



THEIR KNIVES ARE DRAWN: LOCAL CHEFS NUNZIO PATRINO (LEFT) AND MARKESE BEVERLY COMPETE TO SHOW SOUTH JERSEY FOODIES WHOSE CUISINE IS A CUT ABOVE THE REST.



Six months.  
Sixteen chefs.  
Now there  
are two.  
Our finalists  
square off to  
see who will  
be named  
*South Jersey  
Magazine's*  
**TOP  
CHEF.**

Photography  
By  
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# Food Fight

**T**hey're cooking with gas. Chef Markese Beverly of the ChopHouse and Chef Nunzio Patrino of Nunzio Ristorante Rustico are the last men standing in *South Jersey Magazine's* annual Top Chef competition.

Back in May, our final contenders were just two among 16 of the area's best chefs, meeting monthly challenges by submitting recipes featuring a different key ingredient in each subsequent round—starting with asparagus and moving, seasonally, along to blueberries, corn, tomatoes, apples and pumpkin. Reader votes at *SouthJersey.com* whittled the field down, round by round, to Beverly and Patrino.

Beverly has been the executive chef at the ChopHouse since the popular steak house opened in 2002 on the banks of scenic Paintworks Lake in Gibbsboro. He comes by his chops naturally, having previously worked for the Capital Grille's corporate wing. Patrino, who grew up in Italy's agricultural belt, has cooked throughout the Italian Riviera and Monte Carlo, owned several restaurants in and around Philadelphia and won numerous international culinary awards before opening Nunzio in Collingswood back in 2004.

For the final round, both chefs present recipes for a delicious three-course holiday meal, documented on these pages. (Warning: Do not read on an empty stomach!) You will determine who will ultimately be named *South Jersey's* Top Chef. Log on to *SouthJersey.com* all month and cast your vote. The winner will be revealed in our December issue. Happy eating.



# First Course

Recipes by  
Chef Nunzio Patrino  
Nunzio Ristorante Rustico

## Fresh Maine Lobster in a Tarragon-Brandy Sauce over Crispy Parsnips and Baby Greens

Serves 4

2 fresh Maine lobsters, 1 1/2 pounds each  
1 ounce butter  
1 ounce extra-virgin olive oil  
1 garlic clove, finely chopped  
1 medium shallot, finely chopped  
1 celery stalk, finely chopped  
1 bay leaf  
Sprig of fresh tarragon  
Salt and pepper  
1 ounce brandy  
3 ounces white wine  
2 plum tomatoes, diced  
1/2 teaspoon flour  
1/2 quart reserved lobster water  
3 ounces heavy cream  
4 medium parsnips, peeled and sliced 1/4-inch thick  
4 handfuls of baby greens (arugula or frisée)  
Fresh parsley, chopped for garnish  
Black pepper

Remove the claws from the lobster and poach them in boiling water for 10 minutes. Then place the claws in an ice-water bath. In the same pot, poach the lobster body for 3 minutes. Remove and place the lobster body in the ice-water bath with the claws. Save the remaining boiling water for later. Save the lobster head for decoration. Then, on a cutting board, remove the meat from the claws and set aside. Split the lobster in half, remove the sack from the head and set aside.

In a large sauté pan, add butter and extra-virgin olive oil and sauté the lobster with the meat facing down for 2 minutes. Remove the tail meat from the shell with a fork and set aside. Leave the shell inside the pan and add the garlic, shallot, celery, bay leaf, tarragon, salt and pepper. Stir and cook for 1 minute. Remove the pan from the fire and add the brandy. Tilt the pan so the vapors ignite, and, for safety purposes, let the brandy evaporate for 30 seconds before putting the pan back on the fire. Add the white wine, tomatoes and flour. Stir and cook for about 1 minute and add 1/2 quart of the remaining lobster water. Cook at low heat for 10 minutes until the liquid is reduced by half. Add the heavy cream and cook for another 5 minutes. Adjust salt and pepper, and strain the sauce. Set aside. In another pan, sauté the parsnips in olive oil until crispy and set aside.

