

# Zach Bell

## Executive Chef

When Zach accepted his first position as Executive Chef at Daniel Boulud's Café Boulud in Palm Beach, it meant returning home to Florida where he had his culinary start. Zach first joined Daniel at New York's Café Boulud in 1999. "Zach is a great asset to us and has become the face of Café Boulud in Palm Beach. His maturity, depth of culinary knowledge, organizational skills, and above all, great palate serves him well in this challenge," says Boulud.



Zach hails from Clermont, Florida. An early fascination with the kitchen dates back to the fourth grade when his family's relocation meant several months residing at a hotel. He was captivated with the workings of the hotel kitchen, which became his after school playground. At age 14, he went to work at a local restaurant, beginning as a dish washer and climbing his way up to become the cook.

At Valencia College, Zach began studying physical therapy, but again found himself drawn to the kitchen. The Orlando Marriott's restaurant was his next culinary home. The hotel's executive chef recognized his talents inspiring him to transfer to the culinary program at Johnson and Wales. A kitchen externship led him to the William's Island Yacht Club, introducing the young cook to Chef Charles Saunders' California style cuisine and the flames of a wood burning grill.

While still a student, Zach joined Chefs Marc Poidevin and Sascha Lyon at Miami's Biz Bistro, where he remained long after graduation. These first steps in a French kitchen established the direction for his future. He absorbed the technique, care and attention to detail that set this cooking apart and refined his approach to vegetables, garnishes and sauces.

After only two years Chef Poidevin invited him to follow the team to Le Cirque 2000 in New York. He soon settled into an East Village apartment, a new city and an entirely different caliber of kitchen. Le Cirque Chef Sottha Khun soon promoted Zach from the banquet kitchen

to chef de partie tournant, and later saucier, providing a valuable opportunity to train at each station. At Le Cirque, Zach worked alongside then sous chef Andrew Carmellini who went on to open Café Boulud with Daniel Boulud in October 1998. Three months later Zach followed as saucier and soon sous-chef at Café Boulud New York.

Zach perceives cooking as a craft melding technical skill with a love of food and a respect for process. No short cuts! The young chef's affinity for meat shines in intensely flavored dishes such as his tartine of squab, grilled sourdough layered with wild mushroom duxelle, braised squab leg and sautéed squab liver, with roasted squab breast and an a la minute jus, finished with foie gras butter and a delicate mache salad. At the same time, the Florida waters provide fine fish, such as Zach's favorite mahi mahi which he pairs with a summer squash, apple and mussel stew, Colombo curry, coconut milk and cilantro.

"Zach is an energetic and talented young chef who has absorbed the best of what French technique has to offer," says Daniel Boulud. "I remember the first meal he cooked for me years ago in Miami and was convinced of his passion from that moment." Since opening Café Boulud Palm Beach, Zach has earned the restaurant numerous accolades including Wine Spectator Magazine's Best of Award of Excellence, four stars in the Mobil Travel Guide, Four Diamonds in the AAA Travel Guide, Boca Raton Magazine's awards for Best new Kid on the Block, Stellar Hotel Restaurant, and Most Exciting New Menu, as well as Florida Trend Magazine's Golden Spoon Award every year since 2004. Most recently Zach was nominated in 2008, 2009, and 2010 for "Rising Star Chef of the Year" for the South award by the James Beard Foundation.

Zach has also become a dedicated member of the Palm Beach community contributing to culinary events for the Daily Bread Food Bank, The Boys & Girls Clubs, The March of Dimes, and Quantum House. Since 2005 he has hosted an annual gala for Share Our Strength, as well as traveled to other cities as a guest chef at SOS's A Tasteful Pursuit fund raisers. At the November 2009 Share Our Strength Leadership Awards, Zach was honored with the first Community Leader – A Tasteful Pursuit award for his work in support of this program locally and around the country.

(Recipe continued on next page)

## Ropa Vieja

As you may know, Braising and Slow Cooking is a passion of Daniel and those of us around him. So much so, his last book is all about the art of turning less tender cuts of meat into sublime goodness. Most ropa vieja recipes call for flank steak, which I find to be far too lean. I like to use hangar steak, which has a better marbling and much deeper flavor. This dish is great served over yellow rice with wedges of fresh lime to squeeze on it. Slices of fresh avocado and cilantro make it even more special.

**Yields – 6 healthy portions**

### Part one ingredients:

- 3 pounds cleaned hangar steak cut into 3-4 inch lengths
- As needed light olive oil for searing
- ½ cup dry white wine
- ¼ cup whole small manzanilla olives
- 1 14oz. can whole plum tomatoes in juice

### Method

Preheat about 3 tablespoons of light olive oil in a 12 inch all clad sauté pan (try the new d5) over medium high heat. Season the hangar steak with salt and freshly ground black pepper and add to the pan once wisps of smoke start to appear. Brown the meat on all sides and then remove to the slow cooker. You may have to repeat this step several times depending on the size of your sauté pan- but it will be well worth it! Deglaze the pan with the white wine and reduce by half, scraping up any bits on the bottom of the pan. Add the wine reduction, as well as the tomatoes and olives to the slow cooker. Cover the Slow cooker and set on high for 4 hours.

### Part two ingredients:

- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 each medium yellow onions, cut into 1 inch pieces
- 2 each red peppers, cut into 1 inch pieces
- 2 each yellow peppers, cut into 1 inch pieces
- 1 head garlic, cloves separated, peeled, left whole
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 T dry oregano
- 1 ½ teas ground coriander
- 1 teas ground cumin
- 1 teas salt

## Method

Gently preheat the olive oil over medium heat in a wide pan, (I prefer the All Clad Sauteuse with Domed Lid). Add the onions, both peppers and garlic and gently sweat until translucent, about 10 minutes. Add the dried spices, reduce the heat to low and sweat an additional 3-5 minutes. Remove the vegetables from the pan and reserve.

After 2 hours of cooking, turn the pieces of hangar steak over. At this point add the vegetables, replace the cover and allow to cook for the remaining 2 hours. After 4 hours, the All Clad Slow Cooker will automatically switch to Warming mode. Turn the ropa vieja one more time and allow to remain in the mode for 1 ½ hours.

Serve as mentioned above. The meat will be tender enough to shred apart a little as if they were 'old clothes'.