

, Resident



### Maitre Fromager

Written by Lynn McDowell



The art of knowing all the particulars of fine, artisanal cheeses has been embraced by Richard Peterson, resident *Maitre Fromager*, of the Old Hickory Steakhouse at Gaylord Opryland® Resort & Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee.

Peterson has developed a world-class cheese program for Old Hickory Steakhouse with pieces from Switzerland, Portugal, France and even Wasbash Cannonball, Indiana. He studies and tastes every day and visits some of America's best dairy farms to learn more about the cheese-making process.

"One of the most popular items that our guests enjoy the most at Old Hickory Steakhouse is our cheese card experience," Kim Keelor, Director of Public Relations at the Gaylord Opryland, said. "Richard Peterson is probably one of the top ten most highly studied cheese experts in the country."

A native of Salt Lake City, Peterson was influenced by his worldly grandmother, who often shared stories of her exotic trips abroad. He left home at a young age and began working as a line cook and server. He later worked at Ruth's Diner where he developed an appreciation for the finer things in life and became a "foodie," remembering his travels by what he ate and drank.

He moved on to Nashville, Tennessee where he joined the Gaylord Opryland team as a server. He was able to quench his thirst for wine knowledge, and after being recognized by his co-STARs for his ever-expanding wine facts, he was promoted to a trainer. He began teaching wine classes and assisted in making wine list selections for the restaurants.

While traveling with a group of friends to the Caribbean, he visited a restaurant with a wine cellar that had just a single table. They dined in a room unknown to patrons and surrounded by rare collector wines, some bottles claimed to have been uncovered from the sunken *Titanic*. They were introduced to a cheese course in addition to French services and menu. This experience expanded Peterson's interests and ultimately changed his career.

Old Hickory Steakhouse had an interest in adding a cheese course to its menu. Peterson began studying and learned that cheese was just as fascinating, or perhaps even more so, than wine. In support of his new role as *Maitre Fromager*, he immediately traveled to New York to study at the Artisanal Cheese Center, Artisanal Bistro and the famed Picholine. He learned that many aspects surrounding cheese affected its taste — weather, time of the day and even what the animal ate on a particular day.

Peterson plans to complete the level-one Sommelier certification so that he can assist customers with the very best in wine pairing. According to Peterson, the greatest reward of his job is in selecting the right cheese for a customer who has yet to experience a course like his. "Loving what you do and working in a field you are so passionate about is the absolute key," he said.

Old Hickory Steakhouse is Gaylord Opryland® Resort and Convention Center's premier, fine dining restaurant. The southern mansion-style restaurant presents an elegant atmosphere while offering a variety of enticing menu selections and a comprehensive wine list and array of artisanal cheeses. The award-winning restaurant has been named a *Distinguished Restaurant of North America* (DiRōNA) and was listed among the prestigious *Wine Spectator Award* winners.

To learn more about the Old Hickory Steakhouse, [CLICK HERE](#)

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