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Sweet n' Tart: Executive Pastry Chef Adriana Paveglio



Pennsylvania native Adriana Paveglio is one of the hardest working pastry chefs in Philadelphia. Part of the Stephen Starr empire, she oversees pastry for [Continental](#), [Jones](#), [Washington Square](#) and the recently-closed Angelina.

A graduate of [The Restaurant School at Walnut Hill College](#), her work will soon be appearing in [Art Culinaire](#), a hardbound, food porn magazine full of beautiful photography and culinary mega-stars. Adriana graciously submitted to a nosy Q&A and provided Phillylist with a recipe for her unusual Key Lime Pie. Tart and easy to prepare, the pie is uncommon in that the graham cracker crust is crumbled atop the filling. One could say that the pie is "deconstructed" but Phillylist loves its readers too much to use that word. Adriana serves this with a blackberry [coulis](#)

and adorable sugar cookies that resemble lime wedges.

1. Who or what inspired you to become a pastry chef?

I was subconsciously inspired by both my paternal grandmother and my mother to become a pastry chef. Being a pastry chef isn't just about baking, it's about taking care of people and trying to create a memory in their lives.

Growing up, Nonna always remembered to bring my favorite cookies – horseshoes – with her when she came to visit. I believe those cookies were her way of saying "I love you." Later, I took the recipe for horseshoes and used them on my cookie plate, renaming them "Nonna's Almond Crescents" in her honor.

I grew up having family dinners every night, helping make Christmas cookies, grade-school birthday treats, and assisting my older brother with the Thanksgiving fruit salad. My Mom has given me so many great recipes over the years; often, I'll be working on new menu items and have to give her a call for something I remember having as a child.

2. Do you prefer chocolate-based or fruit-based desserts? Do you think that the ubiquitous [molten chocolate cake](#) is the anti-Christ of the dessert menu?

I prefer making chocolate-based desserts because chocolate never goes out of season or style, using one type of chocolate you can make 3 items that taste worlds apart, and more people swoon over chocolate than fruit.

I don't believe the molten chocolate cake is the anti-Christ of the dessert menu. If there are consumers out there that still love that cake, it should stay on the menu. Sometimes items that seem old are just merely becoming classics.

3. Have you ever had customers complain about your desserts, or had one be particularly nightmarish?

Of course, there are always going to be some complaints. Sometimes they hit you like a hot, searing knife through the gut – "I can't believe they didn't like that!" and sometimes it's not such a big deal. I take all criticisms seriously, investigate the issue, and, if it warrants changes, I make them.

4. What "type" of personality is drawn to pastry?

The most dominant personality traits in the pastry world are perfectionism and enjoying a sense of order. Pastry recipes need to be adhered to precisely, desserts are more fragile, and stations are affected by chaos more. As a pastry chef, I enjoy my day more when I know where my measuring spoons are hanging, the microwave is kept clean, and no one has moved the boxes of bombes in the walk-in.

5. Any pet peeves about restaurant staff, both front of house and back of house (alcoholism, arrest warrants, no-shows):

My biggest pet peeve about back of the house staff is the mentality that dessert doesn't really count – no need to put desserts out in a timely fashion; it doesn't matter if a couple pieces of cake get eaten here or there, putting dirty dishes on the pastry station is okay.

For the front of the house staff, it's servers who only want to eat the desserts at pre-meal information sessions, but then don't even know what's in it to actually sell it to guests. I have been working on this with our staff, and, honestly, the servers have been doing an awesome job selling our additions.

6. What do you eat when you aren't at work? Do you bake or make desserts at home?

We had a big barbecue two weekends ago so I have extra hot dogs and buns in my freezer. What a mistake! Several nights this week, I've come home from work and made myself a hot dog, with mustard, of course. My fridge usually looks like a stereotypical bachelor's – eggs, yogurt, water, jar of pickles, lots of condiments, and butter.

I generally don't cook or bake at home much anymore. I got a new cookie book, so I am coaxing my boyfriend into baking cookies with me. Last week we made pecan raisin rugelach.

7. When you tell people that you are a pastry chef, what is their reaction? Does it help you get dates?

I get a lot of different reactions ranging from, "Did you bring cookies?" to "Wow, that must be so much fun!" to "Well, the dessert tonight probably won't be as good as something you make..."

Being a pastry chef has never helped me get dates since I'm not looking and I've been dating my boyfriend, Mike, since before this career. The funny thing is that Mike is not a dessert person. His friends can't understand how he can be so lucky to have someone to make sweets for him everyday, and it doesn't matter to him. I guess I can rest assured that he's not using me for cookies!

8. Nightmarish anecdote, name(s) withheld, during your career in the restaurant industry:

I haven't had any nightmarish stories happen to me that have affected me adversely. If there was something, I've probably blocked it out, so I wouldn't be able to tell you anyway.

9. Favorite ice cream flavor:

Butter Pecan, preferably [Hershey's](#) brand (not affiliated with Hershey's Chocolate)

10. Would your dream dinner be with [Sherry Yard](#) or [Jacques Torres](#), and what would it entail?

Jacques Torres; a sloppy cheeseburger, French fries, chocolate milkshake, and a session finger painting with melted chocolates.

Twisted Key Lime Pie

Yields 6 servings

Baked Layer:

1 can Sweetened Condensed Milk
3 Yolks
3 Limes, zested
½ cup [Key Lime Juice](#)

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

Whisk condensed milk, yolks, and zest together in a bowl. Add key lime juice and whisk until combined. Divide evenly among 6 dishes ([shallow 8 ounce portion](#))

bowls) – the filling will not come up to the top, leaving room for the granola topping. Place on a sheet tray.

Bake 10 minutes or just until center looks set. (If the sides of the custard are looking yellow and bubbly, the custards will be curdled.) Remove from oven and put in refrigerator to chill.

Increase oven temperature to 350 degrees for granola crust.

Granola Crust:

1 cup Granola (either homemade or store bought, dried fruit removed)
 ½ cup Graham Cracker Crumbs
 3 Tbsp. Granulated Sugar
 2 oz Unsalted Butter, melted

Place granola, graham cracker crumbs, and sugar in the bowl of a food processor. Grind until just slightly chunky. Add melted butter.

Spread on a parchment-lined sheet tray and bake at 350 degrees for 10-15 minutes, until golden brown. Remove from oven and cool. Transfer to an airtight container until use.

Chilled Layer:

1/2 pound Cream Cheese, room temperature
 2 Tbsp. Granulated Sugar
 1 tsp. Vanilla Extract
 1/2 cup Sweetened Condensed Milk
 1/4 cup Lemon Juice
 1 Lemon, zested

With the paddle attachment, beat cream cheese, sugar, and vanilla extract until fluffy. Slowly add condensed milk; continue beating until lumps are gone. Add lemon juice and zest last.

Divide batter evenly on top of the baked lime layer. Spread batter evenly. Wrap tray with plastic and refrigerate until ready to serve. Can be made 1 day ahead.

To Serve:

Mound a handful of the granola topping to one side of each dish. Place whipped cream atop the granola taking care not to cover it entirely. Garnish with fresh mint.

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