

# KATY'S CULINARY ARTISTS

*Katy kitchens boast many gastronomic wizards who've honed their passions for flavor and flair to create success on a plate*

Written by Gail G. Collins | Select photography by Anetrius Wallace

*Although these chefs display their talents by cooking food found around the world, they have all worked hard to get to where they are today. They show that perseverance and consistency can bring you to new heights and make goals a reality.*



## ERIC ALDIS

### *Agave Rio*

With five siblings, cooking was simply part of Chef Eric Aldis' family chores. "I have a heart for cooking," he says. The Taylor High School alum graduated from the Art Institute of Houston's entrepreneurship program. To further his education, he worked for free at some of the best restaurants in town. His culinary career began at Four Seasons Hotel Houston and advanced to Bellagio Resort in Las Vegas and The Ritz-Carlton in New Orleans before returning to Houston at Midtown BBQ and Corner Table. In fact, Aldis opened three locations in three months in 2016 with a focus on Agave Rio Restaurant & Patio Oasis. The evolving menu combines American and South American-inspired dishes. Katy is home to Aldis with four children of his own, and he is teaching them to work, whether it's running a nonalcoholic bar or turning those pots. He says, "Sitting down together is the best, and whatever meal we're eating, it's my favorite."

"Katy is a great community for families."

- Eric Aldis

Reinaldo Medina





## CHRISTO BATSIOS

*Sapore Ristorante Italiano*

It's hardly surprising that Chef Christo Batsios would own and operate an Italian restaurant with his father Georgio. As a Greek-Italian immigrant, Georgio owned three restaurants in Michigan, where Batsios grew up. Generations before him had run restaurants, and at 4 years old, Batsios sat on a milk crate peeling potatoes and onions. After a culinary education and work in Italy and Greece, he joined HEB as a butcher and progressed with the company. His dreams soon turned to longing for a restaurant and Georgio emerged from retirement with Landry's. An Italian brasserie with a struggling menu was found and infused with legacy recipes, like Pomodoro sauce and slow-roasted beets with lamb shanks. "I love to feed people, and every guest is coming to our home for dinner," Batsios says. His goal is overachieving in flavor - *sapore* - with service and presentation of rustic dishes dressed in signature sauces. Getting up before dawn and prepping is a joy. The journey from his humble roots to technical cooking skills is satisfying, and new wife Cassie supports his passion.



Reinaldo Medina

"I love that Katy is close to the big city with a hometown feel!"

- Christo Batsios

"I like that Katy has nice people with a laid back style."

- Raul Carrillo



## RAUL CARRILLO

*The Cellar Door*

This chef trekked from El Paso to Katy in search of the best job and life. Raul Carrillo finalized a culinary education at the Art Institute in 2004. Explaining his career shift, he says, "I liked cooking, and everyone liked the way I cooked." His grandmother and mother appreciated the kitchen arts, and Carrillo still calls his mom for recipe checks. He is hard at work when everyone else is playing though - weekends, celebrations, and holidays - so he never cooks at home. "My wife says my food isn't simple, and I use too many pans," he jokes. The humble chef doesn't seek glory, and is happy to know people relish the food and will return. Like most chefs, he delights in chatting with patrons and collects honest feedback to improve the menu. The interaction is a return to his Cooking Connection days at HEB. The Cellar Door needed a kitchen revamp, and Carrillo advanced to executive chef and turned it around. The family establishment showcases the wine, and Carrillo's cuisine complements it wonderfully.



