

Chef Rubio



Chef Dills

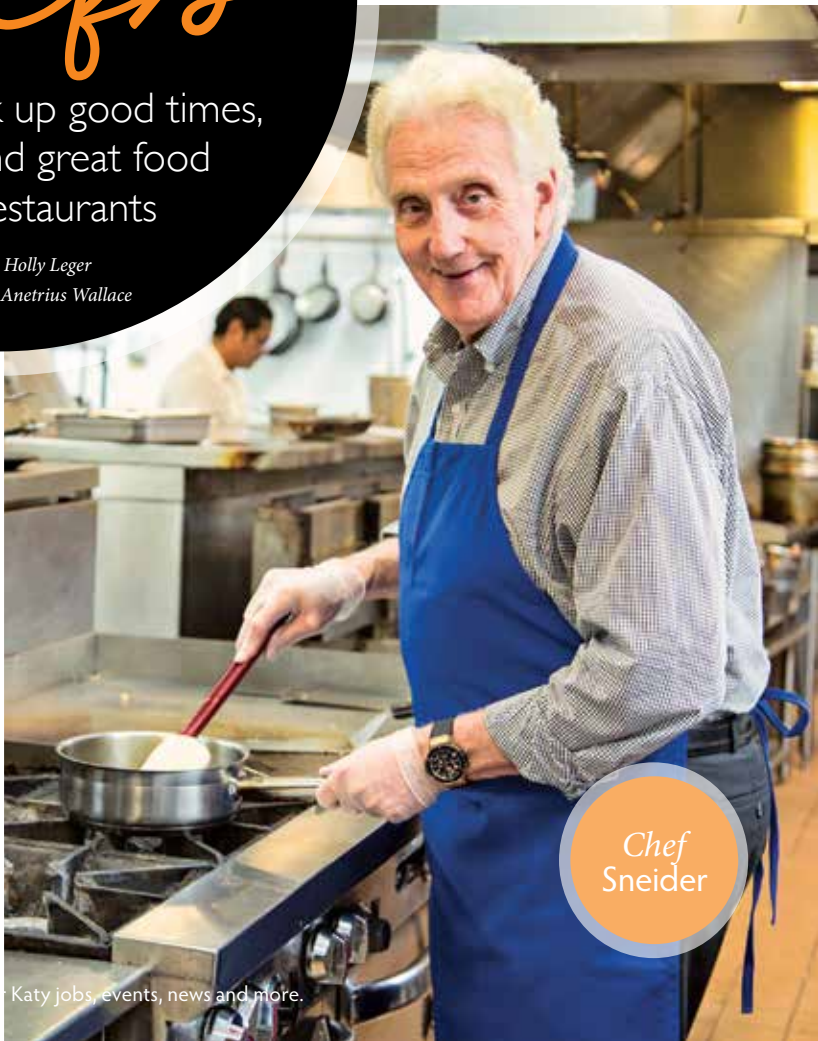
Meet the Chefs

Katy chefs cook up good times, family fun, and great food at local restaurants


Written by Holly Leger
Photography by Anetrius Wallace



Chef Hernandez



Chef Sneider



“All my life, I have loved to cook.”

- Chef Aristoteles “Tota” Alencar,
Alegria Brazilian Grill

*Chef
Alencar*

There are hundreds of restaurants in Katy. Some are long-standing establishments and others are newcomers offering a special cuisine, but behind every meal that is served, there is a chef with a unique story. *Katy Magazine* highlights a few local chefs who share how they learned culinary skills, a passion for food, and the inspirations behind their favorite recipes.

Chef Aristoteles “Tota” Alencar *Alegria Brazilian Grill*

The restaurant business runs in the family for Aristoteles Alencar. Growing up in Brazil, Alencar learned to cook in the restaurants that his family members owned. “All my life, I have loved to cook,” Alencar says. “I started to cook when I was very young in Brazil.” After moving to the U.S., Alencar began working in restaurants.

