



CUSTOMIZED CULINARY SOLUTIONS™

THE RUBBER BAND DOOR KNOB

August 1, 2014



Customized
Culinary
SOLUTIONS

What can you get from CCS? Improved culinary operations, expert culinary knowledge, industry connections, networking through many culinary and food affiliations, an on-call mentor, a diverse culinary background and [more](#).

LIKE US ON
FACEBOOK



INDUSTRY NEWS



American Culinary Federation
Windy City Professional
Culinarians, Inc.

ACF Windy City Professional Culinarians, founded in Chicago in 2003, is one of the fastest-growing chapters of the American Culinary Federation (ACF). Click [here](#) for more information.

A Hole in the Wall

Do I have a knack for this stuff, or does it just find me when I am not looking for something in particular? I always find little places to eat or have food experiences that get imbedded in my food consciousness. It is my definition of a "hole in the wall."

I thought I was being good on my family vacation. I decided that I would follow the typical routes and do the "tourist" thing, staying to the closest food places and accepting what they served. I was also contemplating the usual places, or "traps," an out-of-towner would typically go to eat. Being in "Bean Town," a town where I worked and in the state where I was born, I figured I would be able to make the best selections...all while not doing the inevitable of dragging my family down back streets or taking them on one-hour drives to go to obscure places I had heard of through a foodie's underground network.

Walking the Freedom Trail in the north end of Boston, we hit Mike's Pastries for the cannoli, "a tradition," and since we had had a small breakfast at Fanueil Hall (the original "food court," if I don't mind mentioning), this would hold us over until we found a place to eat. Then, as I looked around, I saw this small black sign high up on a side alley wall. It was a little Diagon Alley-ish, but so what. All it said was "Sandwiches, Fresh Bread." No logo, neon lights or expensive graphics. I passed by it and suddenly stopped as I knew I had to turn around and trust my senses.

Boston being an old town and the home of the revolution, streets are tight and this was no exception. We tucked in to check it out. Could it be a waste of time? I didn't know, but you have to take chances on these "YOLO" moments. So, off the main path, there was this small little sandwich shop making these awesome looking Italian sandwiches. The smells were awesome, there were large stainless steel bowls on wheels filled with marinated fresh octopus and stuffed peppers, and strings of dry cured meats hanging from the ceiling. It wasn't old and dated but clean and sophisticated. There was passion and energy everywhere. However, I knew in my gut that this wasn't it, the place where the "hole in the wall" vibe was happening. This type of place has been replicated many times and in many cities.



Recipes, reviews and resources for everything food and dining in the Chicago area. [Check out](#) what's happening this week.



Eater is the source for people who care about dining and drinking in the nation's most important food cities, like Chicago. A favorite of industry pros and amateurs alike, Eater has an uncanny knack for finding out what's opening where, who's serving what, and how it's all going down. Find out [what's new](#) in Chicago.



Since 1982, Food Industry News has been Chicagoland's source for local industry news and home to the easiest way for buyers to find excellent suppliers they can trust. [Learn more](#).

I speed walked through with family in tow and thinking to myself, "been there, done that." Then, suddenly, there it was. It was an open door leading to a set of stairs that went down to a basement. Only one word above the door: Bricco.

What could possibly make me want to write about a basement? It was the children that were at the bottom of the stairs with pastries in their hands. Their mother had taken them for a treat, and they had smiles from ear to ear. This little trip to an artisan bakery in the basement of a house down a side alley will be a memory that they won't forget. The simple baked bread with chocolate and fruit fillings is not just a food, but a memory that will begin to form within their culinary souls. I wasn't going to pass this one up! Nothing fancy here, just unlined metro racks with fresh baked breads. So, what is one to do? The answer, of course, was to order the Prosciutto and Parmesan Ciabatta Stick. The entire retail space (you know, that space in front of the counter where you wait in line for something), was as big as the last step on the stairs. It was like ordering in a hall closet. This is not a bad thing. This was everything I had hoped for when I turned back around on that hunch. I found out later this place was just rated the best bakery in Boston!

With bread in hand, we left the shop, and it didn't take too long for my family to tear through the loaf. After devouring a large portion, Steven, my youngest son, says, "I will never look at bread the same way again." This is what a "hole in a wall" is all about. It is about a time, place and unexpected experience with food. I had this same experience when I was a child eating tomato bread at the local bakery in my home town. Tomato bread was a New Englander's attempt at foccacia, but it was a delicious memory. This is not an isolated off moment. There are thousands of these experiences waiting for you out there.

There is a great independent movie called **Jiro Dreams of Sushi**. It is about a sushi stand in a railroad station, and it has only 10 seats. It is the only 3 star Michelin-rated sushi restaurant in the world. It's a "hole in the wall" by most definitions, but, if you watch the movie, you will see a devotion to a product like no other. The message in places like this is that you don't have to be big or audacious to be great. It's about the singular focus of great food, regardless of the surroundings. So what is the definition by my standards? Well, there isn't one. You just know it when you find it. It is personal and uniquely yours, but the food, the meal, the drink and the experience is uniquely memorable.

This is what you may stumble upon, and if you do, stop and take a chance:

- Long lines, as they don't take reservations.

"HOLE IN THE WALL"

These places have the "hole in the wall" mentality:

- **Bricco Panetteria**
Boston, MA

- **Fathers Office**
Los Angeles, CA

- **Louis Lunch**
New Haven, CT

- **Oklahoma Joe's**
Kansas City, KS

- **Franklin BBQ**
East Austin, TX

- An unexpected spot that you would not necessarily think about.
- Limited menu, and they are sometimes out of food when you get there.
- No corporate identity, as they just don't care to create one.
- A singular focus on the one dish that they make extremely well for you.
- You got there on a hunch.

For me, if I was going to open a place with a "hole in the wall" mentality, it would be like this:

- It has to feel like a home and that the staff belongs there, welcoming you.
- Beer, beer and more beer. Get real! That's what you really want to drink with food.
- Food for you and no attitude. "We don't need to tell everyone how special we are, just come in and see for yourself."
- Humor and perpetuation of the "duh" decision. Think about that for a minute!

BREAD FLOUR

The bread flour you really need to use in your kitchen.



King Arthur Flour

This story will continue, as I don't want to just write about it, I want to live it. I get the greatest satisfaction of serving you a drink and a meal that will resonate with your culinary soul.

Cheers!!

- Chef John Reed, CEC, CCA, ACE

BEER

A nice choice for BBQ if you can find it on tap.



Tallgrass Buffalo Sweat

| Customized Culinary Solutions | | ccsjohnreed@gmail.com |

Copyright © 2012. All Rights Reserved.

[Forward this email](#)



This email was sent to ccsjohnreed@gmail.com by ccsjohnreed@gmail.com | [Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Rapid removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).



Try it FREE today.

Customized Culinary Solutions | 9450 Keystone Ave | Skokie | IL | 60076