

Chef De Cuisine Derik Watson Iridescence at MotorCity Casino Hotel

Derik Watson, a native of Franklin, Mich., discovered his passion for the food industry early on in life. An adventurous eater from the start, he said: “My mom tells stories about how, at age 2, I would order escargot off the menu.”

By age 13, Watson took his first job at a local grocery store where he was inspired by the possibilities that surrounded him. Growing up in a family of talented cooks – his mother’s father and his own father – Watson was no stranger to the kitchen. He worked in area restaurants throughout high school, finally settling on culinary school at Ft. Lauderdale Art Institute.

After only a year of courses, Watson opted for a position on the line with award-winning Chef Peter Boulukos. He intended to keep his focus in the kitchen, and became a sous chef by the age of 19 at the eclectic Himmarshee Bar and Grill.

Watson also served as a tournant – a chef who could work any station – in two more of Boulukos’ other nearby restaurants. Working long hours seven days a week, his experience varied from high volume to fine dining venues and gave him his first glimpse into the industry itself. “I look back on it as a great experience,” he said.

In 2002, Watson returned to his home state to work at the Rugby Grille in Birmingham alongside Chef Colin Brown. From there he moved to Tribute in Farmington Hills, where he served as tournant under Executive Chef Takashi Yagihashi and later as sous chef under Executive Chef Don Yamauchi.

Watson reunites with Yamauchi, now executive chef of Iridescence, in his new position as chef de cuisine. “Don is a wonderful chef,” said Watson. “We are both so passionate about food.”

Watson’s experience as executive chef of Peabody’s in Birmingham and his tenure at such notable restaurants as David Burke’s Modern American Restaurant at the Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas to Takashi Yagihashi’s Chicago namesake Takashi have prepared him for his new position within MotorCity Casino Hotel.

Watson, a Berkley, Mich. resident, uses contemporary French techniques to craft Italian and Asian inspired dishes. “It’s great to be a part of such a successful team at MotorCity Casino Hotel,” he said. “And you can’t beat the view.”