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Class Notables

Marc Silverstein, SOC '81

The first thing Marc Silverstein admits as he slides into the booth at a favorite Bethesda sushi joint is that he could put on the end of a chopstick what he knew about cooking when he accepted the job hosting *The Best Of* at the Food Network a few years ago.

"I had to learn about food, which was one of the great opportunities of my life professionally," says Silverstein. "At first I fought it. But I learned. I was forced to really pay attention."



Photo by Jeff Watts

Hundreds of tastings and chef interviews later, the TV cohost of the *The Best Of* and Discovery Channel's *Go Ahead, Make My Dinner!* and Emmy award-winning former consumer reporter can now explain the difference between a roux and remoulade. He can also recommend a restaurant or three in just about any major U.S. city.

Heading to Los Angeles? Go to Pink's Hot Dogs. "It falls into the category of dives," says Silverstein, but it's more than the food that makes it worth the trip. "People stand in line there any time of the day or night. There will always be a line, and there will always be celebrities in there along with regular folks, doctors and lawyers and 7-Eleven workers, and it's all very democratic. Everybody waits and everybody drools. They have the hot dogs specially made and they sort of pop or snap when you bite into them," he explains.

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In New York, it's a small family-owned Italian place called Geno—no 's'—on 61st and Lexington that caught his attention with fresh authentic food and friendly service. In Baltimore, Maryland, it's Nacho Mamas. "It is quintessentially Baltimore. You walk in and they have an Elvis on the front and it's done in Elvis, Johnny Unitas, and Christmas decor," he says.

If it's not already evident, it's not the fanciest, or most famous restaurants that garner Silverstein's respect. It's their stories. Sure, he wants and appreciates great food, service, and atmosphere like the rest of us. He names several D.C. favorites in a recent article featuring him in the *D.C. Visitor's Guide* (Silverstein, his wife, WJLA ABC-7 medical reporter Kathy Fowler, and children, Spencer, 5, and Lexy, 2, are all pictured in the article).

But it's Charlie Palmer's steakhouse on Capitol Hill he raves about. "It's cool, it's very friendly, and very comfortable," he says. Plus, "Charlie Palmer is one of these unexpected benefits—a really nice guy," adds Silverstein.

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Perhaps it's ironic that when Silverstein sat down to tell AU about his favorite spots to eat just a few weeks prior to Hurricane Katrina, the ones he mentioned first atop his list were in New Orleans. He attended Tulane for two years before transferring to AU, and came to love—and miss—a long list of restaurants ranging from haute cuisine in the French Quarter to down-home, Cajun-country, mom-and-pop spots in neighborhoods no tourist would ever find.

Today, Silverstein's professional plate varies just like his food tastes. *The Best Of* still airs even though filming stopped more than a year ago, and Silverstein is waiting to hear whether the Discovery Channel wants to do additional *Go Ahead, Make my Dinner!* segments. You might find him hosting an event, signing copies of *The Best of "The Best Of"* book; or you might read an article he's written for DC Style and *Philadelphia Style* magazines. He also owns the PR firm On the Marc Media.

At the end of the day, Silverstein says it may sound schmaltzy, "but so much of historic America, people's backgrounds, food ties into everything we do. You learn so much about the entire world by sitting down and breaking bread." —**Melissa Reichley**

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