

She's the Boss

A look at the CV of departing Bar Tartine co-chef Cortney Burns, now co-chef and co-owner of Motze and the upcoming Crescent.

By Rebecca Flint Marx



"I remember being young and saying I was going to be a doctor or a chef, but then I realized I wasn't good with blood. Which is funny because now I butcher whole animals."

KITCHEN WISDOM

"I really like to use the dehydrator to concentrate flavors. I do it by drying ingredients to create powder, half-dehydrating fruit purées for concentrated pastes, and making thick syrups from fruit or vegetable juices."



"I worked here throughout high school. I made scones, worked the farmers' market, and drove a big green van, listening to the Grateful Dead. I was trading bread for corn and strawberries and meeting farmers; it definitely impacted my world."

COLLEAGUES ON BURNS

"I hired her because she was fearless; she wasn't fazed by anything. We ended up with an almost all-male kitchen, and she was a fighter—she didn't budge an inch and rose to the challenge."

—Michael Tusk, Quince and Cotogna



"I worked in the kitchen at Chautara for a few hours before my shift. I'd work for free because I was curious; the kitchen was very high-energy, and that always really intrigued me. And being there allowed me to do my job better in the front of the house."

"After graduation, I followed a boyfriend to Australia on a whim and bullshitted my way into some kitchens. This was the weirdest place I'd ever worked; there were no recipes, and they were serving, like, chicken satay and burgers with beetroot and egg."

"I needed to get out of the city. I skied 90 days a season, rode my bike, and figured out what I knew and what I didn't know."

"I learned how to cook there. The owner, Marsha McBride, is the first person who taught me how to butcher. The crew at the time included the future owners of the Fatted Calf, Trick Dog, the Marshall Store, Bar Jules, and Dopo and Adesso. It was my first culinary family; it was pretty epic."



BORN

May 13, 1979 ("On Mother's Day")

EDUCATION

Buffalo Grove High School, Buffalo Grove, IL, 1997

University of Wisconsin—Madison, 2001
Double major in South Asian studies and cultural anthropology

CAREER

1993–97

Baker, driver, and farmers' market vendor, **Great Harvest Bread Co.**, Evanston, IL

1997–2001

Server, the **Eldorado Grill**, the **Tornado Steakhouse**, and **Chautara**, Madison, WI

2001

Line cook, the **Waterfall Café**, Daintree Rainforest, Australia, and **Sybling's Bistro**, Arlington Heights, IL

2001

Line cook, **Parc 55 hotel**, Union Square

2001–03

Line cook, **Café Rouge**, Berkeley

2003–05

Line cook, **Quince**, North Beach

2005

Sous-chef, **Adagia**, Berkeley

2005–08

Private chef, Sun Valley, ID

2005–09

Line cook, **Boulette's Larder**, Ferry Building Marketplace

2009–11

Private chef and demonstration chef, the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone, St. Helena

2011–16

Chef, **Bar Tartine**, the Mission



COLLEAGUES ON BURNS

"She had this spunk, this sassy, inquisitive energy that was really refreshing. She's not trying to impress somebody, which I think a lot of men do. She tries [things] because she's truly interested in trying something different."

—Marsha McBride, Café Rouge

"On my first day, I cut my thumbnail off. There was blood everywhere. I worked an 18-hour shift that day, including 6 hours in the ER."

"There were three of us in the kitchen; you either did everything or you did nothing. [Chef-owner] Mike [Tusk] was the most amazing teacher; there are certain things I still do the way he taught me, and sometimes I'll pause and say, 'Thank you, Mike Tusk.'"



"I worked on and off here for years. [Owners Amaryl Schwertner and Lori Regis] were like Mike [Tusk]: 'If you want to make head cheese, great. Figure it out, and tell us what you need.'"

KITCHEN WISDOM

"I remember reading all of Richard Olney's Time-Life cookbooks, Michel Richard's book, all those sorts of things. I didn't go to culinary school, so I had to reeducate myself."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: LEFT: COURTESY OF CORNIEE BURNS; (3) COURTESY OF BAR TARTINE; (3)