Now, as the executive chef at Alegria Brazilian Grill, he still pulls from his Brazilian family recipes, even calling relatives on the phone at times to learn more. Although all of his relatives still live in Brazil, Alencar makes family a priority in his restaurant. Alegria serves no alcohol and plays clean music, so adults feel comfortable bringing their children along. “We are so happy when families come with kids,” Alencar says.

Chef Mitch Dills *D’Amico’s Italian Restaurant*

To many children, lending a hand in the kitchen might seem like a chore, but to Mitch Dills, it was fun. “I grew up in the [restaurant] industry with family members owning and operating mostly Italian restaurants,” Dills says. “My mother and grandmother were always cooking incredible food and letting me help at a young age.” Since then, Dills has used that knowledge throughout his own restaurant career to build his reputation as a manager and chef of various restaurants in the Houston area. In 2013, he returned to Italian cuisine as the executive chef of D’Amico’s Italian Restaurant in Katy. Through his years of experience, Dills knows first-hand about the hustle and bustle of the kitchen. But it doesn’t bother him. In fact, it’s what he loves about his job. “I would have to say the thing I enjoy most about being a chef is the thrill of the rush and preparing wonderful food that people love.”

For owner Nash D’Amico, many of his traditional recipes come from his Italian mother and grandmother. In fact, all four of his grandparents immigrated to the U.S. from Sicily in the 1800s, giving the food their patrons have come to love an authentic taste. Now, D’Amico’s daughter, Brina D’Amico Donaldson, is one of four full partners



Chef Ray Anthony Hernandez's favorite dish to cook at home is steak and potatoes or traditional Mexican cuisine. He is currently enjoying introducing his family to Cajun food.

in the restaurant. D'Amico thinks there is already another generation of chefs in the making, and he couldn't be more pleased to keep the business thriving in his Italian family. "I have three granddaughters," D'Amico smiles. "They're already starting to ask, 'When can we wait on tables?' or 'When can we start to make pasta in the kitchen?'"

Chef Ray Anthony Hernandez
Bonefish Grill

When Ray Anthony Hernandez was bussing tables one day as a teenager, he overheard the chef getting upset that one of the cooks didn't show up for work. So Hernandez took a chance. "I asked him if I could go back there and help out," he recalls. "Ever since then, I've been in it. He changed my life that day." Now 35 years old, he is the chef at Bonefish Grill. Born and raised in San Antonio, Hernandez gained experiences working at various steakhouses and fine dining restaurants, including the Chart House at the historic Tower of the Americas. "I just fell in love there with fish and dealing with fish," Hernandez shares. "That's what really inspired me to pursue a career in seafood."

Chef Jorge Sneider
Las Alamedas

When Jorge Sneider opened his first restaurant with his brothers 50 years ago in Mexico City, he knew very little about being a chef. "Then, I didn't know anything about cooking," Sneider recalls. "We just decided to open it as family-owned and operated. But then I really fell in love with



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the business, and I started learning it.” Now, Sneider is the proud owner of Las Alamedas. He and his family moved to Houston in 1980 to start the restaurant, which features flavors from the different states of his home country. Even though he is the owner, Sneider says he still spends most of his time in the kitchen, except this time, he knows a thing or two about cooking. “I run the place, but I like to teach our cooks our recipes and everything,” Sneider shares. “That’s what I want to do - continue the tradition of good Mexican cuisine.”

Chef Edgar Rubio Perry’s Steakhouse

Ten years ago, a nervous Edgar Rubio walked into Perry’s Steakhouse in Sugar Land. Just 16 at the time, Rubio was interviewing for his very first job - a food runner. “I’ll never forget that,” he says. “I was scared. I didn’t know what to expect.” The job ended up being a springboard into his cooking career. Over the next several years, Rubio worked his way up in the restaurant, eventually landing in the kitchen. Then in March 2014, Rubio was offered the executive chef position at the new Perry’s Steakhouse in Cinco Ranch. “Not too many people get the opportunity to be taught on the job,” Rubio shares. “I consider myself very fortunate to have had chefs in the past take the time to work with me, teach me, and basically give me the tools that I would need to succeed.” **KM**

HOLLY LEGER is a freelance writer who enjoys exploring area restaurants with her husband, Justin.



