



Behind Kitchen Doors with Chris Santos - The Stanton Social

It's not easy to stay fashionable in such a fussy city, but The Stanton Social opened with a bang and has been going strong ever since. Chef Chris Santos has succeeded in luring the young & hungry to the Lower East Side for a multi-cultural menu of shared plates for almost two years. (That's like ten in restaurant years.) Chris has even managed to make french onion soup a social experience with an inspired dumpling version. And let's not overlook the fact that Chris was doing sliders - barbecued pulled-pork & kobe - before it was even in trendy. Just who is this tattooed chef behind these savory bites?



What did you want to be when you grew up? Initially a rock 'n' roll drummer. I grew up in the hair metal 80's and boy you should have seen me. Quite a sight. I have worked in kitchens since I was 13, but I had the rock star dream. Actually, I just bought a drum set for my bedroom, so maybe there's still a chance.....

How did you get into food? I wanted a drum set and a car when I was like 10 or 11, so mom said 'get a job little man, they don't fall from the sky'. So as soon as I could I got a job scrubbing pots at a little neighborhood restaurant in Bristol, Rhode Island. On my first night, the chef walked out in a tantrum and the owner/host stepped in to cook....and she wasn't a chef. It was a horror show. Everybody in the weeds, lots of screaming, that sort of thing. I ended up cooking all these boxes of pasta and getting a nasty steam burn trying to drain the water off. So of course I was hooked.

What was your first job in food? Soon after the neighborhood joint, my first night they hired an Irish chef, who was a total rock star. Before long he was teaching me how to hold a knife, kill a lobster, turn a mushroom, as well as how to flirt effectively with the waitresses. He'd sneak me into the next door bar.....again experiences that have stayed with me my whole life. Not just the wealth of cooking knowledge he began to instill in me but also the idea of this late night, after hours pirate existence that was specific to this line of work. I loved it immediately.

What was your last job before Stanton Social? Previous to The Stanton Social, I was the executive chef of Suba.

How did you decide to take on Stanton Social? I had owned a restaurant called Wyanoka (over Double Happiness) with one of my current partners previous to Suba, and I really needed to get back to doing something that was my own. Also both my partners and I had been conceptualizing this restaurant over wine & dinner for many, many years. And when we found this space, we knew it was time.

What's your favorite dish on the menu? Hmm, that's tough. I guess right now I'd say either our Cider Braised Pork Belly "blt" slider, or the Ancho & Caramel glazed Pork Tenderloin. I'm a big fan of the pig.

What's your least favorite dish (and yes, you must pick one)? Our Moo Shu Shrimp. It tastes great and we move it well, but I haven't found a presentation that I like.

What is your junk food of choice? It's not really junk food but I love, LOVE, LOVE Bahn-mi sandwiches from Chinatown. And I have fixations with bacon, salsas, hot sauces and peanut butter. So any of those are what I might reach for. Oh and Pop tarts.

Other than your own, what's your favorite restaurant in NYC? I tend to love the smaller, less fancy joints. Cafecito comes to mind. Or Fatty Crab. And I love Strip House.

What culinary trend do you most embrace? Well, I guess you'd have to say the small plate trend. We like to call ours share plates, because we really encourage multiple dishes and we make sure everybody at the table is able to get a bite of each dish. We didn't start the small plates craze, but I think we're among the pioneers who are bringing it forward in a unique, approachable but definitely stylish way.

What trend do you wish would die already? Going to an expensive steakhouse and having to pay extra for a sauce on top of the \$68 steak. It's ridiculous. And sides shouldn't be \$12.

What's next on the horizon for you? Any new ventures or restaurants in the works? Spill the beans... Well....yes. There will be a very exciting project announced very soon. My partners and I have been hard at work developing our next adventure. I can't spill the beans quite yet, but soon enough. Also I hope to finally launch a long planned line of Tattoo/Rock n Roll inspired chef wear called Daredevil Chefwear with Michelle Myles of Daredevil Tattoo, and eventually a stylishly divey rock bar possibly attached to a kickass vegetarian joint.

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[Menu](#)

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