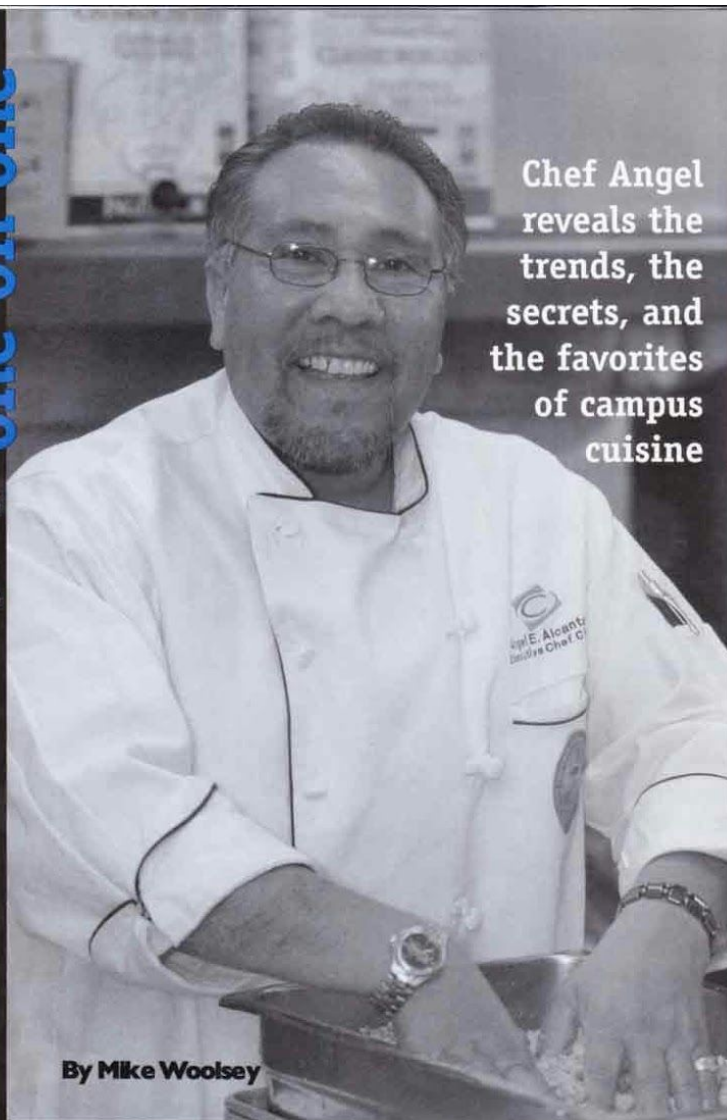


one-on-one

Q & A with UW-RF's Culinary King



By Mike Woolsey

Chef Angel reveals the trends, the secrets, and the favorites of campus cuisine

Executive chef Angel Alcantar oversees 14 full-time food service professionals who serve hundreds of students, faculty, and staff three meals per day at four campus locations. After abandoning a career in law enforcement, the Arizona native pursued the culinary arts. He's now going on 13 years with Chartwells, Inc., the vendor providing food service to UW-RF.

puter program that calculates everything from portion size to how fresh something will stay. Before 1997 we did the math ourselves and kept (paper) records for a lot of that stuff. We still have to finesse things though.

Q How do you know what entrees and side dishes will be popular with students and staff?

A We keep records of previous meals. When we introduce something new we test its popularity over a five-week period. Recently we discontinued a ratatouille dish (French casserole consisting of egg plant and zucchini). It just wasn't popular, but French toast for supper? Man, the students love it. That's our most recent discovery.

Q What kind of nutritional trends are you seeing?

A Heavy fats and sauces are going by the wayside. We are creating substitutions in many dishes—margarine for butter and yogurt for sour cream. All our recipes are test marketed and have nutritional guidelines. We provide the kids with sound meals if they take the portions recommended. That's the key. A student once said to me, "Your cooking is great but it's making me fat." I said "Let me see your plate." He had three hamburgers, a slice of pizza, pasta salad, and cake.

We are also seeing more students claiming to be vegetarian now. They're expanding their palates and eating tofu. Recently a visiting group of vegetarians asked me to prepare tofu scrambled eggs which can be a little bland. So, I used some curry, tamari, tahini, and

Q Tell us about your beginnings as a chef.