Chef Edgar Rubio's favorite dish to cook at home are baked potatoes. He used to watch *Iron Chef* and *Emeril Live* as a kid. Rubio loves cooking because he can use his culinary creations to brighten people’s days.

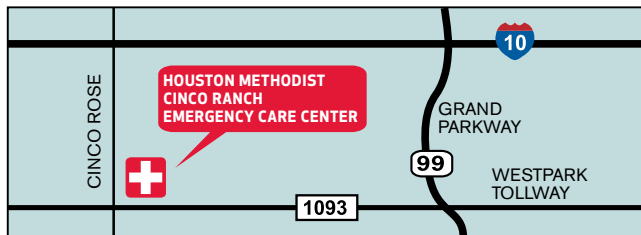
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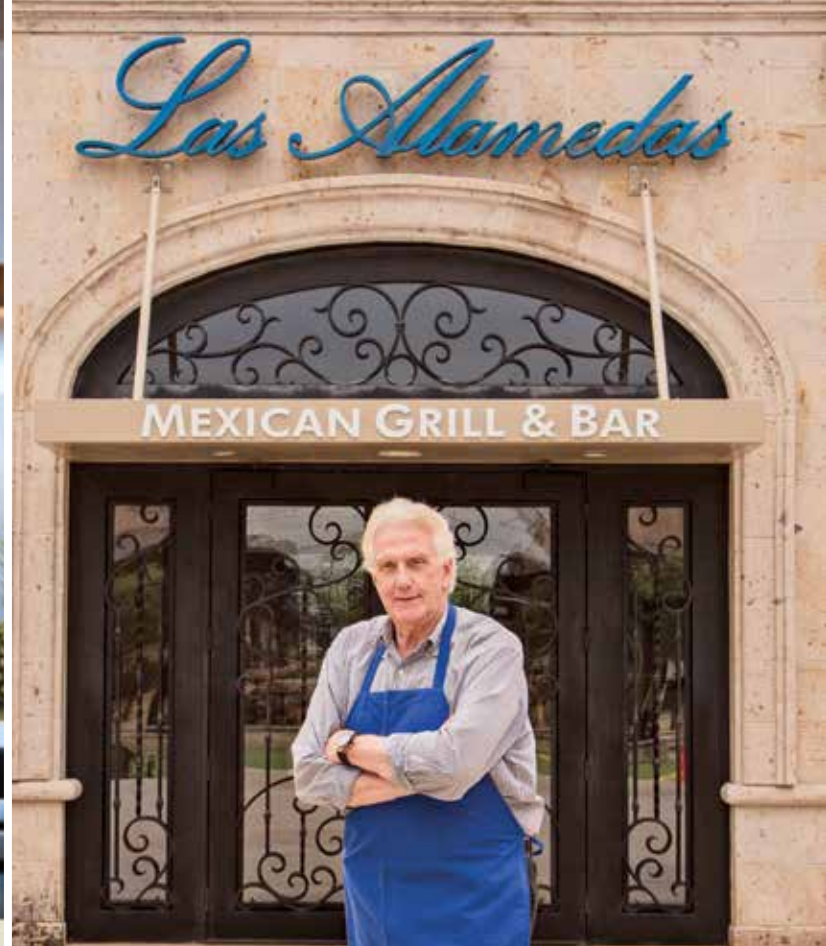
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Chef Aristoteles "Tota" Alencar's favorite dish to cook is Feijoada, a Brazilian plate with beans, beef, and pork. In addition to cooking at Alegria Brazilian Grill, he loves cooking at home, too.



Chef Jorge Sneider's favorite dish to prepare is Paella, a recipe originating from Spain with rice, saffron, and seafood. Sneider's son owns Las Ventanas Restaurant and Cantina in Houston.

Chef Mitch Dills' favorite dish to cook for his family is anything Italian. He and his wife are expecting their third daughter, which he says often results in strange dinner requests at home. Dills is originally from Atlanta, GA.



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