

Chef Leonard Thomson ~Park Event Operations, Walt Disney World® Resort~

As Park Event Operations chef at Walt Disney World® Resort, creating magical stories through food is one of Chef Leonard Thomson's passions. "I love to find out the guest's vision for the event then incorporate themes into foods," he says. "We can fuse different cultures and tastes into familiar food, and whenever you can add a story behind what you're doing, it creates an emotional connection. What better a place to share a story than the happiest place on Earth?"



Chef Leonard lives to cook as well. This fact is shown through his rich culinary background which began at the American Culinary Federation Apprenticeship Program where he earned the Apprentice of the year title from the Central Florida Chefs Association. While attending his apprenticeship he began building a report for himself as a prep chef at Disney's Contemporary Resort. Upon the completion of his education, Chef Leonard earned a plethora of prestigious culinary roles within the company, and was even honored with Disney's coveted Partner in Excellence Award.

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Chef Leonard's love for creating stories started with his very own as a youngster growing up in Yonkers. He loved to challenge his cousins in homemade doughnut-eating competitions at his Italian grandmother's home.

"She made really good pizza, too," Thomson recalls. "Food was always associated with a good time. So the relationship was built between food and fun for me. I live to eat—it's one of life's greatest pleasures."

Today, Chef Leonard oversees Park Event Operations which extends into all four Walt Disney World® theme parks, two water parks, Downtown Disney®, and five additional Disney resorts. His team creates stories for more than a dozen events in a single day. Chef Leonard says comfort foods are all the rage these days, including dishes like mac-and-cheese with lobster and comforting sweets linked to childhood memories, like tie-dye cupcakes. "It's a blast," says Thomson. "The great thing about the events and convention business is that there's something different every day."

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