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Ever notice what's on the bookshelf at your favorite restaurants?
Owner-Chef Mike Wiley talks about

HUGO'S BOOKSHELF

interview Kristy Townsend

Why do you display these books?

Space in kitchens is tight. Ours is no different and just as is the case with ladles, spatulas and plastic wrap, we use books and we need a spot to put them. As Hugo's is an open kitchen, we "display" the books on two rows of shelving above our central kitchen island. After a handful of guests commented that they got a kick out of perusing our little library, we realized that our collection had aesthetic merits in addition to utilitarian ones.

Were all the books chosen by you?

Our library is a collection of cookbooks owned by myself, our cooks and some purchased for the kitchen. Occasionally, I'll become a little territorial and find a cookbook on the shelf that doesn't represent Hugo's well, but for the most part whatever is on that shelf is a fair representation of cookbooks currently in use in our kitchen.

Which are your five favorite books on the shelf?

Some of my favorite cookbooks currently on the shelf (in no particular order):

Harold McGee's *On Food and Cooking* is the great argument ender: What constitutes a gastrique? Which British colony claims Marmite and which Vegemite? Is there a difference between ghee and clarified brown butter? It's all in there.

The Art of Living According to Joe Beef: A Cookbook of Sorts by David McMillan, Frederic Morin and Meredith Erickson is a fantastic reminder of why we cook, why we

practice hospitality and how important it is to reflect on our customers, our community and our cultural history. Additionally, the authors give a wonderful description of the Canadian train system and expound on the distinction between summer lardons and winter lardons.

Manresa by David Kinch has been a source of inspiration for both the Hugo's and Eventide Oyster Co. kitchens. Apart from abalone, Kinch makes use of many of the same ingredients available to us in Maine. While the recipes are interesting and useful jumping-off points for our chefs, I've grown to appreciate Kinch's perspective, decidedly more mature than my own, on everything from sourcing ingredients to serving tasting menus.

Bar Tartine: Techniques and Recipes has been widely appreciated across all of our restaurants; even the pastry department is jazzed about it. We've gleaned lots of cool techniques from the book. Reading the book, I have the sense that their kitchen approaches food with the same curiosity that we do.

And finally, *Cookin' with Coolio* by Coolio "The Ghetto Gourmet." This weighty tome was gifted to us by a former cook and it is as absurd as it sounds. I like to leave it on the shelf just to make sure our guests are really paying attention.