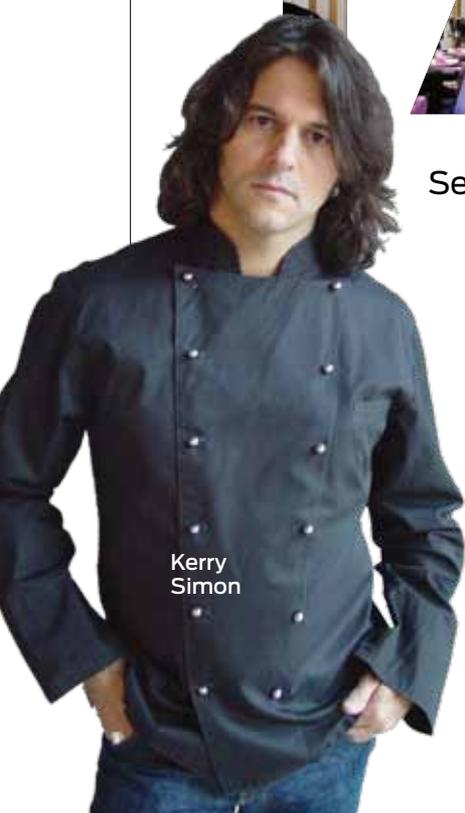




Pork & Beans in downtown Las Vegas



# CHEEFS TABLES



Kerry Simon

Seven of Las Vegas' hottest culinary artisans, from Kerry Simon to Emeril Lagasse, sound off on their go-to cooking shoes, most popular dishes and the celebrity guests they love to serve. **BY MICKEY WOODS**

**KERRY SIMON**

*PORK & BEANS (DOWNTOWN), SIMON RESTAURANT & LOUNGE (PALMS CASINO RESORT), KERRY'S GOURMET BURGERS (HARRAH'S LAS VEGAS)*

 **COOKS IN:** Converse

 **BEST CELEBRITY GUEST:** "Bill Murray is a personal friend of mine. We go back to our teenage years, and he's a great guy: approachable and easygoing. I love having him at any of my restaurants."

 **CUSTOMERS' FAVORITE DISH AT PORK & BEANS:** "Sliders. I made them for the first time at Bill's house, where we incorporated sausage with the beef. They're phenomenal."

 **WEIRDEST REQUEST:** "Once, a customer asked for nothing green on the plate."

 **MOST UNIQUE COCKTAIL:** "Pomegranate Cosmopolitan with Pop Rocks on the rim of the glass. It's a fun drink, and guests smile seeing it on the menu."

## RICK MOONEN

RX BOILER ROOM (MANDALAY BAY)

**COOKS IN:** Cole Haan (and sometimes Klogs)

**BEST VEGAS MEMORY:** “Running this year’s first “Chefs to the Max” event at Rx Boiler Room on Jan. 19. We raised \$275,800 for local food critic Max Jacobson, who remains in critical condition after being struck by a car in December. And I got to work with the best chefs I’ve ever cooked with in my life. [Another great memory was when I] got married al fresco to my awesome wife, Roni, at Red Rock Canyon.”

**WEIRDEST REQUEST:** “Chivas Regal Scotch whiskey and Yoo-hoo. Can’t top that!”

**BEST CELEBRITY GUESTS:** “Robin Leach, singer and Vegas headliner Frankie Moreno and actress Cerina Vincent — and that was all in one night.”

**MY MUST-HAVE DISH:** “The bacon-wrapped bacon and egg. It’s braised Niman Ranch pork belly wrapped in Neuske’s double-smoked bacon sitting on a smear of house-made tomato jam and toasted brioche wafer. A sunny-side quail egg sits on top for breakfast in a bite like you’ve never had before.”

**HOTTEST VEGAS HANGOUT:** “STK rocks the house down while providing some of the best food. I had a warm deviled egg topped with Osetra caviar that I almost lost my mind over.”

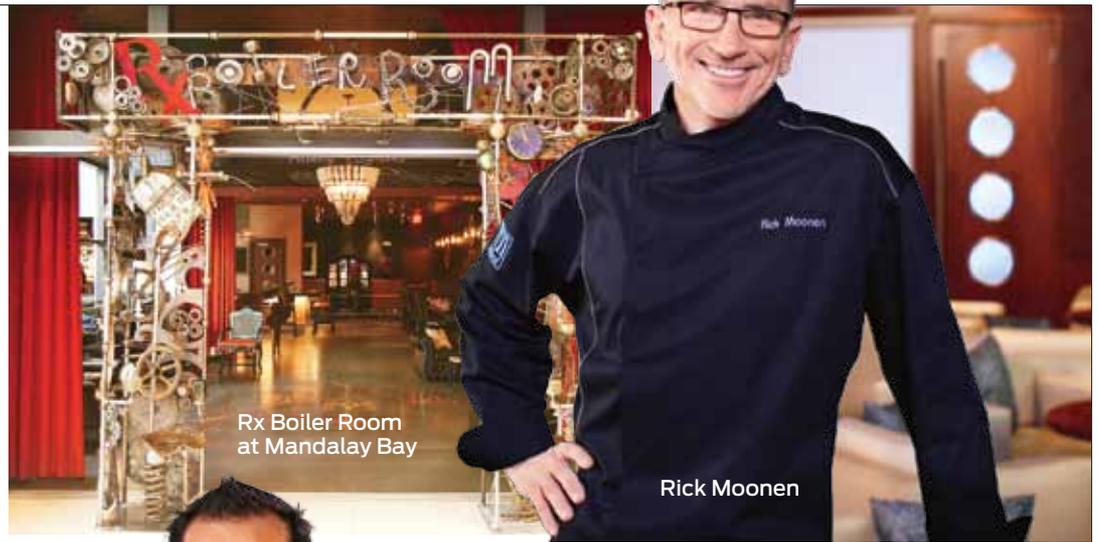
## ROY ELLAMAR

SENSI (BELLAGIO)

**COOKS IN:** Shoes from Klogs or Birkenstock

**MY MUST-HAVE DISH:** “Right now, it would have to be the “Tongue and Cheek,” which is braised veal cheeks in red wine, balsamic and honey with Wagyu beef tongue. I brine the tongue for a couple of days and then slow smoke it on apple and hickory wood. We serve it with the braised cheeks, parsnip puree, red wine glaze and shaved truffles.”

