

DAVID TRUBENBACH

Executive Chef, Asador, Renaissance Dallas Hotel

Dallas

Asador is a very farm-to-table restaurant; we use a lot of local produce and work closely with local farmers. Our partnership with our farmers is paramount to our mission. Rocky and Celeste at Tassione Farms, for example, are some of the best farmers I've ever worked with. They have a hydroponic farm, and whatever comes out of their gardens, we use.

Our menu changes regularly, depending on what our farmers are growing. This forces me to think on my feet, and that's where the passion really comes in — I like the day-to-day challenge of my job. Because I never know what produce might be coming in, I have menu categories that I leave generic. For example, Sautéed Greens and Grilled Garden Vegetables have a permanent place on the menu, but we don't provide descriptions of each dish, as they change depending upon what produce comes in.

Rocco's Garden Salad is another menu fixture, and the ingredients change depending upon what Tassione Farms is growing. Right now, it's made up of watermelon radish, shaved golden beets, carrots and a mix of pea tendrils and claytonia. I top that with a lemon-thyme vinaigrette and local feta cheese. The flavors are immaculate.

Watermelon radish is an interesting ingredient. It's the size of a tennis ball and when you cut into it, it looks like the inside of a watermelon — the outer layer is greenish and it's red on the inside. The flavor is more mild, not as spicy as the smaller radishes, but it's still crisp and clean.

Given the heavy Hispanic influence of our region and concept, we use a lot of peppers. A lot of them are dried, but I'm wanting to do more with fresh peppers like our shishitos. I quickly fry them and make a tequila-lime sea salt to mellow out the heat; they're a delicious snack. I'm also looking at more squashes and edible flowers, and I'm really big on greens. A new variety for us is wrinkle crinkle cress, which is almost the size of parsley, but it's got a bit more spice to it. ☺