

PIERINO JERMONTI
Executive Pastry Chef and Chocolate Maestro
T. Cook's and Royal Palms Resort and Spa

Pierino (Perry) Jermonti joined Royal Palms Resort and Spa in Phoenix, Arizona as Executive Pastry chef in 1996. Jermonti is the creative force behind all of the desserts, pastries and freshly baked Mediterranean breads on the award winning T. Cook's menu and the elaborate wedding cakes and pastries for weddings and special events held at Royal Palms. His brilliant signature work with chocolate has elevated him to be affectionately known as the *Chocolate Maestro*.

Prior to taking the lead position in the pastry kitchen at Royal Palms, Jermonti served as pastry chef at Lon's at the Hermosa Inn and the Wrigley Mansion, both in Phoenix, and at the Citadel in Scottsdale.

Born in Cosenza, Italy, Jermonti's love of baking began at age five. Inspired by his father, Jermonti learned the skills and techniques to make the traditional focaccia, flatbreads and rustic peasant breads of the region. "My father, in addition to being my first teacher, was my first idol. Perfection was the key to everything he did."

Jermonti's grandmother, his second idol, imbued him with a passion for the art of food—that which "cannot be learned but must come from the heart." According to Jermonti, "she taught me that all the education in the world cannot take the place of the love of baking."

Jermonti's family established many successful food service businesses throughout the Midwest, and at the age of fifteen, Pierino relocated from Cosenza to be a part of this growing family enterprise. His family and cultural background provided a rich legacy for his talent and the creativity he currently expresses in his work.

While baking bread is in Jermonti's heart, dessert and chocolate creations appeal to his artistic nature "It is the creativity of chocolate and what you can structure with it" that initially captured Jermonti's imagination. As a child, he dreamed of becoming an architect and today approaches his designs from a structural perspective. In fact, his third idol is Frank Lloyd Wright, who clearly inspires his art of presentation.

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The depth, range and versatility of the medium of chocolate offer him endless possibilities: a solo performance as a main dessert, the harmonies created with fruits and nuts, and the innovative interpretations constantly being explored as Jermonti marries white chocolate with a mild goat cheese. He begins with a drawing of his vision and then “builds his masterpiece” much like an artist chiseling a sculpture. His works of art can take weeks, even months, to design and create, and alas, just moments to consume.

He painstakingly designs imaginative gift boxes, picture frames, champagne buckets and floral arrangements using the finest imported chocolate. As a result, his recipes have appeared in many cookbooks and publications including the *New York Times*, *Pastry Art & Design* and *Chocolatier* magazine. His wedding cake artistry was featured in *Bride’s* magazine.

In 1995, Jermonti was honored as “Best Baker in America, Best Bread” by *Travel + Leisure* magazine and garnered the “Best Desserts” award by the *New Times* of Phoenix.

Featured in the November/December 2005 issue of *The Magazine of La Cucina Italiana* for his decadent holiday offerings, Jermonti was also featured in November of 2005 in the Food Network’s series, *Sugar Rush*, as one of the stellar creators of amazing, hand-crafted sweets and unveils how they are made, served and savored.

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