



Inspiring Culinary Excellence

Going from underdog to mentor helps Cleveland chef succeed as co-owner and chef.

by **Jenny Keyes**, *Certified Angus Beef LLC*



Cooking came naturally for young Matt Mytro, a Texas transplant growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, in the 1990s. The current co-owner and chef at Flour Restaurant in Cleveland started out preparing meals for his little brothers.

"I didn't really have any recipes I was following," he says. "I was just playing around and saw that I enjoyed it." That led to part-time jobs in area steakhouses where being a chef seemed more and more of an option the more places he worked. He put the money into another high school sideline, spinning the hits as a DJ.

Graduation meant choices to make. Not drawn to culinary school and the student loans that it would take, Mytro decided to trade in his DJ equipment for cookbooks.

"I did that and just ran with it, stayed hungry and worked hard," he says. "I think the passion came from a little bit of being the underdog and wanting to prove I could do something that I was good at."

Mytro didn't just learn from his books, but from all the people along the way who became mentors and friends on their way up.

"It was the camaraderie," he says. "A restaurant becomes just like a family." The budding chef knew there was always someone he could rely on for advice, "whether it was an employee or food issue, a recipe, anything and everything."



New avenues

After five years of learning and growth by doing, Mytro and a chef friend took a three-year break from the kitchen to launch

a line of clothing called Stove Monkeys, with "Everyday Street Wear" for chefs.

They were still part of the culinary world and its conversations, of course, and in 2010, Mytro heard something intriguing about a legendary Cleveland chef.

"I wasn't even trying to get back into the restaurant business," he recalls. "Someone said, 'Hey, Paul Minnillo's looking for a chef,' so I was like, 'Oooh, Paul Minnillo, really? Maybe I'll go talk to him ...' So it all kind of happened by accident."

What happened was a turning point. At 28, Mytro got his chance to show what he had learned and what he could do with every creative moment at Flour, the hot Italian concept restaurant that had just opened months earlier to great expectations.

The veteran and new partner developed their "old school, new school" theme to combine traditional Italian flavors with Mytro's innovative culinary creations for a menu guests cannot refuse. Flour prepares all pasta and pizza dough from scratch ("flour") every day, baking in a wood-fired oven straight from the old country.

Overall, the attention to detail has satisfied guests knowing they had the best food, best wine and best service in the area, the chef says of the "high-end casual" eatery.

"We try to create an approachable atmosphere with really simple but interesting food," he explains.

Giving back

At the restaurant as on the ranch or any other venue in life, education is ongoing.



framed by experience and sharing insights along the way.

Mytro was back in the kitchen classroom, but more as a teacher and coach for the past five years, forging his own brand of camaraderie on the team, stepping up to his role of mentor and modeling those who helped him.

“I try to let people cook and do their thing, but I also try to push them in the same aspect, so there is a balance,” he says, always there for advice or direction — no matter where that leads.

“Even if somebody leaves here and wants to go to another restaurant,” Mytro says, “I genuinely want to see people succeed.”

People applaud when he succeeds. Earlier this year, Mytro and Minnillo shared a spotlight as invited chefs at New York’s famous James Beard House (JBH) to prepare

“I try to let people cook and do their thing, but I also try to push them in the same aspect, so there is a balance.”

— Matt Mytro

their cuisine of “traditional Italian with a twist.” Still basking in that milestone, Mytro says he hopes to win a JBH nomination at the restaurant level in the future, as well.

The beef of summer

For much of the year, the Flour menu offers little beef, but two months each summer bring on the locally famous Grilling Series and the chef’s favorite cut, the ribeye.

“We use all *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®)

products and run specials off the grill and smoker from outside,” Mytro says. “That helps set the ambiance.”

The lifelong student says he appreciates the support from CAB, “making sure the purveyors and customers are accountable,” and the continuing education through meat science, cutting and cooking innovations.

As he relies on suppliers, Mytro knows restaurant staff and dining guests rely on his creativity and delivery, and he likes to see the results.

“There’s a lot of satisfaction when people come in and they tell you how wonderful their meal was,” Mytro says. “It’s the most rewarding experience.”



Editor’s Note: *Jenny Keyes is an industry information intern for Certified Angus Beef LLC.*