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PREGO NAMES MATTHEW ZOCH NEW PASTRY CHEF

HOUSTON...Dessert is the perfect ending to a delicious meal, and these fabulous finishes at Prego are now being created by Pastry Chef Matthew Zoch.

A native of Orange, Texas, Zoch has been creating amazing breads, pastries and tempting desserts for many years, starting during his senior year of high school where he worked at a French bakery in The Woodlands.

“While my friends slept in on weekends, I started work at 4 a.m. every Saturday,” says Zoch. “It’s definitely not the normal way to spend your senior year, but I just loved baking.”

Following graduation, Zoch studied pastry at Houston Community College under Eddy Van Damme, and also did an apprenticeship at Andre’s Pastry Shop & Cafe. He then moved to Houston Country Club and worked for two years with Master Chef Fritz Gitschner and alongside pastry chef Chris Leung. Zoch moved to Hubbell & Hudson to be head baker, creating all of the breads, pastries and desserts for the boutique grocery. After a short time in Virginia helping a friend to open a pastry shop, Zoch returned to Houston and joined the Prego family in late August 2012.

“I have spent this first month at Prego learning about the diners and what desserts get their attention,” says Zoch. “My goal is to add some new items alongside the longtime favorites, and put a new spin on a few items to keep things interesting.”

No doubt this will be the case from a pastry chef whose cooking philosophy is, “it has to be orgasmic.”

Zoch’s Coconut Tart with lemon curd, blackberry gelee, toasted fresh coconut and meringue is already receiving raves from diners. For fall and winter, he is adding Pumpkin Pie with cinnamon Chantilly cream and candied pumpkin seeds, and Caramel Apple Crumble with Bourbon ice cream. And from there, the sky’s the limit! He will also be overseeing production of the restaurant’s housemade breads, and housemade pastas including the favorite Cheese and Truffle Ravioli.

Zoch admits that he is a “chocolate freak,” and if he had to pick one favorite dessert he says, “I crave chocolate ice cream.”

Prego is located at 2520 Amherst in Rice Village (77005); telephone 713/529-2420. The restaurant is open daily for lunch and dinner and for brunch in Sunday, with an intimate private wine room for special celebrations. For more information, visit Prego online at www.prego-houston.com or on Facebook.