



Laurie Potts
Executive Chef
Wildhorse Saloon

The choice of culinary school over nursing school may seem odd, but for **Laurie Potts, Executive Chef at the Wildhorse Saloon** in Nashville, Tennessee, it was inevitable. Thanks to the owner of the catering company where Potts once worked, this soon-to-be head chef found herself immersed in a world of flavors and food creativity. She then pursued culinary school in Dallas and has never regretted the decision.

As the Executive Chef for the Gaylord Entertainment-owned Wildhorse Saloon, Potts is the mastermind behind the “Southern smokehouse cuisine” made legendary by the venue. She has a bubbly personality, a keen insight on food trends and rarely seems to have a bad day—qualities that have helped her transform dining at the Wildhorse Saloon into a truly memorable experience for all. What Potts is doing is not only winning over taste buds and appetites but is also winning national recognition from many culinary and hospitality organizations. Recently, Potts has led the restaurant to first place in the 2007 Purity Dairy Dessert Competition and to second place in the 2007 National Pork Competition, among many other competitions.

Once known primarily for steaks and fried pickles, Potts has evolved the distinctive “smokehouse” taste into other aspects of the menu. From succulent loin back ribs slowly smoked over hickory coals, pork tenderloin with caramelized tangerine onions, to pickled okra with herb cheese wrapped in summer sausage and Monkey Love banana cheese cake, Potts ensures that each dish reflects the flavors of her Southern roots. Besides handling menu development for the 1,700-seat Wildhorse Saloon, she also manages a staff of 45, controls inventory and consistently works closely with groups and clients through her customary thorough communication, standards and a personal rapport.

Potts began her career with the Wildhorse Saloon in 2004. Since then, she has had the opportunity to prepare thousands of meals for celebrities, VIP events, meeting groups, social functions and “regular Joes.” But it was a dinner for the Southeast American Culinary Federation’s annual convention that has been her most memorable experience. Being the chef in charge of preparing a meal for 600 of the

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Executive Chef Laurie Potts—cont'd.

nation's best chefs might intimidate some, but to Potts—known to have a fearless streak—it was a challenge she was excited to take. She sees each person in a party of any size as an individual with different likes and dislikes, which leads to different impressions. Her philosophy worked; they loved the food, as well as the presentation, giving her every reason to be proud.

The Wildhorse Saloon opened in 1994 and has since become Nashville's number-one dining and entertainment destination. What was once a three-level historic warehouse in downtown Nashville is now a 66,000-square foot live music and dance destination. As the largest per capita restaurant in Tennessee, servicing more than 2,500 parties annually, the Wildhorse not only serves as a restaurant but as a bar, concert site, dance venue and TV studio. Each year, more than 1.5 million people visit the Wildhorse Saloon to sample Potts's creations, dance or catch a concert.

Prior to her Wildhorse Saloon career, Potts worked for the Four Seasons Resort and Hotel in Irving, Texas and the Westin Hotels and Resorts in Dallas, which provided her with a global view and creative palate for cooking cuisines of all types. Following her hotel career, Potts worked in sports and entertainment outlets for eight years, which prepared her for the high-volume events she currently caters at the Wildhorse. As one of the few female chefs in that field, she had to work harder to prove herself, but with her sassiness, spunkiness and sophistication, she quickly earned respect from her male peers. While working for Levy Restaurants Sports & Entertainment, Volume Services America and Sportservice, she was instrumental in opening kitchens for Ford Field, home of the Detroit Lions; the Nashville Super Speedway; the California Super Speedway; and Nashville's downtown arena. Potts also had a hand in preparing meals for such high-profile events as the Belmont Stakes, the Breeders Cup, Super Bowl XXXVI, the National Hot Rods Association (NHRA) finals and Lake Placid World Cup events.

Potts derives much of her culinary inspiration from John McClean, the corporate chef for Levy Restaurants, whom she admires for his knowledge of food, vision, passion, palate and mentoring skills. She also credits Bernard Muller of the Four Seasons Resort and Hotel with inspiring her with his unending belief in her and in her talent. Her own proficiency and knowledge of food preparation and trends, coupled with her irresistible zeal, makes her an inspiration for those she encounters. When Potts is not at work, she can be found spending time with her son or doing anything outdoors. She enjoys long-distance cycling, mountain biking, hiking, water sports, winter sports and gardening.



Nashville