

**Tony Priolo | Executive Chef/Partner**

Tony Priolo grew up as a young boy cooking with his Sicilian grandmother in her Chicago kitchen, where he was taught the best food comes from a profound place of love and passion. He knew at an early age that he wanted to become a chef, getting his first job at 16 as a prep cook in an Italian restaurant near his home. He went on to graduate at the top of his class from the Cooking and Hospitality Institute of Chicago in 1989 and quickly immersed himself in Chicago's competitive Italian restaurant scene.

Priolo's simply prepared Italian food caught the attention of diners and media when he opened Coco Pazzo Café as the Executive Chef in 1997. The year following, he opened the flagship Coco Pazzo and later was made partner in both restaurants. Under Priolo's direction, Coco Pazzo was honored by many leading food organizations, winning the AAA Four Diamond and DiRona awards and receiving wide acclaim from both local and national restaurant critics. During his time with Coco Pazzo, Priolo also traveled to Italy regularly, working for a short time at Da Delfina, the Michelin two-star country restaurant in Tuscany with famed Chef/Owner Delfina Cioni.

In 2008, Priolo, alongside his partner Ciro Longobardo, opened Piccolo Sogno, their "little dream," providing regional Italian fare to Chicago. The success of Piccolo Sogno led the pair to open Piccolo Sogno Due in 2012, bringing coastal Italian cuisine to River North. Guided by his past experience and the notion of simplicity, Priolo implements a simple attitude of cooking using all of the senses and cooking from the heart. Priolo keeps his food "as Italian as possible," highlighting the very best ingredients, locally and sourced from Italy, and letting the food speak for itself without overcomplicating a dish. In line with Italian tradition, Priolo believes the best way to pair food and wine together is to understand the influence of the dish and where it comes from, and then choose a wine to complement the food.

Piccolo Sogno was named an OpenTable.com Diners Choice award winner in 2009, 2010 and 2015, a Chicago Reader Critic's Pick in 2012 and a Concierge Preferred Favorite in 2011, in addition to receiving the Best of Award of Excellence from Wine Spectator in 2012. Priolo is an Illinois Restaurant Association board member and known for his support of local charities including Meals on Wheels Chicago, St. Jude's Hospital and the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

As a small child, Priolo's dream was either to become a professional baseball player or a chef, choosing the latter due to his grandmother's passion for food. Priolo spent his days growing up cooking and traveling with his grandmother by bus, discovering the best ingredients in the Chicago area and cooking from scratch together. His grandmother's love of cooking taught him that if you cook with your heart and soul, then your food will be the best, and her influence has become his philosophy throughout his years of cooking. Priolo is honored to be a part of the local Chicago chef community and is proud of the national and international exposure that the city continues to garner. Outside of the kitchen, he spends time with his family, where he loves teaching his daughter about food as his grandmother did for him. He also continues to play baseball for fun, playing on local leagues and traveling to major league stadiums for tournaments.

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