

**MICHAEL KRAMER**  
**EXECUTIVE CHEF, THE TASTING ROOM WINE CAFÉS**

Michael Kramer, the Executive Chef of The Tasting Room Wine Cafés in Houston, Texas, pursues every challenge with passion.

Outside the kitchen, the Los Angeles native maintains a frenetic pace. An athlete at heart, Kramer competed as a semi-professional cyclist for many years, and continues to ride extensively as a hobby. He can often be seen enjoying the outdoors with his loyal dogs, Buddy and Roxy. It is within the walls of a kitchen, however, that the chef pursues his true passion, emerging as a leader and an innovator of exciting and cerebral cuisine. Dubbing his style Modern American, Kramer's dishes meld classic French techniques with a distinctly regional focus, looking no further than The Tasting Room's own backyard, including South Texas, the Gulf Coast and neighborhood farmer's markets, to source premium meats, seafood and produce.

With the late 2010 launch of The Tasting Room in CITYCENTRE, Kramer is flexing his culinary muscle anew in a 13,000+ square foot bastion of food and wine experimentation. The Tasting Room's culinary realm spans from casual, European-style café to fine wine and food pairing dinners, with a particular focus on utilizing the finest local products available. Founded in 2003, the original Tasting Room location has grown from 1,000 square feet to over 7,600 square feet and has been recognized as one of the premier wine bars in the country. In 2006, the company added its second location, as well as its sister concept, MAX's Wine Dive. With continued expansion plans, Kramer is well positioned to help develop the culinary direction for the existing Tasting Rooms and future projects.

A graduate of the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco, Kramer's training with legendary chefs no doubt cultivated his energy and creativity. Prior to graduation, the budding chef worked with Roland Passot at La Folie, where he learned the art of butchering and studied the culinary great's deft use of seasonings. While under Wolfgang Puck at Spago, Kramer learned sauce-making and efficiency on the hot line. And at the Mansion on Turtle Creek, Dean Fearing helped Kramer hone his management skills and understand the importance of establishing synergy between the kitchen and the service staff – both critical elements of achieving the five-star dining experience.

In 1999, Kramer was recruited by McCrady's in Charleston, SC to serve as Executive Chef. During his time in Charleston, Kramer led McCrady's to become one of the city's most acclaimed fine dining establishments. The restaurant received numerous local and national accolades under his leadership, including the Di Rona Award for "Distinguished Restaurants of North America" and *Esquire* magazine's "Top 24 Best New Restaurants in America". Additionally, McCrady's was featured in such publications as *Food & Wine*, *Bon Appetit*, *Gourmet* and *The New York Times*.

Kramer's most recent kitchen command began with his move to Houston in 2007 to conceptualize VOICE – the signature restaurant in the Hotel Icon. His vision gave VOICE a uniquely Houston-centric inflection by initiating culinary trends rather than following the lead of the east and west coasts. After opening in April 2008, VOICE received numerous accolades, including *Esquire* and *Travel + Leisure* magazine's "top new restaurants in the country," *Texas Monthly* magazine's as the "best new restaurant in the state" and *My Table* magazine, the *Houston Chronicle* and the *Houston Business Journal's* "top restaurants in Houston."

Kramer joined Lasco Enterprises (parent company of The Tasting Room Wine Café, MAX's Wine Dive and The Black Door) in July, 2010. With his young son Evan in tow, Kramer enthusiastically set to work modernizing The Tasting Room's existing menus and designing the new CITYCENTRE location's kitchen, which will include a brick pizza oven, tapas bar, an open cooking display area, and flexible event spaces for corporate or private gatherings.