

Charlotte

APRIL / MAY 2017

HOME[®]

DESIGN & DECOR[®]



Contributing Editor

FOODIE



BRUCE
MOFFETT



CHARLOTTE'S GOT A LOT OF RESPECT.



I pulled into my driveway at 11:00 p.m. on Sunday night. I was tired from a long and busy, yet rewarding weekend at the Charleston Wine & Food Festival. I participated in three events during the three day affair, was operating on very little sleep, and on the last day I managed to stick an oyster knife in my palm by accident. It was challenging certainly, but I admit rewarding as well.

This was the fifth time I participated in the event, and in the past it always felt a bit like a mixed bag for me. The Charleston Wine & Food Festival is one of the largest food festivals in the Southeast, with chefs from all over the region showing up to display their talents. Everywhere I looked, there were hipster beards and tattoos ranging from vegetables to various parts of a pig. It felt like a flock of peacocks descended upon the city.



Somehow, amidst all of the show, I never felt like I quite fit in there. First, I grew up in the Northeast, so when I hang around southern chefs, I always feel a bit out of my element. I can't passionately discuss my favorite bourbon or engage in deep discourse about the history of cornbread. I didn't grow up with a love of college football, nor have I sampled every barbecue joint in the Southeast. Yes, these may be overblown generalizations, but they all come from real

conversations in which I've been (or tried to be) a part.

I've discovered in Charleston, and at food festivals around the country, that there seems to be a lack of respect for Charlotte's restaurant scene amongst my peers. I



distinctly remember my first year at the festival when I proudly told another chef my restaurant was located in Charlotte. He said, "I'm sorry to hear that," and walked away.

This year was different, however. I realized that focusing on the negative has impeded my focus on all the great people I've met over the years. I noticed I couldn't walk 50 feet without running into a chef I knew and admired. As we caught up, it was clear we all have very much in common. We have the same challenges, frustrations and accomplishments.

Another thing I realized is just how far Charlotte has come as a "food city". This year, everyone I met seemed genuinely interested in what we have going on here. I spoke to chefs and food writers who knew all about our restaurants in the city and all showed respect for what we are doing. I felt most proud to be a Charlotte chef.

Sometimes, it is easy to lose sight of how incredible our city is. Too often, I hear we don't have good food or culture in this city. But, I'm learning it's important for us to recognize what the rest of the South is starting to see in Charlotte. We live in a vibrant city; one I love to call home. Let's make sure we support it. ♦

Bruce Moffett is the owner and head chef of Barrington's Restaurant in Charlotte. He's been in the restaurant business for 35 years and has been cooking for even longer. Visit Barrington's at 7822 Fairview Road, or check out their menu online at www.barringtonsrestaurant.com.