

Chef Spotlight
Todd Young
Sebastian's at Bain Capital

High Above the City, Todd Young Feeds High Power Investment Bankers



From the dining room on the 32nd floor of 111 Huntington Ave. in Boston, Todd Young not only has a unique perspective on the city and its surrounding suburbs, but also on the foodservice world. As executive chef for Sebastian's Catering at Bain Capital, Young has the unique challenge of feeding a captive audience of hard working professionals five days a week.

"[You have to] provide as much variety and change as you can," Young said. "I have no strict budget to go by. My job is to make people happy."

And that's exactly what he's been doing for the last seven years at Bain. On any given day, Young and his staff put out three hot entrees, four salads, sides and soups to feed around 250 employees in a span of an hour and half. There are also 22 conference rooms that he is responsible for catering. To keep up with the demand for variety, Young writes his menus a week ahead of time, often taking inspiration from outside sources and his staff.

"When you serve to a captive audience, you have to source ideas from the outside," he said. "I use the internet all the time for ideas. We write menus as a team. [I'll say], 'What do you feel like cooking?'"

Though Young experiments with a variety of cuisines, he has noticed an increased demand for healthier items, but with such a specific group of customers he has a few advantages that many chefs don't have.

"You do get to know people's likes and dislikes on a personal level," he said. "The only people I answer to are the customers. I have a lot of creative license in what I do."

Though Young has some advantages that few other chefs have, he also has a few challenges to work with. His entire staff, including servers and catering staff, is nine people and space is also at a premium in the kitchen and the dining room.

"The amount of storage and cooler space is a challenge," he said. "We have deliveries coming in daily, we don't do any prep work, and everything is cooked fresh that day."

Fortunately for Young, with his consistent business, predicting how much to order is fairly easy. The biggest challenge he faces is time, or the employees' lack of it.

"The big challenge is no one wants to wait for their lunch," he said. "I have to design the food to be served a certain way while giving them the variety, freshness and taste that they want."

Though Young says he would like to open his own operation someday, he is more than happy with his current situation since he gets to balance his passion for food and time with his wife and two children.

"This is a great place to have a well balanced life," he said.

Originally intending to study engineering after high school, Young spent a summer working at a resort in Maine, where he grew up, and at the insistence of the chef there tried cooking, eventually graduating from Boston University's Metropolitan College with a degree in Hotel Management and Culinary Arts. After graduating, Young worked in hotels in Hawaii and Vail, Colorado before eventually coming back East, taking positions at the Charles Hotel and the former Hotel at MIT before landing at Sebastian's.

Though he has traveled across the country, he considers himself a New Englander at heart, and even admires fellow New England chef Jasper White.

"I love his style of food – the simplicity of it," Young said. "I admire his passion for food and his work ethic."

Simplicity of food is something that Young has noticed over the course of his career, as well as the surge in demand for locally produced products.

"Food is prepared more naturally and more simply now," he said. "There is more focus on buying things regionally, seasonally and at the peak of their flavor."

Young said the public is also more aware and more educated about food, especially his customers.

"The overall food knowledge of the public – people are much more enlightened now," he said. "When you are writing menus and descriptions, you have to be very careful because they will call you on it if they think you are trying to pull the wool over their eyes."

Because the general public, and especially his customers, are much more educated about food, they are also more willing to experiment with more than just traditional cuisine.

"People's willingness to try more exotic items opens up whole new opportunities to experiment," he said. "I can experiment on people here."