A My godfather owned a hamburger joint, and I worked for him when I was 15. He challenged me; he was tough. He put a recipe in my hand once and after a few minutes snatched it away and asked me to recite it. He told me the parts I forgot I could improvise. I learned that's what makes a recipe yours. After high school I joined the service and became an MP (military police officer). But after my service, the influence of my godfather was still with me, and I enrolled in culinary school. I

had a catering business and a restaurant before coming here (to Chartwells). I like this work. I'm artistic. I like to create art on a plate.

Q What are some things you have to consider when preparing a campus meal that most people may not consider?

A I want to make the food available in quantities that will allow items to retain their color and consistency. I have to know how long vegetables will last before they wilt, so sometimes we'll batch cook them. Foodco 6 is a com-

lemon juice. They were amazed and assumed that I was a vegetarian too. But I had spent some time at the CIA (Culinary Institute of America) learning to prepare vegetarian cuisine.

Q What seems to be the most popular items students choose?

A Everyday I could serve macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes, and "Beanie Weenies."

Q Beanie Weenies?

A Kids go crazy for it. I don't know, it must remind them of home or being a kid.

Q How about dessert?

A Rice Krispy bars.

Q I should have guessed! As a professionally trained chef, what do you enjoy preparing?

A Being from Arizona I enjoy preparing southwestern cuisine. I enjoy cooking things with a lot of color—red peppers, dishes that are zesty but don't numb your palate. My signature rice dish calls for epazote (a citrus herb from Central America). I also will add that to black bean dishes to reduce the gases. The essence and colors of the ingredients allow you to create a collage of flavors. But I also enjoy cooking French dishes with creamy white sauces.

Q Do people eat enough vegetables when dining on campus?

A Add cheese and they do. I can't keep cheese broccoli on the line. Mixed vegetables are popular here. Zucchini has trouble. We go through about 60 pounds of vegetables per meal.

Q What do you wish people ate more of?

A A balanced meal with whole grain fiber. Hearty breads are losing to white bread. Students wouldn't have to worry about the "freshman 15" (the additional pounds new students often pack on) if they varied their choices and portions.

Q What entree or side dish have you created so often you could do it in your sleep?

A Chicken. Grilled, fried, baked, sautéed in peanut oil...chicken has become the meat of choice. Someone should write a book, "1001 Ways to Cook Chicken."

Q What is the most commonly used spice in your kitchen?

A I am always reaching for garlic. It's the spice of the gods. When my staff smells garlic they say, "Angel's cooking."

Q Do you pay attention to television chefs like Emeril?

A He's an excellent showman and has a great restaurant, but if I want to learn something new I'll watch Wolfgang Puck or the Naked Chef.

Q Who are the more finicky eaters on campus?

A Freshmen. They want to try new things but they can be very picky too. Rookies on the Kansas Chiefs can be hard to please. I've put out candied asparagus, pesto and feta scalloped potatoes, and prime rib, and then I had a player ask for "Easy Mac" (boxed macaroni and cheese). Some players haven't tasted the fruits of their earnings yet.

Q Tell us about some unique campus dishes?

A Britctson Chicken is named after the retired director of university advancement, Chuck Britctson. He likes Cajun dishes. It contains sausage, roasted red peppers, and shrimp. Then there's a pesto chicken named for the director of alumni relations, Dan McGinty. And we have chicken served in a white wine sauce called Chancellor Chicken. That was inspired by Chancellor Thibodeau.

Angel's Orange Beef with Glazed Walnuts

Marinade:

2 Tbsp.	soy sauce
2 Tbsp.	corn starch
3/4 lb. (12 oz.)	beef tender (thinly sliced)

Sauce:

1/3 cup	orange juice
2 Tbsp.	dry sherry
1 Tbsp.	soy sauce
2 tsp.	dark soy sauce
1/2 tsp.	hot pepper sauce
2-1/2 tsp.	sugar

Ingredients:

2 Tbsp.	olive oil
2 Tbsp.	orange zest (shredded)
1/2 cup	medium red peppers (cut into 3/4" pieces)
1/2 cup	onions (cut into 3/4" pieces)
1-1/2 tsp.	cornstarch (dissolved in 1 Tbsp. water)
1/2 cup	glazed walnuts

Combine marinade ingredients in bowl. Refrigerate overnight.

Place 1 Tbsp. of olive oil in wok. Cook over high heat. Add beef from marinade and stir fry until no longer pink. Remove beef and set aside.

Place remaining olive oil in wok. Add orange zest, peppers and onions. Saute 1 minute. Return beef to wok and add pre-mixed sauce. Bring to boil. Add cornstarch and cook until mixture thickens. Remove from wok, sprinkle with walnuts, and serve.