

# THE DAILY TRANSCRIPT

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*Q&A with Danny Bannister, chef de cuisine*

## Hyatt chef says consumers now focusing on 'responsible eating'



### Hospitality Beat

By Jada Thomas

Danny Bannister is the chef de cuisine at the Hyatt Mission Bay's signature restaurant Red Marlin.

**Q:** Who/what originally inspired you to enter the food industry?

**A:** My mother always wanted me to be a chef. I enjoyed cooking as a child, and she knew that. When I was in high school, she would mention culinary school. I never took it seriously until I was 20 and I got a part-time college job at the Bacara Resort & Spa in Santa Barbara. It was the first time I had ever seen such a nice place. When I found out that some of the chefs were making over six figures, I said, "Sign me up." I was in New York City going to culinary school eight months later.

**Q:** What should someone

thinking about becoming a chef consider before signing up for a culinary school?

**A:** I would advise anyone thinking about becoming a chef to spend some time in a professional kitchen prior to spending any money on school. It's a demanding career. Find a local restaurant to get a part-time job at or at least volunteer there a couple days a week. They should also know that when the rest of the world is off work, you are working. This can be hard if your friends and/or family aren't in the hospitality industry.

**Q:** Besides cooking, what are some other daily job duties of a head chef?

**A:** There are a lot of other administration tasks that I have to do on a daily basis. I have to make sure we have all the supplies/food, make sure recipes are written, payroll is updated, and coaching my cooks, just to name a few. Actually, I wish I was able to only cook all day.

**Q:** Beyond price, how do you choose your food purveyors? Do you buy local, if at all?

**A:** We are part of a large buying group. Most of our purveyors are already chosen for us. This might sound like a bad thing, but actually it's not. Our produce vendor is L.A. Specialty. They are a great company that really focuses on small farms. They are a large company that has the resources to get the product from small farmers across California. Some smaller produce companies wouldn't be able to do that. It's nice that I can use many different small farms, but get it all from one place. There are some things I can purchase outside of the buying group, however. The

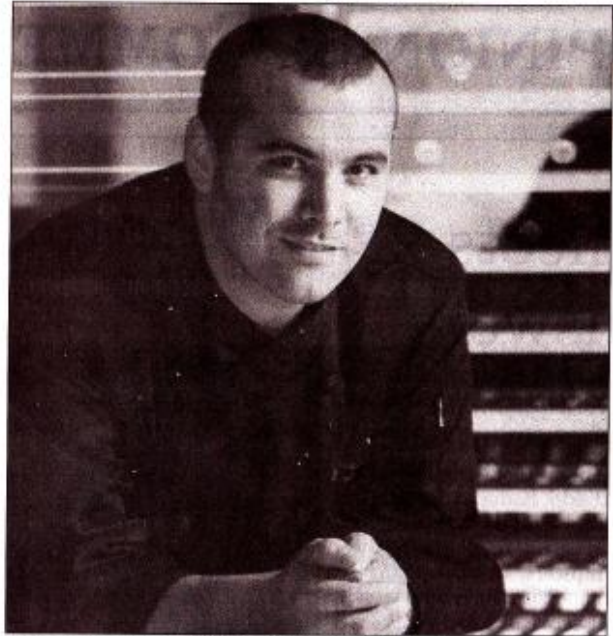
bread we use in the restaurant is from Con Pane bakery in Liberty Station. Best bread in San Diego! No question.

**Q:** What is the most essential item in your kitchen?

**A:** Salt. Hands down. Everything you cook needs salt. Even desserts need salt. Make sure it's kosher salt, too. None of the iodized salt.

**Q:** What are some of the challenges you have faced as head chef of Red Marlin, and how have they made you and the restaurant better?

**A:** I think I have faced the same challenges as most of the other restaurants in America. People are watching their wallet more than ever, and they still expect the same



Danny Bannister, chef de cuisine at Red Marlin

level of quality. It's a fine balancing act between providing quality in a responsible manner, providing a great work environment for our staff and

ing the right decision whether it is at a nice restaurant or at the grocery store.

Connect with Bannister via Twitter @HyattMissionBay.

being profitable. I would like to think we are doing a good job at this. We are seeing more guests year after year without sacrificing quality one bit.

**Q:** What do you think the food trends for San Diego, and even the nation, will be in the next five years?

**A:** I really think that the restaurant and hotel industry in America is getting away from trends. People are refocusing on the truly important things. People now realize the importance in responsible eating and supporting the small farmers, fishermen and purveyors in their local area. In the next few years, more and more people will be mak-

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The Habit Burger Grill opened its first San Diego location this week in Mission Valley on Camino de la Reina.

The eatery first opened in 1969 and now has more than 45 restaurants in California and Arizona. A second location in Carmel Mountain Ranch is under way, and more locations are planned for the San Diego area.

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Eclipse Chocolat is celebrating its fourth anniversary with a dinner this Saturday. Visit [eclipsechocolat.com](http://eclipsechocolat.com) for more information.

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