

## **Craig Hopson**

### **Executive Chef**



In January 2009, Craig Hopson joins Le Cirque as executive chef. Classically trained in the kitchens of Paris, Geneva and his homeland of Australia, the former chef de cuisine of New York restaurants Artisanal and Picholine was most recently executive chef of One if by Land, Two if by Sea.

Growing up near the beach in Perth, Australia, Hopson began working nights in the kitchen of a local restaurant so that he could surf by day. He soon found himself enjoying the creative aspects of cooking as much as he loved riding the waves. Before long, he enrolled in a culinary apprenticeship at a local hotel and then moved around Australia working in several hotel kitchens of Queensland and Sydney.

Eager to expand his culinary knowledge, Hopson traveled to Europe. He spent a year in Geneva, Switzerland and then in Paris where he sharpened his skills in the prestigious kitchens of Restaurant Troisgros, Restaurant Guy Savoy and Lucas Carton. At Lucas Carton, Hopson met his mentor, the legendary Alain Senderens, who taught him the techniques of nouvelle cuisine, particularly that a classic dish does not have to stay classical. By experimenting with the juxtaposition of different flavors and textures, Hopson learned to add personal flair to traditional dishes.

Hopson eventually left Paris and decided he was ready to embark on a career in the United States. He held two positions with The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company – first as sous chef at Victor's, a fine dining establishment in the Ritz-Carlton New Orleans, and later as chef de cuisine at the Paris Restaurant in the Ritz-Carlton Philadelphia, which brought him closer to his ultimate goal: New York City.

Hopson met his goal after accepting a job at Artisanal, the New York restaurant known for its excellent cheese selection and French brasserie cuisine. Working under executive chef and Le Cirque alum Terrence Brennan, Hopson was quickly promoted to chef de cuisine, a position he next upheld at Brennan's Picholine. There, Hopson experimented with international ingredients to offer a fresh take on the restaurant's signature approach to Mediterranean cuisine. During his tenure, the restaurant received a glowing three-star review from The New York Times and two Michelin stars. Seeking a new challenge, Hopson left Picholine to join One if by Land, Two if by Sea.

At Le Cirque, Hopson continues to uphold the legendary restaurant's classical culinary style while adding his own modern perspective. By incorporating global flavors and techniques, he creates dishes that are both approachable and refined. His culinary philosophy is simple: provide guests with what they want, while adding a personal touch and memorable elements to each dish.

When entertaining at home, Hopson visits the greenmarket for inspiration and prepares dishes that are simple and ingredient-driven. When not cooking, he enjoys going to the movies and traveling.