

KEVIN GILLESPIE

He won our hearts on *Top Chef* with his dynamic cooking style and passion for food. Now, slow food expert and new cookbook author Kevin Gillespie, executive chef and partner of Woodfire Grill in Atlanta, talks about the fire in his belly, pig trotters, turnips and the summer table.

TRADITION IN A TURNIP Tradition would tell you that turnips should be boiled until they're soft, and then mashed. But I'm about rethinking that; say, turning turnips and cabbage into a raw salad and serving them with winter citrus with hazelnuts—all food that's in season at the same time—to experience that food from a new perspective.

A TASTE OF PLACE The South has a dynamic and longstanding dining history. I bring those traditions, with changes, into the present—and make my own traditions. My philosophy is to embrace the ways things have always been done, but incorporate them into dishes that haven't always existed.

PIG-TASTIC For flavor, my favorite part of the pig is the trotters, but they're hard to work with. For usability and variation, I like the shoulder: from Boston Butt to a dried cured pork coppa, to picnic ham or a pork steak.

TOP CHEF The show taught me to be a better cook, to rely on my instincts and trust myself. I liked that people got to see the real Kevin. I never censored myself, and I approached every day with the mindset that I would make food that I believed in.

IN THE SUMMER Tons of fresh vegetables: I appreciate what comes out of the ground. Summer food should be light and bright, with lots of veggies, herbs and spices. I like the grill this time of year because it's a universal piece of equipment. You can put everything on it.

ON THE GRILL Steak! I'm a big protein aficionado. I love a juicy, grilled rib eye with roasted potatoes and a quick chimichurri or a very basic sauce.

NO COOK COULD LIVE WITHOUT A chef's knife, a slicing knife and quality olive oil.

SUMMER SIPS A lightly sweetened iced tea, either as a cocktail with fresh peach juice or by itself. That's how my grandmother taught me. I put the sugar and the tea in the pot at the same time, then add water and bring it up to just below a simmer for 7 to 8 minutes; strain and dilute with water.

REAL LIFE COOKING My book, *Fire in My Belly*, is written for people, not chefs. It's a book to cook from, a representation of what real-life cooking is all about, being inspired by ingredients. ■

A graduate of the Art Institute of Atlanta, Gillespie was a fan favorite on *Top Chef* Season 6.

