it is equally certain that diners in Chicago and London will continue to delight in the results of Charlie Trotter's originality, continuing innovation and unparalleled flair, and that people in need around the world will continue to benefit from his creative generosity.

To learn more about Charlie Trotter's, please point your browser to www.charlietrotters.com.

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