

CHEFCETERA

Saul Montiel Lives American Dream By Bringing Authentic Mexican Cuisine to NYC

Amidst the turbulent times and swirling debate over immigration, one New York City chef represents the path that can be achieved with a recipe that works and an inspiration. Chef Saul Montiel has accomplished his American

dream of four children, all of whom were raised by his single mother, Margarita Montiel Perez. As a young child, Montiel learned the kitchen skills

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Montiel is the Executive Chef of Cantina Rooftop, one of New York City's most popular rooftop spots. Montiel, now age 35, was born in Atotonilco el Grande, a small town outside of the city of Pachuca in central Mexico. Montiel was one

of four children, all of whom were raised by his single mother, Margarita Montiel Perez. As a young child, Montiel learned the kitchen skills that Montiel learned much from the cooks he worked with. Montiel's culinary skills allowed him to quickly advance in the kitchen. He began working at I Coppi, a Tuscan cuisine

continued on page 110

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A sampling of one of Chef Saul Montiel's delicacies at Cantina Rooftop



Saul Montiel, Executive Chef, Cantina Rooftop, New York City

Saul Montiel, from page 16

restaurant, and was responsible for its salads, pizzas, and desserts. He also worked at Amaranth, an Upper East Side restaurant that specializes in the fusion of Italian and French cuisines.

"When I came to New York, I determined to find an opportunity in the restaurant industry. I care what I had to do to get it, so I basically showed up and washed dishes at several restaurants," Montiel continued. "I hated it. I was washing hundreds of dishes and it drove me to tears of funny though how things work out as people wouldn't show up for work and the next thing I knew I was working on the cooking line."

It was at his next job, at the terranean restaurant Tappo, where Montiel had the good fortune of meeting Chef Jodi Williams, a television personality on Food Network. Montiel soon found himself making pizza. "The owners didn't know how I made the dough and before they knew it they had me making pizza."

Williams served as a mentor to Montiel, teaching him many culinary skills and reaffirming his passion for food. At nineteen years of age, Montiel worked directly under Williams as Tappo's sous chef. When Williams moved to Giorgio DeLuca of Giorgio DeLuca & DeLuca gourmet foods line, she invited Montiel to work with her once again. Montiel continued to work as Giorgione's sous chef until he was appointed executive chef when Williams moved to another restaurant.

"She had restaurants in New York and Tokyo. I was 19 years old and she taught me so much. But when she left and ownership asked me if I could run the kitchen. I said yes. I told myself that I would figure it out along the way."

After Giorgione, Montiel moved to SoHo's Lure Fishbar, where he

worked as sous chef to Chef Josh Cappon. After his work at Lure, Montiel was invited by Williams to work as the sous chef of Gusto Ristorante e Bar Americano, owned by restaurateur Sasha Muniak, the founder of

In 2017 he reopened his grandparents' old restaurant **Cantina Rooftop** on a new Location, making the decor vintage and rustic. Also with a new menu that reflects the old world Mexican cuisine and new world Mexican cuisine, he took old recipes and made them fun and delicious, adding some American dishes with a Mexican twist.

Montiel's recipe for success at Cantina has been based on authentic product and enticing price point. "We utilize authentic heirloom tomatoes that create a signature taste and combine that with signature cheese blends. We are in that \$12 to \$18 entree range that makes our menu a great value."

Chef Montiel has managed to accomplish his American dream on his own terms. "With a wonderful wife, two wonderful daughters and a successful restaurant, I am very lucky," Montiel concluded.

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