To plate the dish, place a handful of greens at the center of the plate. Arrange the crispy parsnips around the greens, then place the lobster tail and claw meat on top of the greens. Decorate with the lobster head and drizzle about 2 ounces of the lobster sauce on each plate. Finish by sprinkling with fresh parsley and fresh ground black pepper.

## Main Course Colorado Lamb Stuffed with Figs, Prosciutto and Asiago Cheese served with Yukon Truffle Mashed Potatoes

Serves 4

2 racks of lamb, 1 pound each, French-cut (Colorado, domestic or imported)  
Sprig of thyme  
Black pepper  
2 slices of prosciutto  
4 dry figs, split in four  
1 1/2 ounces of Asiago cheese, cut into 1/2-inch-thick sticks as long as the rack  
Flour for dredging, plus 1/2 teaspoon  
1 small onion, finely chopped  
1 garlic clove, chopped  
Sprig of rosemary  
6 ounces red wine  
1 cup chicken stock  
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
Salt and pepper

### Mashed Potatoes:

1 pound Yukon gold potatoes, skin on, washed and cubed  
1 tablespoon Parmigiano cheese  
2 ounces butter  
1/2 cup milk  
1/2 teaspoon truffle oil  
Grated fresh black truffle or canned truffle for garnish  
Salt and pepper

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Remove the excess fat and butterfly the rack of lamb. Sprinkle with fresh thyme and black pepper. Stuff the center of the loin with a slice of prosciutto, some fig and some Asiago cheese. Roll back the lamb and tie up like a small roast with kitchen string. Dust with flour and sauté both sides. Place in the oven and bake for 15 minutes. The lamb will be medium rare. Remove the rack of lamb from the pan and set aside. Drain the excess oil from the pan and sauté the onion, garlic and rosemary. Stir in the flour and add the red wine. Reduce the red wine for 2 minutes. Then add the chicken stock and mustard. Reduce by half. Adjust with salt and pepper. Strain the sauce and set aside.

In a medium pot, cook the potatoes all the way through. Drain the water and put the potatoes back into the same pot. Add the Parnigiano cheese, butter, milk, truffle oil, and salt and pepper, and mash at medium heat until creamy. Set aside.

To assemble the plate, place one serving of mashed potatoes in the middle of the plate. Remove the string from the rack and cut the rack into individual chops. Place them around the mashed potatoes. Drizzle the sauce over the lamb, then grate fresh black truffle over the dish and serve.



## Dessert Poached Pear in Vanilla Syrup with Zabaglione Sauce and Bitter Chocolate Shavings

Serves 4

4 medium Bosc pears, peeled  
1 cup sugar  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract or 1 split vanilla bean  
1/4 quart water  
**Pastry Tulp:**  
1/4 pound butter, softened  
1/4 pound sugar  
1/4 pound all-purpose flour  
1/4 pound egg whites  
Fresh grated lemon zest  
Fresh grated orange zest  
**Zabaglione Sauce:**  
4 egg yolks  
4 tablespoons of sugar  
4 ounces of dry Marsala wine  
2 tablespoons of cold water  
Shaved bittersweet chocolate for garnish

Cook the pears in water with sugar and vanilla until tender. Remove and set aside.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a mixing bowl, combine all the pastry tulp ingredients and whisk firmly, creating a creamy dough. Prepare a sheet pan with a no-stick cooking spray and place 4 tablespoons of the dough on the pan. Create a 5-inch pancake by spreading the dough with the back of the spoon. Bake for 5 minutes until golden brown.

Remove the pancake and drape it on the inside of a coffee cup. To create the tulp, sit another cup inside the cup with the pancake. Let it sit for about 30 seconds, then gently remove the first cup and then the tulp. Set the tulp in the middle of the plate and place the poached pear inside the tulp. Mix the egg yolks and sugar over a double boiler. When the mixture begins to thicken, add the Marsala and water and whisk constantly until soft peaks form, about 6 to 8 minutes. Remove from heat and drizzle the sauce over the pear, then decorate with shaved bittersweet chocolate. Serve.