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# Opryland Chef Teaches, Travels and Creates Great Tastes



From The Kitchens of The Food Channel  
Guest Chef Profile

Posted by Editor from [The Food Channel®](#)

Recipes from Chef Swann:

[Harris Ranch Barrel Cut Grilled Beef Filet with Pan Seared Striped Bass](#)

[Thyme-Scented Pinor Noir Buerre Rouge](#)

Imagine serving 2 million meals annually, all while striving for culinary perfection and a unique flavor experience. That's the life of [Gaylord Opryland® Resort and Convention Center](#) Executive Chef Michael Swann.



Swann joined the landmark resort, located in Nashville, Tennessee, in 2004. He now teaches and leads 15 chefs and 160 other employees in the Banquet Operations section of Gaylord Opryland's Food and Beverage Division. It includes a \$50 million banquet operation that works for "mass customization" to make each banquet's food unique.

"People have a much more sophisticated understanding of food and food preparation today than they did 20 years ago," says Swann. "You must take your food and your service to the next level. We strive to create meals that are fun, interactive and memorable."

Although many of the meals are delivered in a banquet setting, Swann has incorporated a

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## Comments

restaurant-style philosophy of providing meals "cooked to order" rather than prepared hours in advance. He also works with meeting planners to select from a variety of concepts, ranging from contemporary American cuisine to international dishes. He is directly responsible for food quality, financial enterprises, employee retention, and overall production in the area of conference services, Garde Manager, Banquet Hot food, Commissary and Pastry.

Swann's ability to teach has also led him to a role of international training for 60 international students, half from Seoul, Korea and half from Latin America. He offers these students hands-on training in two extensive programs per month, allowing them to build a portfolio of recipes. "I have found that it brings an interesting flavor to our team by adding students from these two locations," Swann said. "We have 20 other cultures working in the kitchens, from as far away as the India, Philippines, Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, Iran and Central and South America."

Swann's culinary education began early while sharing cooking duties with his three sisters. He says he knew from the first time he witnessed the process involved with creating his favorite dish, Osso Bucco (braised veal shanks, or Italian for "on the bone"), that he wanted to prepare amazing food and be around food all of his professional life. Swann's formal education includes a long list of prestigious appointments and certifications, including extensive studies at the Culinary Institute of America in New York. He is also a graduate of Hilton Hotels Culinary Apprentice Program.

Swann's many awards include earning the Award of Culinary Excellence, Chef of the Year, from Marriott International. He has been presented with five awards from the American Culinary Federation including the Judges' Award for Best of Show.

The hotel has won some of the industry's top honors under Swann's food leadership, including the Gold Platter 'Elite' Award (2004, 2005, 2006), and Gold Platter Hall of Fame Award (2005, 2007), given by Meetings and Conventions magazine. He has also been recognized by countless organizations over the years for his leadership, community service and culinary expertise. Swann was featured in the cover story for Hotel Food and Beverage Executive magazine regarding the renaissance of Gaylord Opryland's food and beverage program and makes regular appearances on television programs throughout the year.

Swann was recently given one of Gaylord Opryland's highest honors when he was awarded the only Level-Five Leader Hedgehog Award given in 2007 out of all of the property's 4,000 employees. The award recognizes an outstanding manager who builds enduring greatness through a blend of personal humility and professional will for the company's success.

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