



Cooking from scratch at the Riviera Scratch Kitchen

By Taylor Cramer
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The Riviera Scratch Kitchen has been creating waves under the stewardship of Chef Travis Owen. With a passion for local flavors and a knack for innovation, Owen has transformed the Riviera into a beloved dining destination, drawing on his roots in the valley and a deep commitment to community and quality.

"It means the world to me," Owen said, reflecting on his journey with Riviera, which he has owned for nearly eight years. "I grew up in the valley and just to see Riviera and where it is today,

I couldn't do it without my whole restaurant family."

The success story of this establishment is not just his alone but a testament to the dedication of a team that has grown into a close-knit restaurant family. Among them are Business Partner and Front of House Manager Kimber Utton, Chef de Cuisine Brian Lee, and Sous Chef Dillionius Moore, all integral to Riviera's ethos and operations.

At the core of Owen's culinary philosophy is a simple yet profound concept: making food that tastes like food. This approach, centered on fresh, local ingredients, has set the Riviera apart. Owen

and his team's commitment to scratch cooking is a nod to tradition, while their innovative dishes keep diners coming back for more.

"We take local fresh ingredients and we cook from scratch, the way food should be made," Owen said. "

This ethos is vividly reflected in the restaurant's dynamic menu, which includes standout dishes like the Five Spiced Duck Leg Confit. This dish, a collaboration between Owen and Lee, exemplifies the fusion of global flavors and techniques that characterize Riviera's offerings.

Riviera Scratch Kitchen's story is as rich and varied as its menu. The space

has undergone numerous transformations, from a go-go dancing hall to a salad bar, before finding its current identity. Owen and his initial business partner, Jonathan Gorst, drawn together by a shared vision, added a unique touch with live entertainment. Although the COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges. The pandemic also sharpened the restaurant's focus on creating a local, unique, and fun dining experience.

Owen's ambition for Riviera extends beyond the plate. He envisions the restaurant as a place where diners can have immersive experiences, where the food tells a story, and where



dietary needs and preferences are not just accommodated but celebrated.

"We'll make something off the menu... and make sure that somebody's having a good time and enjoying what we can do," Owen said. "If we have to run down to Whole Foods to accommodate an allergy so that you can eat out with your family, we are more than happy to do that."

The restaurant's sourcing practices are a testament to its commitment to quality and sustainability. With herbs and vegetables from Osage Gardens, an organic farm nestled in New Castle, Riviera underscores the importance of local

partnerships in crafting its seasonal menus.

Owen sees the dining experience at Riviera as an opportunity for connection and education. Whether explaining the nuances of the ingredients used or the cooking techniques employed, Owen and his team are eager to share their knowledge and passion with guests.

"If you want to know why the eggs are the color that they are or want to have a conversation about chickens, I will get as nerdy as you want," Owen said. "I want it to be a memorable dining experience for everyone, so that in 10 years people can look back and say, 'remember that one night at Riviera

Scratch Kitchen where it was more than just a meal'."

The space itself is a reflection of Riviera's adaptable and innovative spirit, with Owen noting the adaptability of the restaurant's space for special events.

"We have had parties rent this place out for a night and bring in cornhole sets or pool tables," Owen said. "All things are possible as long as it fits within the space of the building."

As Riviera Scratch Kitchen continues to evolve, Owen's focus remains steadfast on the well-being of his restaurant family and the satisfaction of his guests. His vision for the future is clear: to continue exploring

new ideas, ingredients, and dishes, all while ensuring that every person who walks through Riviera's doors feels cared for and valued.

In addition to its culinary accolades, Riviera Scratch Kitchen has been recognized as a finalist in numerous categories, including Community Hero, Place to Work for 20 People or Less, Après Ski, Bar, Bar Food, Bartender (Sonia Walter), Cocktails, Dessert, French Fries, Outdoor Patio, Place for a Date, Restaurant Staff, Salad, Steakhouse, Vegetarian Restaurant, Late Night Spot, and Place for an Office Party, marking the Riviera Scratch Kitchen as a true gem in Glenwood Springs.