



FOODIES WEST

## Restaurant Review

*Don't be deceived, the elements of simplicity are incredibly complex—the results unforgettably delicious. What else is food about if not that experience?*

**CHE-AH-CHI**  
Enchantment Resort  
*Palatkwapi-Style Dining*

*Chef de Cuisine Cord Chatham grates a Marcona almond over his Natural Chicken (Concord & Roasted Grapes, Cauliflower, Saffron, Pancetta)*

**S**edona has always had a reputation for culture and art. This legendary heritage first appeared in Hopi tradition as Palatkwapi—the "Place of the Red Rocks." The area, tradition says, became a thriving cultural center for Native Peoples all over the Southwest.



Diners looking for a close encounter with the culinary arts in the Red Rocks will find it at Che-Ah-Chi. The kitchen is full of artists that know how to cook legendary meals.

Executive Chef David Schmidt has a way with food that combines trend with tradition and rustic with elegance. He also likes to keep an eye on the healthy side of dining, and he does this without infringing on flavors. And the plates come arranged Palatkwapi-style, meaning the ingredients get placed in such a harmonious manner, the arrangement can't help but uplift a diner's spirit.

Chef de Cuisine Cord Chatham doesn't waiver a bit from his boss's talent. No wonder, since Chatham and Schmidt have worked together several times over the years. Chatham's style leans towards fine dining.

"I was always a draw-er," Chatham said about his artistic talents. "From the time I was a little kid. My mom still has my pictures. I thought about getting into interior decorating. At my house, I'm the one who does the decorating. I just always had that eye."

*Cheese Ravioli (gluten-free) — Butternut Squash, Pumpkin, Cranberries, Brussels Sprouts, Fennel*



It shows on every plate. The flavors from each ingredient work together seamlessly.

“My style of cooking is to enjoy everything on the plate together,” Chatham explained. “In each bite.”

The menu, Chatham revealed, lists the basic ingredients in each plate. But he likes to add elements of surprise to each one, impromptu additions that make every plate an original.

“I believe dining should still be a surprise,” Chatham explained. “There should be some excitement. For me, it’s a big deal. I love to go out and be surprised. So I’ll just list the main ingredients, and then I’ll throw in what I want to.”

“Throw in,” meaning, placed Palatk-wapi-style. All of his plates have a beautiful assemblage.

Some points of interest: The menus is loaded with tapas-style Market Vegetable plates; Top-tier ingredients, which are featured in menu descriptions, appear often; The flour for the house-made pastas is sourced from Italy; The Cheese Ravioli, which features seasonal filling and sauces, comes gluten-free.

*Hamachi Crudo — Blood Orange, Radish, Furikake, Yuzu, Fresno Chiles*

A word about the pasta dishes. The few selections, which include a daily special, change constantly. The whole kitchen gets involved in making the pasta, including the cooks. The creative effort produces some great varieties that taste soulfully satiating. As pasta should.

Sommelier Michael Robb has compiled an engaging wine list. It contains the largest selection of Arizona wines in the entire state (he checked). Since Arizona’s vintners have been around for 10 to 15 years, they’ve had a chance to perfect their juice. And there are some great labels out there. Just ask.

Diners that do pairings or order by the glass can count on each wine, no matter how esoteric the label or special the vintage, to taste super fresh. That's because Robb, who has a bit of the mad-scientist lurking in him, has this handy-dandy device called the Coravin Wine Needle that allows him to dispense a glass a wine without removing the cork.

"We tested the device with several wines," Robb said. "We used it for seven months, and the wines tasted like they've never been opened."

Is that cool, or what?

For e-people, Robb has the wine list programmed on an iPad. The user-friendly device allows diners to send, via email, info about any of the labels offered on the menu.

For those diners that can't bear to end a great meal without a sweet something, Pastry Chef Morgan Gurney does not disappoint. There's usually some ode to *crème brûlée* in the dessert menu. This time it came in the form of Pumpkin Cheesecake. BTW, those casual-sounding numbers, such as S'mores In A Jar, contain some serious ingredients, like Godiva Chocolate Mousse with Maldon Sea Salt.

The desserts, just like everything else on the menu, come Palatkwapi-style.

That's because the culinary arts is alive and well at Che-Ah-Chi, and the kitchen is full of artists.



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Where else?

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*Pumpkin Cheesecake Crème Brûlée topped with Chantilly and Caramel Waters with Gelato atop Molasses Crumbs plated by Chef de Cuisine Cord Chatham and Mocha Cappuccino created by our exceptional waiter, Manuel.*

[http://foodieswest.com/Che-Ah-Chi\\_2015.html](http://foodieswest.com/Che-Ah-Chi_2015.html)