

## DESTINATIONS

ESCORTED TOURS | ROCKY MOUNTAINEER

# Q&A

## DANIEL STIERHOF, EXECUTIVE CHEF, ROCKY MOUNTAINEER

INTERVIEW BY Katie McGonagle



### Q. How would you describe a typical day in the kitchens on Rocky Mountaineer's GoldLeaf carriages?

A. We get up about 4am and the bus will pick us up at 5am from the hotel. We start work on the train about 5.20am, preparing the croissants and pastries. We do a lot of our dessert baking first thing in the morning because it's quite tough to use scales when the train is moving. We come in early just to make the desserts happen! Then we check our ordering, as we can't just pull in and pick something up, and we get everything ready for our two breakfast and two lunch sittings.

### Q. How many chefs do you have on board?

A. On average there's about six to seven GoldLeaf carriages and we have three cooks in each one. There's a first cook, second cook and a dishwasher, and a sous chef for the train who quality checks everything. We have about 120 cooks in Vancouver, and there's a team of 30 in Kamloops, so when we're asleep, they'll be cleaning and preparing some of the food for us. We pre-wash all the vegetables off the train, so we don't need as much water on board.

### Q. How do you source your ingredients?

A. We use local, seasonal products from places on our route, so while you're travelling you get to see and taste those places. We have local ingredients like spaghetti squash and red peppers from Ashcroft,



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### DANIEL'S TOP TIP

Find out more about the onboard dining, upgraded GoldLeaf carriages and more news and selling tips from Rocky Mountaineer on its agent training programme Tracks. [rockymountaineer.com/tracks](http://rockymountaineer.com/tracks)

cheese from Calgary and beef from Alberta. Throughout the season, the vegetables might be totally different, because we get them while they're in their peak.

### Q. What's the biggest challenge of cooking on board?

A. It's the movement. I've been here for quite a while and when you get off the train, you still feel you're on it. When I cook anything at home, it's so easy in comparison. But I'm well adapted to what happens in here. It's simple things like when you're chopping vegetables and moving back and forth, you have to brace yourself with your leg. But we never run out of food! With our new GoldLeaf carriages, we definitely have more freezer space, and we have ovens that think for you – you can press a button that

says 'chicken' and it cooks chicken – though that's after a lot of testing. And the chefs love that the kitchens now have air conditioning!

### Q. How do you deal with dietary requirements?

A. There were always the classic nut allergies, but we also see a lot of dietary trends. We have adapted to that and made all of our sauces gluten-free to keep our menu the same, but adapt to a new age of dietary restrictions.

### Q. How do you decide what goes on the menu?

A. We come up with the dishes collaboratively. On the Seattle and

Rainforest to Gold Rush routes, there's a peach cake, but I may have stolen the recipe for that from my mom... She's going to come on the train this year for my birthday and I'm going to make her the peach cake. I'm very proud of that dish, and quite

a few others that we have worked together to design. I have focused more on pastry throughout the years so desserts are my thing.

### Q. How big a role does food play in the Rocky Mountaineer experience?

A. The food is definitely a huge part of the journey. To be able to hear those stories and be able to relate to them, through our food and through what you're looking at outside, is incredible. That's what makes it a once-in-a-lifetime trip, because you can't get that anywhere else. **TW**