

that fresh herbs are cheap and easy to grow, just needing sunlight and water.

It was only 20 minutes later that the meal was done — the salmon was cooked on each side for about three or four minutes, and then put aside. The vegetables — asparagus, tomatoes and mushrooms — were cooked in the same pan, with some added olive oil and soy sauce. The cubed avocado was added over the dish as a tasty garnish, and Rosenberg titled it “Soy-glazed salmon with mushroom, asparagus, tomatoes and avocado.”

THE TWO-TIME DEFENDING CHAMPION: COREY BUCK

Buck is one of the lucky chefs in Boulder — he is the owner of John's, 2328 Pearl St. His sister, Ashley Baxell, helps him with the business side of the restaurant. All of the menu decisions are made by Buck and his sous chef, Kyle Marston.

The two chefs met while they were working at the Flagstaff House, and they now man the large, spacious kitchen at John's together in a laid-back compatibility. And while most chefs are protective of their recipes and space in their kitchen, Buck had no problem with me hanging out with him in the kitchen during the dinner hour on a Thursday evening. And as he and Marston handled the dinner orders, he gave some advice on how he got where he is today.

» **Lesson one:** You can survive in the restaurant business as a laid-back chef. Buck immediately says that he's in the business “to have fun and make people happy.”

John's is just open for dinner, which gives Buck an opportunity for an easier daily schedule and a smaller staff. Throughout the entire evening, the only staff present was Buck, Marston and one dish washer.

» **Lesson two:** Be nocturnal. Although Buck laughs that he doesn't get out of bed until 1 p.m., he also stays at the restaurant until midnight or 1 a.m. every night.

Buck bought John's 20 months ago, and he changed the menu dramatically — adding quail, venison, duck, scallops and foie gras. He's not shy about rattling off exactly how he prepares each dish, and each essentially is simple, though rich with some sinful (think heavy cream instead of skim milk) ingredients.

» **Lesson three:** Just because you cook gourmet doesn't mean you always have to eat that way. “I'm not health conscious at all,” Buck says.

His dinner that night before work? Hashbrowns, bacon and eggs. And while he can rattle off his favorite high-priced wines, he says he loves Pabst Blue Ribbon beer.

John's only has 19 tables — counting the two small ones that are rarely used on the porch — which is a much smaller



ABOVE » JOHN'S RESTAURANT HEAD CHEF COREY BUCK.
BELOW » BEEF TENDERLOIN PLATES PREPARED BY COREY.



SHOPPING LIST

While Hosea Rosenberg admits to not cooking much for himself at home, he does have a few items he thinks should be in every kitchen.

» **Unsalted butter:** “You can always add salt later. Only used salted butter for bread.”

» **Bacon:** “It's great because you can freeze it.”

» **Garlic** (fresh)

» **Olive oil**

» **Lemons**

» **Mustard:** “It just works in so many recipes.”

» **Cream**

» **Eggs:** “Get farm fresh if you can.”

» **Rice:** “I love a purple sticky rice called Chinese black forbidden rice. It's great because you can be careless with it, and it's got a chewy, nutty flavor.”

amount of people to cook for than the 100 plates of food Buck has had to prepare during the Flatiron Chef Competition. But he says that the time limit and quantity don't really phase him.

“It's almost twice as many people as I'm used to cooking for,” he says. “But you're so dialed into what you're doing that it's not stressful at all.”

» **Lesson four:** Learn how to trash talk — but jokingly. Buck says the local chef scene is non-competitive, but he still went over to each of his former two competitors' restaurants — Kimball Musk from the Kitchen and Mateo Jansen of Mateo's — to eat before the competition. He's planning to drop in on Rosenberg as well. Buck also challenged the chefs at much-hyped Frasca to cook against him at a future Flatiron Chef Competition, but they declined.

While some chefs complain about the hours of work hurting their social lives, Buck says it's the perfect schedule for him.

“At the end of the night all the chefs from town come over and we hang out here and have some drinks,” he says.

Cooking also didn't hurt in his romantic life.

» **Lesson five:** Cooking can get the girl, but then you'll always be the turkey guy on Thanksgiving.

When Buck was first dating his wife, he tried to win over her family by making a last-minute run to his seafood distributor. He brought home a dozen lobsters on Christmas Eve and cooked them.

“But now I can't get away from any meals,” he laughed.

Buck closed the restaurant to the public last Thanksgiving but opened it up to his family, where he cooked for 50 people.

FLATIRON CHEF COMPETITION

The next competition on Aug. 25 is sold out — but there's a waiting list, says event organizer Paul Eckert. However, there will be another event in September, when the winner of the August competition faces Trattoria's Daniel Conrades. You can call and make reservations now at (303) 464-3207 to get on its waiting list.

The event, at Bromfield's Omni Interlocken Resort, features a five-course dinner with five wines from a selected region that complement the secret ingredient. Once the secret ingredient is named, the audience can watch the progress in the kitchen via two 50-inch plasma televisions, and also will be escorted into the kitchen to interact with the chefs personally.