

## **THE CHEF'S CHEF**

By: Andrew [Bear] Christie, Director Evolution Catering College

I have known and worked with John T Bailey over the best part of almost 25 years in various parts of Australia. As chefs, we are passionate and inspired to be the best, strive for excellence and aim for the ultimate indulgence for our guests. Reward is the oohs & aahs we so often hear when the gratification is beyond that of the initial expectation. That is what empowers great chefs to create. Not for money, fame nor fortune.

Most chefs' train in a combined module of on the job experience with formalised acknowledgement of their learning's through technical college. This can often lead to a rote style of thinking about what should go on the plate, keeping in mind all the factors to successful menus which include seasonal considerations, colour, texture, cooking methods and the like. In hotels and restaurants, this is certainly apparent and not unacceptable by any standards, but what John does with food blows away that theory.

Logical food structure, sourced locally (he has ALWAYS been an advocate of local produce from the local growers wherever possible); cooked with minimal invasion of natural flavours and served in a beautiful clean style would sum up my version of Johns cooking technique. Just walking into the small but extremely organised kitchen at the Banc restaurant in Swansea leaves me breathless with motivation, flavour concepts and a welcome knowledge that the produce is given all the integrity and opportunity it rightfully deserves. Fresh caught rabbit (John asks for it in the morning and there it is by mid afternoon) is slowly braising on the stove whilst confit cocktail abalone are being showed their culinary respect to the blind baked pastry in the oven emanating that wonderful fresh patisserie aroma awaiting its filling. This might be great for the guests, but it is heaven for us chefs.

John is a chefs' chef and anyone who knows him or indeed has worked with him would certainly attest to this. And what of his patrons and clientele both past and present? You are indeed fortunate to have enjoyed some of the finest and most sincere dining experiences by one of the great chefs of Australia (an import initially but he just couldn't resist us!), or you will be in for the treat of your lives.

John continues to inspire and create whilst always allowing the food to dictate his cooking motives and not the other way around. I cannot wait to get back for another dining experience (although I may well find that I end up in the kitchen at some stage!) and continue to pay homage to an exciting and truly sincere professional.