**BIGGEST RESTAURANT DRAW:** “You’ve heard of dinner and a show, but we really are those things. The kitchen stage is in the



Rx Boiler Room at Mandalay Bay

Rick Moonen



Sensi at Bellagio

Roy Ellamar



Joël Robuchon at MGM

Joël Robuchon

center of the dining room, enclosed in glass from floor to ceiling, and situated about 3 inches below the dining room floor so guests can see all the action. The kitchen also is open from two sides, so guests walk in all the time and talk to my cooks or me as they watch their food being prepared.”

**HOTTEST VEGAS HANGOUT:** “Hyde at Bellagio. It’s a great place to chill and sip a cocktail with a view of the Bellagio fountains before dinner, or you can go after dinner when it transforms into a party.”

**WEIRDEST REQUEST:** “Guests always ask for unique things, especially if they saw my episode of Food Network’s “Chopped,” where I won against fellow Vegas chef competitors. I guess the funniest request was when a guest asked me if I could sign my chef jacket and give it to her as a memento. The funnier part was that she was 12 years old. Alas, the rock-star chef’s life I’ve dreamed of.”

**BEST CELEBRITY GUESTS:** “Jay-Z and Beyoncé. I also cooked for them at The



Table 10 at The Palazzo

Emeril Lagasse

Buddy Valastro

Buddy V's Ristorante at The Palazzo

Beverly Hills Hotel years ago. They are very cool people and I would love to have them back next time they are playing at the Grand Garden Arena.”

## JOËL ROBUCHON

JOËL ROBUCHON, L'ATELIER DE JOËL ROBUCHON (MGM GRAND)

**COOKS IN:** Red-and-black Pradas

**CUSTOMERS' FAVORITE DISH:** “It would have to be the mashed potatoes. Regardless of your menu selection, everyone is served the mashed potatoes during their meal.”

**BEST CELEBRITY GUESTS:** “Celine Dion and David Copperfield have been such a help to the growth and success of the restaurants in Las Vegas. It's always a delight to see them.”

**MOST UNIQUE COCKTAIL:** “A simple blend of great flavors accentuating one another: the martini aux fleurs, a blend of Elderflower liquor, gin and fresh grapefruit, garnished with a rose petal.”

## BUDDY VALASTRO

BUDDY V'S RISTORANTE (THE PALAZZO)

**COOKS IN:** Leather slippers by Ecco

**MY MUST-HAVE DISH:** “That's really tough. I grew up eating a lot of these recipes, and they're all delicious, but if I have to choose, I'd say my wife's eggplant parmesan, the steak pizzaiolo and the osso buco.”

**WEIRDEST REQUEST:** “A guest asked if he could purchase the family photos from the dessert menu book. When told no, he said he was going to steal them if we didn't sell them to him.”

**BEST CELEBRITY GUESTS:** “Nicolas Cage. We've also had chef Thomas Keller and Carrot Top dine with us, to name a few.”

**MOST UNIQUE COCKTAIL:** “The Drago Rosso. Everyone loves it. It's made with Absolut Ruby Red, pomegranate molasses, jalapenos and mango juice.”

## EMERIL LAGASSE

LAGASSE STADIUM, TABLE 10, DELMONICO STEAKHOUSE (THE PALAZZO), EMERIL'S NEW ORLEANS FISH HOUSE (MGM GRAND)

**MY MUST-HAVE DISH:** “I can never choose just one favorite. I have a few standby dishes, but I really like to try what the chefs are coming up with for our specials that change daily.”

**CUSTOMERS' FAVORITE DISH:** “All four of my restaurants here serve one of the first dishes I created at my first restaurant in New Orleans — barbecue shrimp. It's been a longtime guest favorite. We serve the fresh sautéed shrimp with a hot rosemary biscuit for sopping up the sauce.”

**MOST UNIQUE COCKTAIL:** “Max Solano at Delmonico Steakhouse is a master of mixology. It's amazing how he pairs different flavors and techniques to create new cocktails. He has an entire menu dedicated to whiskey cocktails. My favorite now would be one of his cocktails using our new private-label barrel of Eagle Rare 10 year whiskey from Buffalo Trace Distillery.”

## TONY GEMIGNANI

PIZZA ROCK LAS VEGAS (DOWNTOWN)

**COOKS IN:** Puma

**CUSTOMERS' FAVORITE DISH:** “The New Yorker pizza with sliced mozzarella, tomato sauce, sliced house link sausage, garlic, pepperoni and ricotta cheese.”

**HOTTEST VEGAS HANGOUT:** “The Griffin nightclub and Double Down saloon.”

**TOP CELEBRITY GUESTS:** “Joe Montana is always the greatest. I make him my sausage and peppers combo, ‘Montana style.’ Also, Jennifer Love Hewitt.”



Tony Gemignani



Pizza Rock Las Vegas