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Out of the Kitchen: Local Chefs Playing a Different Tune

There's a natural music in the kitchen—the rhythm of knives, the hum of the meat slicer, the sizzle of the grill. Some chefs keep rocking out after their shifts. These four are just as comfortable playing music as they are wielding a boning knife.

By **Nevin Martell**

Comments (0) | Published April 4, 2013

Vikram Sunderam Chef at Rasika and Rasika West End



Photograph by Jeff Elkins.

Instrument: Tabla, an Indian-style pair of drums.

His learning process: “If I hear something often enough, I can play it.”

Tip for tabla mastery: “You play with your hands, so you have to have skillful fingers.”

Influences: Indian tabla maestros Zakir Hussain and Alla Rakha.

Where he plays now: “I have a tabla set and a drum kit at home, so I definitely keep the neighbors up.”

What he listens to in the kitchen: Pop, rock, Bollywood tunes, Hindi music.

Aaron McCloud Chef at Cedar



Photograph by Jeff Elkins.

Instrument: Violin.

First restaurant job: Playing violin during Sunday brunch at the Gandy Dancer in Ann Arbor as a teenager.

Pay at the time: \$100 an hour.

Training: At McCloud's peak, he was practicing up to ten hours a day and spending summers at Michigan's Interlochen Center.

How performing informed his cooking philosophy: “A lot of chefs have this idea that they cook for themselves. If guests like it, that's great; if not, screw 'em. I'm the opposite because I cook for other people.”

Career high: Taking a class with violin virtuoso Itzhak Perlman.

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Victor Albisu

Chef/owner of soon-to-open Taco Bamba and Del Campo



Photograph by Jeff Elkins.

Instrument: Guitar.

Why he started strumming: “The first time I heard Guns N’ Roses’ Appetite for Destruction, I knew I wanted to make noise like that.”

Band: Spoiled Rotten (1990-92).

Band’s look: “Leather pants and cowboy boots with chains. I looked like Ian Astbury.”

Sample song title: “Choking on Glass.”

Career high: “We headlined the Fairfax High battle of the bands, and Dave Grohl introduced us.”

Eric Brannon

Executive chef and general manager at Ted’s Bulletin



Photograph by Jeff Elkins.

Instrument: Drums.

Band: The Borderless Puzzle (2001-07).

Style: “We did a lot of genre-hopping, but there were jam-band elements.”

Career high: “From parties in hotel rooms to super-late nights to X-rated activities, it was the life of the rock star.”

Opened for: Parliament Funkadelic and rapper Matisyahu.

Where to hear the band: “You can download a few concerts on [Archive.org](#).”

What he listens to in the kitchen: When prepping food, he listens to Wu-Tang Clan.

This article appears in the [April 2013](#) issue of *The Washingtonian*.

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