



Percy Whatley CEC
Executive Chef ~ The Ahwahnee
Corporate Chef ~ Western Region
Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts
Yosemite National Park, California

Percy Whatley has been the Executive Chef of The Ahwahnee since 2005. Yosemite National Park's AAA four-diamond, historic national landmark hotel is operated under contract with the National Park Service by concessionaire Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts at Yosemite, Inc. Whatley was named to his added position of responsibility, corporate chef for DNC's Western Region, in August 2010 and oversees aspects of food production along with human resource recruitment, training and professional development within Yosemite National Park, Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite and Wuksachi Lodge at Sequoia.

At The Ahwahnee, Whatley's menu reflects the best in California's seasonal produce, sometimes drawing inspiration from Italian, Middle-Eastern and Asian culinary styles and techniques. He has strong relationships with the farmers he sources from to procure local and organic ingredients.

Initially arriving in Yosemite in 1989, Whatley's culinary career began as a cook at the Hamburger Stand in Curry Village, site of the Park's first lodging facilities dating back to 1899. He utilized Yosemite's seasonal employment opportunities while earning an Associates of Science Degree in Business Management from The College of the Redwoods in Eureka, California, and then returned to Yosemite full-time in 1994, joining the ranks of The Ahwahnee, holding multiple kitchen positions including Chef de Partie.

In January 1996, Whatley enrolled at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America (CIA) in Hyde Park, New York. Whatley graduated with honors in October 1997. Soon thereafter, he returned to The Ahwahnee as Sous Chef where he honed his creative skills, developing special entrées and appetizers for the cultured palates of Ahwahnee guests.

In the summer of 1999, Whatley became the Executive Chef at the Wawona Hotel near the south entrance of Yosemite. In the spring of 2002, Whatley assumed expanded responsibility for all aspects of food production, dining room service and catering at the Wawona Hotel, including elaborate weddings, banquets and lawn barbecues. His wine and food pairing expertise became significantly enhanced when he was also assigned a major role in the selection of the hotel's wines.

Whatley returned to The Ahwahnee for a third term in the fall of 2003 as the interim Food & Beverage Manager. He soon accepted the position of Executive Sous Chef and began the use of organic and sustainable ingredients, which allowed him to be a major contributor to DNC Parks & Resorts' GreenPath® environmental management program.

Under the guidance of DNC Culinary Ambassador & Corporate Chef Roland Henin CMC, Whatley earned dual certification by passing the distinguished ProChef III exam proctored by The Culinary Institute of America certifying him both as Certified Executive Chef and Certified ProChef III.

For more than 25 years, The Ahwahnee plays host to more than 30 winemakers and multiple tasting moderators, all leaders in the wine industry, during Vintners' Holidays, an annual, four-week event held in the fall. During this time Whatley is responsible for writing menus for the gala dinner, pairing courses according to the wines each vintner is highlighting. This unique style of wine and food pairing is reversed so that Whatley creates a menu around the individual flavor profiles of each presenting wine. Whatley uses his extensive knowledge of viticulture to complement the subtleties of each wine with unique California cuisine.

Since the first Christmas at The Ahwahnee in 1927, *The Bracebridge Dinner* has been heralded as a Yosemite institution. A 17th century English holiday musical pageant featuring The Andrea Fulton Chorale is intertwined with Whatley's seven-course, themed menu via a procession-style service for 350 people.

In January, The Ahwahnee hosts its annual Chefs' Holidays event with 24 guest chefs from around the country. Guest Chefs have included James Beard Award winners and nominees, "Top Chef" contestants, "Next Iron Chef" contestants, and *Food & Wine* magazine Best New Chefs, among others. Whatley plays host to these chefs aiding them in executing culinary demonstrations and a five-course gala dinner for up to 250 people.

Twice Whatley has been selected as a semi-finalist for the prestigious Bocuse d'Or USA competition, an organization designed to train an American team of chefs which will compete for the prestigious representation of the United States at the Bocuse d'Or World Cuisine Contest in Lyon, France. The competition takes place before a live audience with other semi-finalists, while being judged on taste, presentation and kitchen organization. In 2010, Whatley received the coveted Best Meat Presentation award.

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