



## EXECUTIVE CHEFS JOSEPH HICKEY AND GREG SMITH

Noble Rot's Talented Culinary Duo

| BY TRACY BEARD

**N**oble Rot restaurant recently celebrated its 18th birthday in Portland, Oregon. Owners Kimberly Bernosky and Courtney Storrs teamed up together in 2002 to create a restaurant with excellent food inspired by the wines they loved. The team hires chefs that share their vision. Today, Executive Chefs Joseph Hickey and Greg Smith co-manage the kitchen.



### A Bit About Noble Rot

The restaurant, located on the fourth floor of the Burnside Rocket Building on Eleventh and Burnside, offers a delightful panoramic view of the city, a charming outdoor terrace and a modest yet prolific rooftop garden.

Kimberly and Courtney share the responsibility of wine purchasing and consistently offer 40+ wines by the glass. Noble Rot was one of the flagship restaurants in Portland to offer wine flights paired with seasonal plates. Although the small plates and dinner options have expanded over the years, the wine program remains at the heart of each new menu. Executive Chefs Greg and Joseph change the menu every two to three weeks according to the season. Accolades speak for themselves, and in 2018 the restaurant's

incredible wine program was nominated as a semi-finalist by the James Beard Foundation.

### Chef Greg Smith

Chef Greg lived in Illinois. At the age of 18, he ventured to Atlanta to attend culinary school and then cooked in well-known kitchens in both Atlanta and Chicago. He came to Noble Rot in 2003, left in 2007 and returned in 2019 as the co-executive chef. In 2019 Chef Greg was featured on the TV show "Chopped."

Chef Greg likes to let the ingredients speak for themselves. He was one of the first people hired by Kimberly and Courtney. He enjoys cooking Northwest-inspired American food. Chef Greg said, "We like to tell the story of the seasons through our farmers, winemakers, fishermen

and foragers, and we try to keep a high level of synergy with the wine and food at Noble Rot."

He explained that when the team, which includes both executive chefs and the owners, put together a menu for a special event, they taste the wines and dream about the food that will pair best with them. They take a lot of notes, let the wines sit for a day, and then review their notes again. Later, they begin making lists. They reference their farm and kitchen lists looking at the seasons and determine what they want to cook. The process takes several weeks, and they like to let their personalities shine through.

Owner Courtney Storrs said, "Chef Greg is like a kid in a candy shop. His enthusiasm is electrifying, and his creativity is curious with

a profound understanding of where food comes from and how it is supposed to be used and paired with other foods and wines.”

**Chef Joseph Hickey**

Chef Joseph came to Portland, Oregon, from Dallas, Texas, in 2009. He boasts a varied background that includes jobs as a construction worker, caterer and rock and roll drummer. In 2003 he opened his first restaurant in Texas and a second one a few years later. In 2009 it was time for a change, so he picked up and moved to Portland. The owners at Noble Rot snatched him up before anyone else had a chance.

Courtney said, “Chef Joe is a machine. He is our nuts and bolts, and he has the Midas touch with curing, brining and aging meats. These two chefs collaborate along with a talented staff to produce some of Portland’s most sought-after dishes.”

**A Dinner Event at Noble Rot**

My friend, Laura, joined me for a fundraising dinner. Noble Rot and Argyle Winery joined forces to participate in one of the [winemaker dinners](#) for the 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the [Classic Wines Auction](#). Laura and I arrived to find the banquet room suffused with light. A pink glow emanated from the sun as it leisurely set behind the city. The terrace lights created a twinkling reflection on the windows making the room warm and inviting. Wine glasses lined up on the long table stood like soldiers at attention; and as the sunlight kissed each glass, a prism of color danced throughout the room. Lively guests entered and each one received a glass of Argyle Vintage Brut 2015.

Laura and I mingled with the other guests and discovered that many were regular customers at Noble Rot. We chatted as the staff served two different tasty hors d’oeuvres: crispy beet chips topped with carrot hummus and shaved radish and crunchy golf-ball-size arancini filled with smoky brisket and warm gooey provolone capped with a dollop of remoulade.

Before each course, Noble Rot’s Chef Joseph and Chef Greg described the upcoming dish. The salad course consisted of long strips of fermented carrots, crunchy snap peas, a generous portion of luscious burrata, lemon-pepita relish, puffed wild rice and a garnish of pea greens. Argyle’s 2014 Blanc de Blanc married nicely with the mild salad.

Chef Greg was quite excited about the pasta dish. The Dungeness crab ravioli were bathed in crab bisque and garnished with snap peas and pickled pioppini mushrooms. The Extended Tirage Brut 2008 stood up well to the pickled mushrooms without overpowering the delicious crab.

The main entrée, apple-chutney-filled lamb shoulder, was tender and succulent. A side of crispy potatoes, caramelized fennel and apple-fennel salad completed the plate. The Blanc de Noirs 2015 complemented the lamb and highlighted the fruity nuances of the apple chutney.

The finale did not disappoint. The chefs created a Basque cheesecake. It was mild with no crust and a burnt top that mimicked the flavor of burnt sugar on crème brûlée. The feisty Brut Rosé 2015 cut through the cheese and melded lovingly with the cheesecake. The cake rested on a bed of thick quince syrup that added a spicy yet fruity note.

Executive Chefs Greg and Joseph did a spectacular job with the winemaker dinner. They are both well-known and respected chefs in Portland’s culinary circle. If you ask the regulars, they will tell you that every dinner at Noble Rot is a delicious event. ◆

