

John C. Metz

EXECUTIVE CHEF, CEO AND CO-FOUNDER, MARLOW'S TAVERN AND STERLING CULINARY MANAGEMENT

Written by Karina Antenucci / Photographed by Kyle Ripley, Haigwood Studios



WITH HOSPITALITY IN HIS BLOOD and experience working in top kitchens and developing brands around the world, John Metz jumped in with both feet early on in his career. His goal was to create a company with multiple restaurant brands using his own concepts, and that's exactly what he did. In 1996, he and partner Thomas DiGiorgio launched their business with the creation of Hi Life kitchen & cocktails in Norcross, which they later sold, along with their Roswell concept, Aqua blue Restaurant & Bar. About the same time, the duo co-founded Sterling Culinary Management, an onsite cafe company offering chef-driven breakfast, lunch and catering options in commercial office buildings from Alpharetta to Columbus, Georgia. In 2004, Metz opened his American tavern concept, Marlow's Tavern, which now has locations throughout Atlanta and Florida. Here, the restaurateur chats about his greatest influencers, what he likes to eat and the secret to Marlow's more than 15 years of success.

Q: *How did you decide to get into hospitality?*

A: I grew up in the business and was inspired by my father who has been doing this his whole career and has a number of restaurants and food service businesses in Pennsylvania. I jumped in feet first. I worked as a dishwasher in his restaurants growing up, then eventually in his kitchens and then ran some of his restaurants. Working there was so much fun because I got to be around him.

Q: *Would you say your dad was the most influential person in your career?*

A: My dad was the first and set the pace for the hospitality standards I've come to adopt as my own. He showed me the right way to lead and support people. I've also had the good fortune to work with a lot of great people like Drew Nieporent of Myriad Restaurant Group, which operates Tribeca Grill and Nobu in New York City, among others. He had multiple concepts and brands, and inspired me for what I wanted to do early in my career. Also, Dick Rivera and Tony Santarelli, who gave me unique opportunities at a young age to assume big roles in Dallas and to travel the world opening Italianni's and other restaurants.

Q: *What advice did they give you?*

A: To take care of people and to be true to who I am in terms of what I wanted to accomplish. This business is all about people and you're only as good as the people you surround yourself with.

Q: *What did you eat growing up?*

A: My mom still doesn't believe I am a chef sometimes. I ate very simply as a kid—fried shrimp and my mom's meatloaf and tuna noodle casserole were my favorites. Now, she's amazed by what I'm eating and cooking!

Q: *What do you like to eat at home?*

A: I like to eat whatever my better half is cooking. She takes good care of me. We go out to eat a lot, mostly to try different things and to visit our own restaurants. We also have the good fortune to go to a lake near here, and have fun on the grill or Big Green Egg cooking whole meats, seafood and big steaks.

Q: *Marlow's Tavern opened in 2004. To what do you attribute its longevity and success?*

A: When we set out to open Marlow's, we wanted it to be a neighborhood tavern for the 21st century. We wanted it to be timeless, a place where the neighborhood gathers for celebration, for food, for beverage, just to get away. Every Marlow's menu is personalized for its neighborhood.

Q: *You've raised considerable funds for the Special Olympics. What prompted you to support this organization?*

A: I was inspired by a great friend of ours who has a special needs child. We started supporting the Special Olympics in 1996. We've been doing a golf tournament benefiting the organization for 21 years and have raised \$1.3 million to date.

We also support Share Our Strength and No Kid Hungry. Each of our restaurants has the opportunity to support a local school or neighborhood organization. We like to contribute to the communities we serve.

MARLOW'S TAVERN
marlowstavern.com

STERLING CULINARY MANAGEMENT
4470 Chamblee Dunwoody Road
678/395-7066



Crab cake with baby arugula, grapefruit and pickled red onions tossed with a squeeze of lemon juice and olive oil. Find the recipe on page 69.

Recipe referenced on page 17

Jumbo Lump Crab Cake

Recipe by John C. Metz, Executive Chef, CEO and Co-Founder, Marlow's Tavern and Sterling Culinary Management

Yield: 5 crab cakes

- 1/4 cup cream cheese, softened
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1/2 teaspoon fresh chopped tarragon
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly cracked pepper
- 2 tablespoons sliced chives
- 2 eggs
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 1 pound jumbo lump crab meat
- olive oil as needed for sauteing
- Horseradish Aioli** for garnish (recipe included)
- dressed greens as needed for garnish

Into a mixing bowl, place all ingredients up to but excluding crab and combine until smooth. Gently sift through crab meat, removing any shells. Gently fold crab into mixture, being careful not to break up all the crab.

Place a saute pan over medium-high heat. Place a small amount of olive oil in pan. Pack crab cake mixture into a 1/2-cup measuring cup. Once oil is hot, remove crab cake from measuring cup to saute pan while maintaining its cylindrical shape. Cook on both sides for approximately 3 minutes per side, or until outsides are golden brown and inside of crab cake is hot. Keep warm and repeat process until all crab cakes are cooked.

To serve, plate with a dollop of **Horseradish Aioli** and a small garnish of dressed greens.

Horseradish Aioli

Yield: 1 cup

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 2 teaspoons Dijon-style mustard
- 2 tablespoons fresh horseradish
- salt and pepper to taste

For the Horseradish Aioli

In a medium-sized mixing bowl, combine all ingredients using a wire whisk.

MARLOW'S TAVERN

marlowstavern.com