

# Calgary's Chefs

## Chef in Profile: Richard Cartwright

### Restaurant: Escoba Bistro and Wine Bar

One of the most popular spots in downtown Calgary is Stephen Avenue, a pedestrian street during the day located between 1st Street SE and 4th Street SW. Historically Calgary's main street, today Stephen Avenue is a unique mix of old and new architecture with unique shops, retro cinemas and some of Calgary's best restaurants lining the avenue.

This trendy area is where you'll find Escoba Bistro and Wine Bar, an eatery that offers European fusion cuisine in a relaxed traditional setting. Escoba is best known for its tapas and wine pairings with its main dishes, its specialty, but also for its knowledgeable servers. Behind all the great dishes offered at Escoba is chef Richard Cartwright.

Cartwright grew up in the beautiful mountain city of Nelson, B.C. and got his start in the kitchens of some of the great restaurants that dot this town when he was only 15 years old. The creativity in the kitchen appealed to the artist in him and eventually led him to become a chef.

The freedom of creating his own dishes is what eventually brought Cartwright to Escoba and along the way he learned the



Chef Richard Cartwright

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importance and pleasure of pairing certain wines with a particular creation to complement the flavours of both.

"One of my favourite things to do is tastings," says Cartwright. "These are special events just for pairing wines with specific dishes and the representatives come in from the vineyards to present their wines."

It's from these events that the restaurant's special pairings have developed. Most of the menu items have suggested wine pairings and where there isn't a pairing, such as with tapas, the well-trained staff are happy to offer suggestions as to what would work best with particular dishes.

In the kitchen Cartwright ensures that the quality of the dishes match the quality of the wines that are offered on the impressive wine list by running a very tight ship. Although he comes across as laid back and seems to have a great rapport with the staff, Cartwright does not accept anything below standard in the restaurant.

"We have lots of fun," says Cartwright. "I'm notoriously hard to work for but if someone comes and does their job well then it's fun."

This has translated into the excellent service provided by the staff members who seem to take great pride in their knowledge of the dishes and wines as seen in the positive feedback from the restaurant's patrons.

What comes next for Cartwright? He hints that a second restaurant might be in the works but the idea is still in the developmental stage. Although there are a lot of steakhouses in Calgary, Cartwright feels that a higher end restaurant of this type would be well received in the city.

Meanwhile Cartwright has plenty to keep him busy on the side. His creativity carries over to his personal life as an accomplished artist who enjoys doing pen work and painting in his spare time. **BIC**

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