

## TIM CREEHAN

Owner, Cuvee Bistro, Grill Plus® Instant Marinade and Great Events Center  
Destin, Florida

**A**s the owner of Destin Florida's Cuvee Bistro restaurant, Grill Plus® Instant Marinade, and the Great Events Center, Chef Tim Creehan is living the dream. Born in Hartford, Connecticut, and spending most of his childhood and young adult life in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, he discovered his calling at a very young age.

Creehan's impressive career in the culinary arts began at Steak & Ale in Baton Rouge when he was only 14 years old. Two years later, the pursuit of excellence led him to serve as Executive Chef at Joey's. Studying under Executive Chef Philippe Parola and then working side-by-side with John Folbe, he progressed to the position of Executive Chef at Lafitte's Landing in Donaldsonville, Louisiana at the ripe age of 19.

In 1998, Creehan opened Beach Walk, which has since relocated to the Henderson Park Inn. Prior to establishing Beach Walk, Creehan served as Executive Chef and founding partner of Destin's award winning Marina Café for ten years. In 2007, he reopened Copper Grill, and soon after, Bluz Grill & Bar.

In 1992, The American Culinary Foundation named Chef Creehan as one of the "youngest and most accomplished Certified Executive Chefs in the United States." In 1999, Cooking Light's Grandstand '99 selected Creehan as "one of five chefs in the United States to be honored as a Shining Star Chef." In early 2004, Creehan was selected as one of five "Celebrated Chefs" to represent the National Pork Council at various events nationwide. Not surprisingly, he has been voted Best Chef on the Emerald Coast six years in a row, paving the way for various upscale catering gigs via his Great Events Center in Miramar Beach, including the Sea Ray Yacht 50th Anniversary show, and the wedding reception of recording artists Amy Grant and Vince Gill. In May of 2010, Creehan reopened another local hotspot as Cuvee Bistro in Destin, which has since won numerous awards, including a 2011 Wine Spectator Award of Excellence.

Creehan is also a published author of three cookbooks: "Flavors of the Gulf Coast" (1992), "Simple Cuisine" (2004), and "Exceptional Taste, Tales & Recipes" (2010). Creehan's award-winning recipes have been featured on Emeril Lagasse's TV show and in publications such as Sysco's Menus Today, Restaurant Business, Cheers, Florida Living, Cooking Light, Sea Ray Living, Ford Times and Bon Appetit.

Commonly dubbed Destin's own "celebrity chef", Creehan regularly appears on various television shows, including as host of the Emerald Coast Chefs series. He's also personally cooked for a bunch of high profile celebrities, including Bruce Willis, Jessica Simpson, Rachel Hunter, Debra Winger, Cybill Shepherd, Timothy Hutton, and Jerry Jones.

Tim has instructed middle school students in the All Kinds of Art Culinary program and donated his time, food and talents for many charitable organizations such as Alzheimer's Family Services, Inc., SOS, the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society, to name a few. Tim's unfaltering energy and passion for the culinary arts along with his natural teaching talents are manifest in his cooking classes, his vanguard dining experiences, and the high esteem his peers hold for him.



**Chef Tim Creehan**

Tim Creehan lives in Destin, Florida where he enjoys sailing and exploring the journey of simplifying his life and his career.

*Do your Louisiana roots influence your cooking style?*

Absolutely! There was no better place in the world to grow and become a chef. Louisiana is America's only authentic cuisine and the seafood products are amazing.

*Please describe some of your most popular recipes.*

I have more than 900 original recipes including Smoked Tomato Soup, Seared Yellowfin Tuna, and Sea Bass with Mushroom Broth. I like the simple ones that are easy to execute, yet the results are just perfect.

*Chef, you have been affiliated with many of the Destin area's great restaurants -- Beach Walk, Marina Café, Copper Grill, Bluz Grill & Bar. How does the Emerald Coast inspire you?*

I love the water and the community. Great food defines and identifies a community, so adding to that identity inspires me every day.

*What is your "sizzle" -- for example, cuisine and food that are your signature or "specialties", unique food presentations or any new ideas that you are using?*

People fall in love with a dish, and they want to come back to share that experience with family and friends. If it's not the same, they're disappointed. I think people know when they dine with me, they're getting the highest quality made-from-scratch

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product, so for me, consistency and sourcing the highest quality product is the "sizzle" standard.

*Your list of awards and accolades over the last 12 or so years is impressive – DiRoNA, Wine Spectator, Golden Spoon, Bon Appetit, Cooking Light, TripAdvisor. How do you continue to develop unique and successful operations that that appeal to diners?*

I'm driven by being the best. I'm always committed to excellence. It's in my blood; it's part of my DNA, so it comes easy to me. It's a tricky balance in business as many operators are so focused on saving money and looking for the best deals that they lose sight; it's not always about the money. There is an immeasurable feel in a great establishment, and I think I have a feel for finding that.

