



Flavor in the Details: Barcelona

In his first year as executive chef of Barcelona, Jacob Hough has made small changes to yield a big difference

BY BETH STALLINGS



PHOTO BY TESSA BERG

Jacob Hough always wanted to work at Barcelona. The Pennsylvania School of Culinary Arts grad applied for a job as a line cook several times, he recalls, but never got hired.

So Hough took a job as a line cook at the Bexley Monk, biding his time until he got the call to take an opening at Barcelona. Hough would eventually work his way up from the line at the German Village institution to sous chef, a No. 2 position he held for two and a half years under longtime Barcelona executive chef Paul Yow, who left to open his own restaurant in 2012.

Now executive chef at the Spanish-inspired restaurant, Hough has made subtle changes to the Barcelona menu over the past year in an attempt to give it a deeper taste of Spain. And so far, the chef says, it's made a difference to customers.

"Diners have said things are better for all the right reasons," says the 34-year-old chef, who immediately amped up Barcelona's paella recipe—adding more spices, peppers and jalapenos to the base of the classic, aromatic Spanish dish—when he got the job last year. "It wasn't bad. I just wanted to give the flavor more of a boost."

He applied the same philosophy to the tapas menu, expanding the offerings to include 12 to 15 small plates on a tasting menu that rotates every Tuesday. Hough added dishes like a braised beef short rib with fried leeks and a Spanish blue cheese and mushroom sauce, as well as a crispy pork shank with smoked paprika and rosemary cream sauce.

It's like homey, comfort food, he says, but simplified. "Our food is simple, but with a lot of flavor,"

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explains Hough, who plans to add more game meats to the menu this season, such as boar and ostrich. "As chefs, we tend to overdo things. But with Spanish food, it's simple, fresh."

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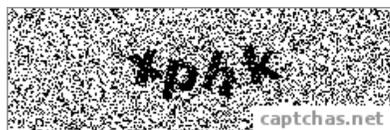
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