

Jiho Kim: Sweet, sweet success



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Jiho Kim has an incorrigible sweet tooth and the perfect cure for it: He's head pastry chef at L'Espalier. Kim, 35, was recently named a "Boston Rising Star" by [StarChefs.com](#), the first online food magazine, which will soon celebrate its 15th anniversary. Each year, the site picks four cities. Rising Star Awards are presented to up-and-coming chefs - and they're chosen by veteran chefs such as Todd English, Daniel Boulud, and Jean-Georges Vongerichten. A native of Seoul, Kim attended culinary school there and got an additional certificate in sweets. He spent 10 years as pastry chef at the five-star Renaissance Hotel in Seoul before moving to the United States to pursue his passion. It took him only two years to land at L'Espalier. He and other "Rising Stars" will be honored at a reception at the State Room, 60 State St., on Nov. 3. For tickets, visit www.starchefs.com/risingstars. A portion of the proceeds goes to the Greater Boston Food Bank.



Q. I take it you have a sweet tooth?

A. Yes, I do. I love [sweets] and I have since I was young. Everyone loves sweets.

Q. How did you start as a pastry chef?

A. I started working at the Renaissance Hotel and I would pass through the pastry kitchen. I was always interested in what they were doing. I asked the chef if I could transfer to pastries, and that's how I started.

Q. Aside from the obvious - taste - what is it about pastries that you love most?

A. I can create a beautiful plating that is so much fun.

Q. What's your current favorite?

A. One of our signature desserts, banana bread pudding.

Q. No offense, but that doesn't sound very exciting.

A. It's not traditional. There are multiple layers inside a cylinder or tuile made of chocolate and banana. The guests don't really know what's inside. When they crack the cylinder, the banana pudding comes out, then the crème Anglaise comes out, then the banana cream. And there's banana pudding at the bottom. There's also hazelnut and chocolate.

Q. You got a special certificate for working with chocolate. What do you like about it?

A. It's easy to work with. I like to combine it with different flavors. Like wine, there are lots of varieties of chocolate. There are nutty chocolates, acidic chocolates. . . . My favorite is manjari chocolate, which comes from a region in Africa [the beans are from Madagascar]. It's a really unique chocolate, it's kind of like a citrus fruit flavor.

Q. What's your biggest seller at L'Espalier?

A. The banana bread pudding; and this fall, I've sold a lot of the classic apple tarte tatin. I also do an apple curry put in a chocolate cylinder and when you break it, it's like a chocolate capsule releasing all this white chocolate. I use maple syrup to make a meringue foam that gives it a nice foamy texture.

Q. When you're relaxing at home, what's your favorite dessert to make?

A. Tiramisu. It's easy to make and I have a really great recipe. My wife loves it. ■