

# Meet the Chefs!

## THE ART OF FINE DINING

*photographed at The Cleveland Museum of Art by Howard Agriesti*

By Brenda L. Lewison



Claude Monet (French, 1840 - 1926) *Water Lilies* © The Cleveland Museum of Art

**G**reater Cleveland is home to a sizzling restaurant scene and the renowned Cleveland Museum of Art. We're proud to bring them together: 11 talented, passionate chefs – masters of the culinary arts – and works drawn from “Impressionist and Modern Masters from The Cleveland Museum of Art,” on display through January 13. Later visitors will be enthralled by “Arms and Armor from Imperial Austria,” opening February 24.

## Michael Annando

MICHAELANGELO'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT & WINE BAR

**What is your biggest challenge?** Getting the right people and putting them in the right places. Dealing with 20 employees and having everyone executing what they need to be doing at the right time is complicated. As soon as one person screws up, it throws a wrench into the whole business. You never set the pace yourself. Usually it's the customers – how fast they come in and how fast they order.

**Do you have a favorite utensil?** My fish spatula. It's an extension of my fingertips, a way to reach in and pay attention to detail and move food around quickly. I use it for meat too, browning pieces correctly.

**What does your restaurant do best?** We deliver very high-quality products and a sophisticated atmosphere. Our servers have a high standard for responses to guests. We have lots of training, goals and guidelines in place, with weekly wine tastings for servers and monthly training for different techniques of service. With front-of-house turnover, we have to reiterate the image we want.

**Do you have a can't-live-without seasoning?** Kosher salt. Salt is necessary to pull out flavors. Correctly used, it's very effective; incorrectly, it's offensive. One of the hardest things to train is flavoring because it's hard to standardize. Tomatoes are of varying ripeness and pieces of meat vary. You have to taste everything every evening. Kosher is the most versatile; it's smoother. High-iodine salts add bitterness to food.

**What's your philosophy about cooking?** Use the best ingredients you can possibly get: all wild fish if possible, meat without hormones or antibiotics, organic. My style of cooking is classic Italian, being creative within traditional techniques of cooking. It's not practiced widely these days. The techniques are time-consuming, but they intensify the end product.

**What tip would you offer visitors for cooking at home?** Buy the best quality ingredients and taste everything you make. Don't cut corners; spend five minutes extra to cut vegetables in the most perfect way. Try doing some steps earlier in the day, getting everything set – the way we prep at the restaurant.

## Luigi Iannuario

BICE RISTORANTE

**How do you stay motivated?** Working in the kitchen myself. Making sure everything is perfect, touching, tasting the food.

**What is your greatest skill in the kitchen?** Cooking and creating new things all the time. I also like to manage the staff and to sauté.

**What is your biggest challenge?** It was coming here to Cleveland from Milano; my house is in Cremona. It's a hard market. There is lots of competition with very good restaurants and chefs. I have to be finding good staff and good products.

**What does your restaurant do best?** Making customers welcome. It makes you feel at home, with friendly people and excellent food and imported wines. Bice gives the perfect feeling of Italy, the true Italian experience. We never rush people.

**Do you have a can't-live-without seasoning?** I love everything!

**What's your philosophy about cooking?** My way is using the best fresh products I can find and putting them together in the simplest way. In Italy we don't mix too many ingredients. We look for good matches that are more tasty. I love simple things.



Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853 – 1890) *The Large Plane Trees* © The Cleveland Museum of Art

**How do you define a great meal?** I really like to enjoy it with someone else. A great meal is something that makes you feel special for that day, that gives you different sensations in your nose, eyes, hands.

**How do you balance your career and your personal life?** I think my wife and three kids give me lots of motivation. My work steals time from them, but sometimes I take time off from work. I brought them all here from Italy. They know no English. It's a good challenge to learn a new language, to learn a different way to see life. My wife is a great cook and she is already teaching the kids. My son, who's 3, would love to start cooking.

**What tip would you offer visitors for cooking at home?** I see people buying prepared and frozen food. Don't cook and eat for filling up. Do it for fun, for learning new things and for having nice times with friends. Spend some time eating at the table and not in front of the TV.