*Is it a lot of fun cooking for high-profile celebrities like Bruce Willis, Jessica Simpson, Amy Grant, Vince Gill, Rachel Hunter, Debra Winger,*

#### Personal Chef to Jerry Jones, Owner of Dallas Cowboys

Beyond successfully tackling Northwest Florida's culinary gridiron, Destin's celebrity Chef Tim Creehan also serves as personal chef to Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones during his frequent visits to the Emerald Coast.

For Creehan, the result of the decade-long relationship between these two consummate professionals is nothing short of a game changing touchdown.

"Working for Gene and Jerry Jones has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life," Creehan says. "They treat you like family, and that makes the work fun. We have shared almost ten years together watching their children and grandchildren grow up. Spending most holidays together has created a real trust and loyalty."

In gratitude, Jones recently hosted Creehan's family and business partners at Cowboys stadium for the Kenny Chesney and Tim McGraw Brothers of the Sun Tour. "Tim has really become a special friend to our family over the past few years," said Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones. "Tim is first class on many levels, but his easy going personality and fun loving approach to his craft are what we enjoy just as much as his meals."



Chef Tim Creehan with Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones.

*just to name a few?*

It is, and I have been honored to do it for so many. The best part is that they are gracious simple people who want to enjoy a great experi-

*Cybill Shepherd, Timothy Hutton, Jerry Jones, Matthew Broderick, Danny Glover and Alan Rickman,*

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### *Please tell our readers about your creation – Grill Plus®*

Grill Plus® is a patented instant marinade and cooking sauce suitable for seasoning, grilling, sautéing, baking, broiling, stir-fry and frying. A non-stick coating I invented in 1997, it contains no trans-fat, carbs, or gluten, and it has low sodium and sugar levels, making it 60% lower in fat content than traditional marinades. At just pennies per portion, it is extremely cost effective. Grill Plus® currently comes in four flavors, and enjoys regional growth in both the retail and food service industries.

### *Tell us about your catering venue, Cuvee Catering*

We have a wonderful medium sized venue perfect for up to 100 guests. What makes it so special and unique is that it was converted

from a custom home, so it's an event center that doesn't feel institutional or hotel-resort style. It's a very comfortable multi-functional facility encompassing over 5,000 square feet, including a 2,000 square foot poolside deck. It also features two fully functional kitchens furnished with cutting edge technology from DCS by Fisher & Paykel, and integrated HD multimedia capability with a 100" big screen. Cuvee Catering offers award-winning cuisine and world class catering services onsite, in Destin or anywhere in the world.

### *Word on "the street" is you cook for the Dallas Cowboys family. Can you tell our readers about that experience?*

I have been honored to cook for them in Destin for ten years now. It has been a great experience, and we have enjoyed the relationship with the Jones family. They have been the

best celebrity client I have ever worked with and they are a first-class American family. Destin is very fortunate to have them as part of our community.

### *What dish have you created which is your favorite to eat?*

My version of the Creole staple, crawfish étouffée.

### *I read you participate with other chefs on the Asian Carp Invasion Solution. Please explain to our readers what this is and how to help.*

Phillippe Parola is my mentor and he is leading the country in facing a major threat to our waterways: the Asian carp, which isn't common carp or a bottom feeder. It's a plankton feeder with a very clean meat, but they are taking over the fresh water ways at an alarming rate, and it's believed they can adapt to brackish waters as well.

They can grow to over 20 pounds and leap many feet out of the water when motors are present, sometimes injuring boaters or even worse. These fish have been overlooked as a food source because of their bone structure, not the quality of the meat, which resembles crab-meat after it's been cleaned and steamed.

If we can harvest these fish, we can put fisherman and plant operators to work, but most importantly we can provide a low-cost high-quality fish to a global market which is struggling to sustain affordable seafood. Please support legislation and awareness of this issue that is dramatically impacting our waterways.

### *To what do you attribute your success in the culinary world?*

My success in the culinary world is due to an unending passion for great food and wine, and a philosophy that you can constantly learn more about food every day of your life. I rarely prepare anything the same way twice when experimenting with dishes, as I'm always looking to improve my technique.

I think the fact that I believe something can always be better, steers me clear of complacency and drives me toward a bar that is constantly being raised.

### *Any other interesting tidbits about your recent trip to Dallas or anything else on horizon?*

Being hosted by the Jones family at the Brothers of the Sun tour was a once in a lifetime experience that I will cherish forever.

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