



Brent Menke '92

Has been elected to membership in the

Beta Phi Hall of Honor Class of 2023

Brent Menke '92 received his Marketing degree from the University of Arizona in 1992 before embarking on his path to success in the culinary world. Today, he lives in Phoenix, AZ, where he owns Atlas Culinaire, LLC, and The Mick Brasserie. Brent and his wife, Benedicte, have two children: Jayden (17) and Melia (20).

Brent's path to the title of chef was a non-traditional one. After graduating, he found himself in Newport, RI, looking for a job on a boat for the summer before returning to get his MBA. One fateful interview led him into the rarified world of international yachting as an assistant in the galley and as a deckhand. With a brand new passport in hand and his first-ever visit to the Caribbean followed by a Trans-Atlantic to the South of France on a luxury mega yacht— he was hooked.

Chef Menke quickly found himself in a world where access to outstanding locally-produced foods was the rule of the day. “The yachts I worked aboard often tied up in European harbors where incredible local farmer's markets were held daily. My clients always wanted healthy meals and we never had a problem finding incredibly fresh, abundant, beautiful ingredients. I gained a great appreciation for the true value of locally-raised foodstuffs, and what a major difference high-quality components make in creating truly good cuisine.”

After an immersion into the world of yachts, jets, and international villas, Chef Menke had a rare opportunity to add formal training to his resume. Extensive studies at the renowned Culinary Institute of America in both the Hudson River Valley and Napa Valley— along with schooling in Asia and Europe— rounded out his education. In addition, he met his French-born wife aboard a yacht charter and has had vast exposure to classic French cooking and food traditions as a result— cooking for world leaders, billionaires, Russian oligarchs, and the occasional dictator.

Fast-forwarding to November 2011, Chef Menke found himself at the helm of a new type of restaurant created exclusively for the Pioneer Valley in Massachusetts. He had a simple philosophy: “We want to give people that intimate understanding of what they're eating and, at the same time, support our local farmers and growers, sustaining jobs close by and keeping local land in agriculture instead of losing it to development.” And from that philosophy, he created The Farm Table. This New England fine dining restaurant was hyper-focused on supporting local farmers and craftsmen. This building itself was a restored 1790s farmhouse, reimagined as a fine dining establishment based on the premise that it was always someone's home— and the guests were honored and welcomed as such.

The Farm Table was rebuilt from reclaimed timbers, repurposed foundation stones, and materials sourced from within 100 miles, utilizing the finest products New England's farmers could provide. The restaurant burst onto the local scene in late 2011, earning the Valley Advocate's distinction of “Best New Restaurant” after being open barely 100 days. The community embraced Chef Menke as their local celebrity with multiple speaking engagements, fundraisers, and Chef experiences used to raise funds for multiple charities.

But, like many chefs, the work kept him away from his family. He relinquished his position in late 2015 and decided to take his family around the world for a year. Traveling with only what they needed on their backs, Chef Menke took his wife Benedicte, daughter Melia, and son Jayden on an epic journey around the globe; eventually bringing them back home to Arizona after Brent gained much-needed perspective, education, and a newfound commitment to family and his craft.

Upon returning in 2016, he founded Atlas Culinaire— a restaurant consultancy that helps others create new recipes, control costs, improve efficiency in the kitchen, and develop systems to increase productivity and reduce waste. But inspiration struck again. Brent has now opened his newest creation, The Mick Brasserie; an internationally motivated small plates restaurant with French colonial flair, wine-driven, and refined intention. But more importantly, he has returned home.

During his undergraduate career, Brent was president of Arizona Allegiance honorary and Sigma Chi's ritual chairman. He has since earned the title of Significant Sig for his expansive success and has expressed great gratitude toward the chapter. “Sigma Chi gave me a standard to live by and a lifelong group of brothers to celebrate life with and to lean on in times of need. Sigma Chi helped me to be the man I wanted to be with the courage to follow the path less traveled.”