



In the Kitchen with... **Chef Drew Araneo** BY LORI DRAZ

Well-respected and humble, Andrew “Drew” Araneo has been showcasing his bold side for the last 18 years at Drew’s Bayshore Bistro. Born in Union Beach, Drew is a proud graduate of the Culinary School at Brookdale. He interned at Long Branch’s famous Joe and Maggie’s Bistro on Broadway. His other credits include Whispers at Spring Lake where he worked with Scott Giordano of the Poached Pear. Drew lived in Holmdel for many years before moving to Keyport. “I think I always wanted to be a chef, and I always knew I loved spicy Cajun food, even though I’m Italian. My father was a roofer, and I followed him into that business, but my father wanted me to keep growing as a chef. Now I’m doing the same for my son, Andrew, who works at my side as the sous chef.”

What is your favorite way to relax on a day off? I like life’s simple pleasures – taking a swim in the pool; relaxing in my backyard with my wife of 29 years, Tracy, who works as a paraprofessional at Holmdel High School; sipping on whatever bourbon is on the shelf at the time; and listening to some good old rock ‘n’ roll.

Do you have a favorite ingredient? Who doesn’t love a Jersey tomato? I also love working with pork, and I really love cooking duck. It’s so versatile. I call it the air pig. It’s great in a gumbo. I use the



CHEF DREW WITH SON ANDREW

duck fat for roux, the bones for the stock and the dark meat in stews. And of course I love chilis; I own a Cajun restaurant after all.

What is your favorite item in your kitchen? My Big Green Egg and my Yoder YS 640 pellet smoker. The egg is the best grill. It’s smaller than the Yoder, so it’s perfect for small groups. You can use the Yoder as a grill or a smoker, even as an oven. You also can’t miss with an Ooni Pizza oven. Inside I use a Lodge cast iron pan. I’ve had mine for years, and its just keep getting better. Remember just scrape out with hot water and kosher salt.

Anything else you want to share? Don’t be afraid to cook. Use the remarkable Jersey produce. I often shop at Hauser Hill Farm in Old Bridge, Samaha Farms in Aberdeen and the farmer’s market in Keyport. Buy fresh, local produce, and use it up quickly so you can buy some more and support the farmers. I also use Monmouth Meats in Red Bank and Lusty Lobster.

What is your favorite at-home recipe? I really enjoy simple grilled vegetables, and this is a family favorite.



Chef Araneo’s favorite at-home recipe:

Giambotta – A Classic Italian Vegetable Stew

4 tbs. olive oil
1 onion (small dice)
2 carrots (small dice)
2 stalks celery (small dice)
1 red bell pepper (small dice)
10 cloves garlic (minced)
Kosher salt
black pepper
1/2 tsp each of dried oregano and dried basil
1 tsp crushed red pepper
1 can crushed tomatoes or 4 very ripe fresh tomatoes
4 cups chicken stock (or vegetable broth for vegans)

OPTIONAL:

4 cups diced potatoes
2 cups carrots (cut larger than above)
4 cups string beans
8 cups zucchini
Fresh basil (any fresh herbs)
When I have them, I add Cubanelle peppers and Italian long hot peppers. Eggplant, corn, sweet potatoes, any greens and any squashes can also be used.

Heat the olive oil then add all the small diced vegetables and garlic. When they begin to soften, add the seasonings, then the tomato and chicken stock. Vegetarians, use vegetable stock or water.

Next, I usually add the optional ingredients listed above, but you can add any vegetables you have or that are in season. Just add the harder vegetables first, then add the softer ones (like the zucchini) later or they will get mushy, although some people say the flavor gets better if they get really soft.

Hope you enjoy it!