

Eric Silverstein

The Peached Tortilla
Austin, Texas

Austin is so famous for its food truck scene, it's hard to imagine anyone driving 25 miles in the rain to a suburban department store parking lot to track down a particular truck, especially one named for the tortillas that wrap up half the dishes around town. But securing a taste of Eric Silverstein's *báhn mì* sliders, pad Thai tacos and Japajam burger slathered with Japanese BBQ sauce and sweet tomato jam makes extreme gestures like that seem reasonable.

Silverstein's truck, The Peached Tortilla, has been doling out Asian-Southern street food in Austin since 2010, when the lawyer-cum-chef gave up his dreams of opening a restaurant, at least temporarily. "The truck was a backup plan," he says. "I was looking at restaurant spaces and getting estimates." The numbers were so high he had to make his idea mobile.

Born and raised in Tokyo with a Chinese mother and American father, Silverstein recalls eating his mom's pot stickers, and rolling dumplings with her when he was 9. "She'd do more of the clean type of Chinese food. It's kind of bastardized in the U.S.," he says.

He got his first taste of Americanized oil-and-soy-sauce-soaked Chinese food when he moved to Atlanta at age 11. "It was culture shock," he says. "I was in a private school with all white people. I don't think they had ever seen an Asian person."

What he hadn't seen before was real Southern cuisine: "Soul food, fried chicken, collard greens, cornbread, sweet tea, all that shit that's unhealthy," he says. Those flavors, combined with the Chinese, Japanese, Malaysian and Singapore

street food he grew up eating, created the perfect storm for his menu.

"The original concept was fast-casual tacos influenced by the food I grew up eating," says Silverstein. "Which was easily convertible into a truck." But limited cooking space, shady leasing agents and unpredictable weather systems kept Silverstein motivated to make his brick and mortar dream happen—later this fall, in fact.

While his two custom-built trucks will continue to roll, the restaurant will feature the same tacos (from brisket to the *báhn mì*), sliders and burritos. The space will allow room for amped-up rice bowls like a catfish version with charred napa cabbage (\$13, recipe, plateonline.com), Korean fried chicken buns, short ribs and grits, *kimchi* steak and eggs and more.

"My biggest issue with dining in Austin is that it's hard to get creative, affordable, accessible food at a reasonable price," says Silverstein. "That's the place I want to create." — **Liz Grossman**



Inked Fingers

Blistered catfish rice bowl, \$13, Eric Silverstein, The Peached Tortilla, Austin, Texas. RECIPE, plateonline.com





LAW SCHOOL LESSONS

Even though he doesn't miss his old life as a lawyer, Silverstein says his law school lessons still apply to his life as a chef/restaurateur.

- "Law school taught me to be extremely disciplined. You work like a dog your [first] year and you study 6 to 7 days a week to be in the top 10 to 20 percent of your class to land a job at a major law firm. That commitment to hard work helped me get through my first year of owning The Peached Tortilla, where I was the order-taker, fry cook and dishwasher all in the same day.
- As a lawyer, I learned to deal with angry clients. That has transferred over to the food industry, where I have had to deal with the occasional angry client.
- Organization as a lawyer is key. You have to stay on top of all of your clients and case files. It's no different being a food truck or restaurant owner. Each facet of the business demands your attention—your employees, your brand, your business development.
- As an attorney, you have to hustle to get clients in order to move on to partnership. In the food truck world, you have to hustle to network and get in right with influential industry people. You also have to work hard to market your brand and get catering clients.
- Even great lawyers lose a case. As a food truck owner, you have off days. You just have to put your head down and plow through it.
- Lawyers and law students have a bad habit of drinking a lot. That pretty much holds true in the restaurant world.
- You have to multitask as a lawyer. It's no different in a kitchen whether you are on the line or doing prep for the day."

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MEET 30 CHEFS
you need to know

Justin Carlisle, Ardent, Milwaukee, Wis.

digestif

WHAT'S THE WORST ADVICE YOU'VE EVER GOTTEN?

I was once told it's OK to date the staff as long as no one finds out and it doesn't affect your work. Total bullshit! It never works out, no matter what. Another fun one: I once worked for a chef who told me to marinate the pork chops in fryer oil. My response was obviously, "Yes chef!" Needless to say, I didn't stay there much longer.