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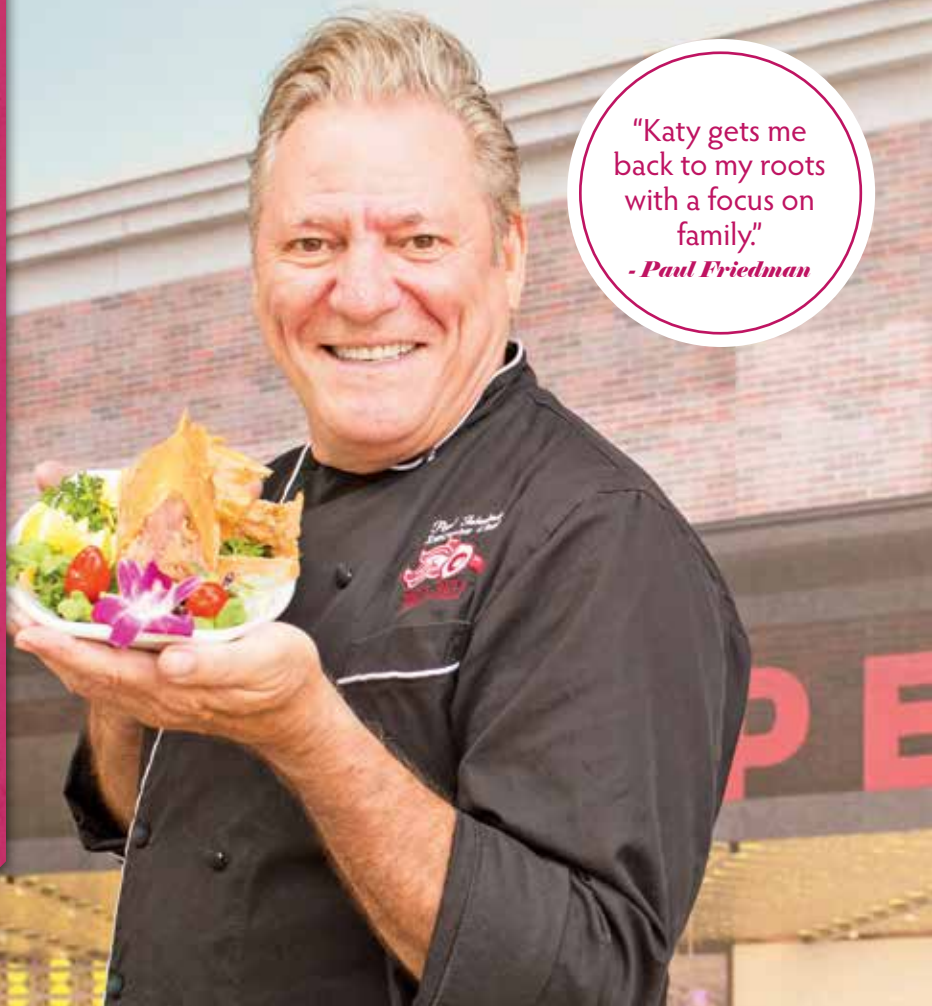
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## PAUL FRIEDMAN

### *Peli Peli*

Chef Paul Friedman was born into South Africa's version of Willy Wonka's chocolate factory, intricately linking him to the food industry. After family training and a trial by fire, Friedman owned his first restaurant at the age of 21, crafting the open kitchen idea. In 1978, he drove across America in a Volkswagen bus and arrived in Houston. Now, after 35 years invested professionally in a string of international accomplishments, he returned to his roots with the flavors of fruit and fire, many people know as Peri Peri. Combining hot and spicy with guava, passion fruit, papaya and mango, Friedman utilized the Mozambique term of Peli Peli to name his restaurant model. His series, *From a Jew to the Stew*, includes three cookbooks, and numerous awards crowd his 58th restaurant, including first place at Katy's Sip n Stroll 2017. Still, Friedman's four grown children make him most proud. The CEO Chef enjoys meeting diners table-side and says, "We're creating a culture of happiness, taking care of guests and our staff." That kindness will soon expand with a location in Austin and a winery in Stellenbosch, South Africa.



"Katy gets me back to my roots with a focus on family."

- Paul Friedman

"It's great that Katy has a multi-cultural experience of expats."

- Solé Lynds



## SOLÉ LYND'S

### *Aromas Latin Cuisine & Wine Bar*

Chef Solé Lynds' admiration for the service industry began while studying international business at university in the UK. She worked in cafés and revived a culinary passion. Her Venezuelan family was immersed in the dining trade, and she played restaurant games as a child. Through international job moves, she met her American husband in China, and they had a son. Lynds focused on wine and garnered a Wine and Spirit Education Trust certification to consult with restaurants in Australia, and then the U.S., to pair wine with food. Still, she yearned to combine her own food and wine angle, so she started cooking with a mission. Her restaurant was conceived through strong Latin and European influences in wine, alongside dishes that reflect the wine's inherent qualities. Today, Lynds' hands-on training presents a pretty plate, which she excitedly serves up in the inspired setting built through supportive family and friends. "I love creating amazing food to wow people," she says. **KM**

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