



“Chef Cantu is blazing a trail in the Buck Rodgers tradition to a space age culinary frontier”
– *The New York Times*

WHAT’S BEHIND THE CULINARY GENIUS?

HOMARO CANTU

Executive Chef – Moto Restaurant
Chairman and Founder – Cantu Designs

BEN ROCHE

Pastry Chef – Moto Restaurant
Director of Research & Development – Cantu Designs

The Story of Homaro

Chef Homaro Cantu is blazing the way into the new era of postmodern cuisine. Heralded as one of America’s most daring chefs, Cantu pushes the limits of known taste, texture and technique in stunningly futuristic fashion at Moto.

A scientist at heart, Cantu is driven by insatiable curiosity and endless possibilities. The same childhood enthusiasm that drove Cantu to dismantle his father’s lawnmower many times over and chomp on five-, ten- and twenty-dollar bills as a young boy still consumes him. Tagged a “techno chef” and a “real life Willy Wonka”, he brushes off these labels and merely refers to himself as a cook when asked. But calling him a cook only scratches the surface – delve a bit deeper and discover an equally talented and inquisitive chef aiming to shatter the traditional rules of the kitchen by introducing new technologies to his chosen craft. Cantu’s goal? To entice 21st century diners to embrace unimaginable -- for most -- edible creations.

Make no mistake, Cantu has not lost sight of what entices most to the dinner table – great tasting food. While guests may be stunned by the creativity on display at Moto, rest assured that this young chef can cook. Having grown up in Portland, Oregon, Cantu graduated from Le Cordon Bleu in 1994 and then staged in nearly 50 kitchens on the West Coast before moving to Chicago in 1999. He chose to settle in Chicago having obtained a position as sous chef at the world-renowned culinary mecca that is Charlie Trotter’s. Cantu honed his already sharp skills in this demanding kitchen and after four years, ambitious and with a hunger to test the waters, he left Trotter’s to open MOTO.

Dining at MOTO is more than a culinary experience; it also provides a window into the inner workings of Cantu’s mind and the future of gastronomy. It both questions and challenges the diner. Offering tasting menus comprised of ten and twenty courses, Cantu stretches the imagination and takes you on a culinary adventure from the very first bite – a bite which may be taken directly from your menu, one that is printed on edible paper.

This type of out-of-the-box thinking touches the entire dining experience – sometimes literally. One of his many inventions for which patent applications are pending is his polymer box. A perfectly self-contained oven, the three-inch opaque box made of super-insulating polymer is brought to 350 degrees in the oven before a raw piece of fish is placed inside. The box is then delivered to the table where it cooks right before the guest’s eyes.

Although the experience at MOTO is designed to expand both one’s mind and palate, Cantu is not blazing new culinary trails for shock value, but rather to change the way that people perceive and eat food. He views Moto as his laboratory and tests new technologies in the kitchen daily.

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Scientific elements such as liquid nitrogen and helium and devices like a centrifuges and a hand-held ion particle gun make regular appearances in the MOTO kitchen -- and Cantu was the first chef to zap food with a class IV laser, a cooking technique he unveiled in Spain in January 2006 at Madrid Fusion. With lofty goals and an impressive track record, it's hard to imagine what will be served up next at MOTO. As Cantu modestly explains, "Gastronomy has to catch up to the evolution in technology and I'm just helping that process along."

The Story of Ben

Chef Ben Roche has become a leader of creativity and ingenuity in the field of pastry arts. In less than 3 years as Executive Pastry Chef of Moto in Chicago, news of Ben's work has been the subject of numerous print articles and national television shows including *Iron Chef America*, *Dinner: Impossible*, *Unwrapped*, *Sugar Rush* and print articles including *USA Today*, *The Chicago Sun Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *Fast Company Magazine* and *Gourmet Magazine*.

Ben has also been featured as a keynote speaker at prestigious gatherings around the world for his inspirational approach to innovation that influences numerous aspects of creative sciences. These appearances have included a design symposium for the NASA Institute for Advanced Concepts (NIAC), Stanford University's Design School, Taste 3 Napa Valley in both 2007 and 2008, Pop Tech's Impact of Technology on People in Camden, Maine and numerous other venues.

When asked to describe himself, Chef Roche simply states, "I like to constantly evolve existing dishes by making them slightly different every time, even when following recipes. Sometimes this ends in a failed experiment, but that's how we learn and progress. That's a reflection of my personality as well, evolving with the times and always being prepared for change."

Chef Roche's involvement with food does not stop at the kitchen level, he has also been an instrumental R&D collaborator with Cantu Designs which is currently working on innovative food products for consumer outlets, medical applications and developing nations.

Ben Roche discovered a fascination with the scientific process early on, conducting experiments such as creating Alka Seltzer "bombs" as a boy in his best friend's kitchen in Beaufort, South Carolina. So it seems fitting that this young, aspiring pastry chef now creates technically innovative and "explosive" desserts at Moto, where the kitchen resembles a lab with tanks of nitrogen gas, helium and liquid nitrogen. Roche's love of science and his culinary degree (Johnson & Wales, 2001) are in perfect harmony.

Already a world leader in pastry innovation, Chef Roche is poised to take his highly unconventional approach to creativity well beyond the realm of the kitchen.

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