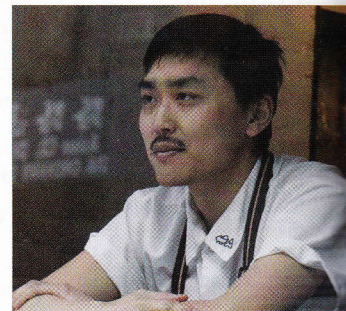
— Tom Van Lente, TWO, Chicago



John Dale

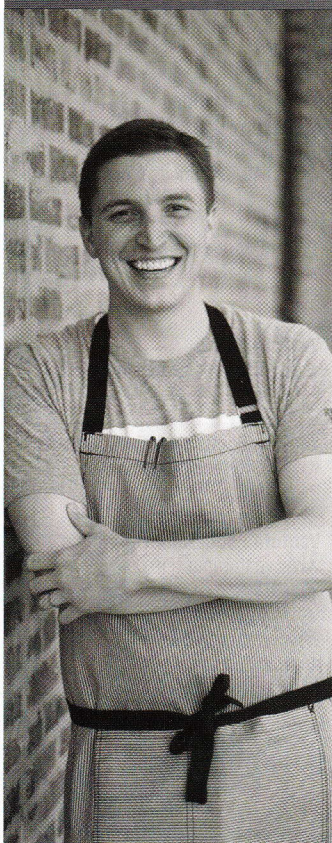
It was my first day working for Marco Pierre White. The sous chef told me that no matter what Marco says, I should call him "chef." He told me that he'd insist I call him "Marco," but it was only a test. So I kept calling him "chef" even after he told me numerous times to call him "Marco." Halfway through my first day he pulled me aside. He made it very clear if I called him chef one more time it would most likely be the last time I ever spoke. This was a joke the sous chef played on all the new cooks.

— Jason McLeod, Ironside Fish & Oyster, San Diego

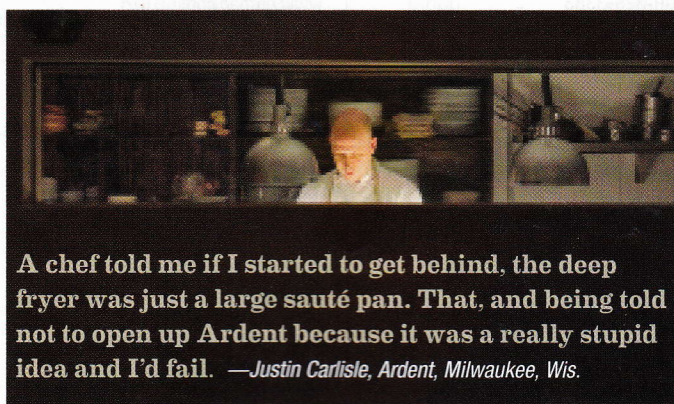


MY MOTHER TOLD ME TO GO TO DENTAL SCHOOL!

— Jonathan Wu, Fung Tu, NYC



2014 Shannon Marie Braniff



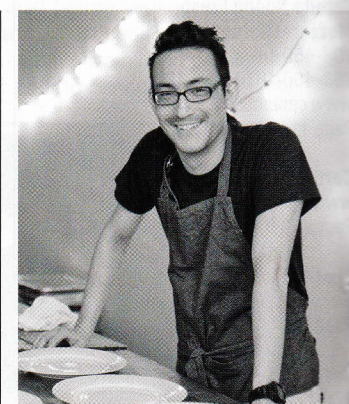
A chef told me if I started to get behind, the deep fryer was just a large sauté pan. That, and being told not to open up Ardent because it was a really stupid idea and I'd fail. — Justin Carlisle, Ardent, Milwaukee, Wis.

Kevin J. Mizganski

I was told by a past employer that if I didn't open my own business by the age of 33, I should let that dream go and work for someone I trusted. The best advice was to wait for the right opportunity and then plan and re-plan until you are there. Dreams don't have an expiration date, the vision only becomes more crystal clear. — Kristen Murray, MAURICE, Portland, Ore.



Nicole Chalmerson Photography



I was told by a chef in Austin that to be successful you had to play to your audience and in some circumstances, really dumb down your food. He questioned the sophistication of Austin. After being here for four years, I'm going the opposite direction. I'm getting more creative with food and introducing dishes that are not mainstream. Austin has proven that it has a changing palate. — Eric Silverstein, The Peached Tortilla, Austin, Texas