

Evan Parker
Executive Chef, Strato 550

Evan Parker has cooked for weary rescue workers, well-heeled world travelers and locavore-leaning hipsters—distinct audiences and experiences that together have shaped his deep-seated sense of purpose. “This idea that food is a constant throughout the world, that everybody needs to eat and that food brings joy, that’s what made me want to become a chef,” he says.

A California native, Parker grew up in Houston and started cooking in his early teens to fill his summer days and fix himself lunch while his parents worked. Boredom and necessity led to a genuine interest in cooking. After high school, he moved to Austin to work as a dishwasher at a hole-in-the-wall bar and grill, then on the saute station at Satellite Bistro, where he was first introduced to classic French sauces.

At 20, Parker moved to Portland with his girlfriend (now wife) to attend what was then the Western Culinary Institute. While in school, he also was a line cook at Mingo, an Italian restaurant known for its handmade pastas and simple, seasonal food. He gained an appreciation for local, sustainable cooking and for the farmers who stopped in daily with their haul: freshly foraged mushrooms and truffles, grass-fed lamb, the first favas.

The economic downturn in 2011 led Parker and his girlfriend back to Houston, where he joined *Mélange*, a catering and events company, as sous chef and worked closely with his mentor, chef Louis Cressy. Parker, who eventually rose to executive chef, relished the creative work of customizing menus for large-scale events, from weddings to seated dinners for foreign dignitaries—even a Belgian princess.

One of his most formative experiences came in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Harvey in 2017 when he was called to help feed rescue workers at the Houston Emergency Center. The city was under water, but Parker and another cook made it to the center, where they cooked breakfast and lunch with limited supplies for 300. They did that for 14 days straight.

After seven years with *Mélange*, Parker returned to his restaurant roots in November 2018 as executive kitchen manager at *Tinys No. 5*, a beloved casual American eatery.

At *Strato 550*, Parker combines his management and catering experience, classical French training and a passion for refined, ingredient-driven, Mediterranean-influenced cuisine in a setting he describes in one word: beautiful.

He and his wife live in Copperfield, where they enjoy brewing beer, making cheese and cooking for friends and family.

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