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ORLANDO BULLETIN

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Southwest Orlando Bulletin's 19th annual Best Mom in Southwest is **Summerport** resident **Leah Bergstrom**, who is pictured with her daughter, **Heather Mitchell**.

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CHEF SPOTLIGHT

A Passion for Culinary Expression

Robert Mason, executive chef at **Fiorella's Cucina Toscana** at The Westin Imagine Orlando, is one of the hottest chefs in Central Florida. He has made a strong impact on the Orlando market's culinary scene through his passion for artistic culinary expression. Having a constant drive to find a new angle and never satisfied with yesterday's accomplishments, he always strives for new inspiration. Drawing his influence from fresh ingredients complemented by an intriguing array of flavors from around the world, his eclectic yet harmonious cuisine brings a dynamic perspective to classic techniques. In the tradition of great artists, Mason can breathe new life into any menu.

Under his watch, Fiorella's Cucina Toscana has become one of the top Italian restaurants in Southwest Orlando. His signature dinner appetizer is the antipasto Fiorella, which is perfect for two and consists of prosciutto, melon, tomatoes, mozzarella, grilled artichokes, bruschetta, marinated olives, cured salami sausage and aged cheese. Entrees include Gulf shrimp scampi, *cavatelli alla vodka*, oven-roasted grouper with crab tapenade, *bistecca alla*

fiorentina, and *filetto con Gorgonzola*. For bigger appetites, a tasting menu offers selections from Mason's market menu.

For lunch, Mason offers 10 items on a \$9.99 express menu for diners who need to get back to the office in a timely manner. Menu items include grilled Caesar and Tuscan shrimp or chicken, rosemary chicken panini and Tuscan pizza. The price also includes a *mista* salad or cup of soup with each entree.



◀ **Fiorella's Cucina Toscana** executive chef **Robert Mason** constantly strives to find new angles and inspirations.

Previously, Mason was the executive chef at The Kessler Collection's Grand Bohemian Hotel Orlando. Under Mason's direction, the Boheme Restaurant was consistently recognized as one of the top-rated restaurants in the Florida market. Some of the accolades and awards the restaurant received during Mason's tenure include the AAA Four-Diamond designation; *Florida Trend* magazine's Top 20 Best New Restaurants and Florida's Top 500 lists; *Orlando Sentinel's* Foodie Award Winner/Critic's Choice for Best Power Lunch; *Orlando*

Magazine's Dining Award Recipient for Best Restaurant, Best Hotel Restaurant and Best Sunday Brunch; named in the Zagat Survey as a Top American Restaurant; and was inducted into the prestigious Nation Restaurant News Fine Dining Hall of fame.

Mason also garnered recognition when he was invited as a guest chef to the prestigious James Beard House in New York City and has called this a defining moment in his career.

Fiorella's Cucina Toscana, located at 9501 Universal Blvd. in Orlando, is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and happy hour is from 5-8 p.m. daily. Complimentary valet parking is offered. For more information, call 407-233-2950 or visit www.fiorellasorlando.com on the Web.

Fiorella's Cucina Toscana Bruschetta Classico

Bruschetta tapenade:
 4 large tomatoes, diced small
 1/4 red onion, diced small
 3 tablespoons fresh basil, cut into long strips
 3 tablespoons garlic cloves, finely minced
 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
 fresh lemon juice, 1/2 lemon
 salt and pepper to taste

Mix together all ingredients by hand. Refrigerate and allow to set 1 hour prior to use.

Crostini:
 1 baguette
 salt and pepper to taste
 extra-virgin olive oil to taste

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Cut baguette into slices about 1/2-inch thick. Brush with extra-virgin olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake for about six minutes or until bread rounds are lightly toasted. Remove and allow to cool.

Assembly:
 Place 1 tablespoon of bruschetta tapenade on each crostini. Garnish with Parmesan cheese or olives, if desired. ■