

**G R E A T C H E F S O F B O S T O N**

# My Night as a Sous Chef at Aujourd'hui

**by Clint Hamblin**

The invitation arrived: Would you like to spend a night as sous chef for chef William Kovel? Sure! Why not? The elegant Aujourd'hui continues to be the quintessence of fine dining in Boston. It's such a privilege, how could I say no? As long as I don't poison anyone!

In 2006, Kovel joined the Four Seasons Hotel as chef de cuisine of the award-winning Aujourd'hui. This young and passionate chef draws from his international experience, culinary cunning and French cooking technique to manage an army of devoted chefs who achieve perfection, recreating Kovel's elegant and straightforward menu daily.

The white Aujourd'hui kitchen uniform fits perfectly. The flute filled with Moët champagne fits even better and helps me to focus on my first duty: making the pasta – from scratch! Monica Marulanda is Aujourd'hui's "Mistress of Pasta," and every morning she rolls out enormous amounts of dough and makes large quantities of various pasta styles for the restaurant.

"Where's the food processor?" I ask. "We don't use one," Marulanda replies, as she builds a mountain of flour on the counter. Adding fresh eggs, she blends everything with a fork until a paste forms, and then she kneads the pasta with her hands, making a giant ball that was rolled out into flat sheets of dough.

After a quick journey through the pasta machine, the now thin pasta sheet is cut into small rectangles. "Roll a piece of the pasta around the wooden dowel while you push it into the block," she directs. The wooden block has ridges cut into it, making even lines on the outside of the finished pasta. Suddenly, there it was: my first macaroni sitting alone in a very large and very empty bowl.

"OK," Marulanda says. "Let's fill the bowl." Counting from one to six, it takes me the full six counts to make a single noodle, but for Monica, one to three has the same noodle formed and in the bowl. Once the bowl is filled, the pasta is spread out on a cookie sheet to dry.

Stacked on a rack with wheels, Kovel shows me trays and trays of handmade



Clint Hamblin and Aujourd'hui chef William Kovel

pasta of various shapes already made for the day. "Monica is an artist, and we're very lucky to have her as part of our team," Kovel says.

The first order comes in, and it is fettuccini with tomato sauce. Like a conductor of a great symphony, Kovel starts the process. "Heat the pan before you add the olive oil," he instructs. "Hand me the tomatoes and everything else on that tray." The sauce starts to take shape with the bright red chopped tomatoes and slivers of green basil being the dominant colors.

In go the cooked noodles, and with a flip or two of the pan, the noodles change position and the sauce slowly thickens. The smell is incredible. Kovel slides the pasta onto a plate and adds a little extra



Fettuccini with Tomato Sauce

cheese and chopped chives. The pasta is beautiful to look at and delicious to eat.

In comes another order. It's going to be a busy night.

More Moët, please. I can't make the pasta without the Moët!

**Fettuccini with Tomato Sauce****Ingredients**

Extra virgin olive oil  
2 or 3 crushed fresh tomatoes  
1/2 tablespoon chopped chives  
1/2 tablespoon chopped basil  
Salt and pepper  
1 clove minced garlic  
2 tablespoons parmesan cheese

**Preparation**

Cook the fresh noodles in salted boiling water until al dente, and then strain and set aside. Heat a sauté pan with extra virgin olive oil. Add all ingredients except the noodles and chives, and toss until just cooked. Toss in the fettuccini and cook through. Add more cheese and sprinkle chives on top. Serve hot with a glass of red wine.

**Wine Pairing**

A good wine pairing for this fresh pasta dish is Antica Irpinia Aglianico, a wine from Campania near the Amalfi coast and the Italian home of Red Sauce.

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