

The Men We CRAVE



STEVE CARLSON

FOODSMACKDOWN.COM

As CEO and Founder of FoodSmackdown.com, Steve Carlson has combined a life's worth of passion and experience. Having inherited the entrepreneurial spirit from his father and a love and talent for cooking from his mother, Steve used his expertise gained from part-time restaurant jobs in college and over a decade in the computer technology industry to start Food Smackdown. Today, Steve lives in San Diego, California, with his wife and two dogs, where he runs a website that connects people with more than great food — he helps them find an unforgettable experience.





FAVORITE QUOTE

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

— Philippians 4:13



I grew up in Orange County, California, with my brother, sister, and parents. My mother, who was Japanese, taught me how to cook, and food was always an important part of our Japanese culture and at the center of get-togethers at my house. With my mom's guidance, I took a strong interest in creating my own recipes and trying new foods.

As an adult, my love for food led to a lot of eating out, but I always had to do a ton of research to find a restaurant that really had it all. I thought to myself, "Wouldn't it be great to visit a website that only featured the best of the best?" That's how Food Smackdown was born.

There are many great online resources for finding restaurants, but you have to sift through endless reviews to get enough information to make a decision. Food Smackdown takes it to the next level and alleviates the restaurant hunt. Only the best restaurants in a given area are featured, so you know they will be good. Food Smackdown's trademarked E.A.T.S. rating system

(Economics, Atmosphere, Taste, Service), high-quality images, and the caliber of the featured restaurants make the site unique. You'll know exactly what to expect, what it looks like, the cost, and even how to dress for the occasion. The site is also a place where well-deserving restaurants can gain notoriety.

After starting Food Smackdown, I visited hundreds of the best restaurants in a few months time and quickly became known by restaurant owners and media outlets as a premier food critic. In a short period of time, I was asked to make several TV and radio appearances, which quickly established Food Smackdown as a leading critic in the food industry. I am often invited by the top restaurants across the country to give opinions of their food. I am also approached by outlets, such as the Cooking Channel, to give my critique of food events and restaurants. I try hard not to be a food snob, but it's difficult not to judge when I am exposed to so much good food — it's hard not to eat the best.



"Orange County's Lime Truck is a bright beacon of good eats to the communities of Orange County. When in need of a bite on the go, the Lime Truck is hard to miss!"

— Steve Carlson

I love the challenge of finding the best places to eat — hole in the wall restaurants that people might not normally find — experiencing new foods and restaurants, and sharing it with others. I also enjoy learning the story behind the restaurant, how the restaurant owners and chefs were inspired to start their businesses. It's neat to see the true joy they take in serving their customers and creating not just good food, but an overall experience.

Another aspect of Food Smackdown that I love is bringing restaurants together for good causes and charities; I was recently involved in silent auctions for Big Brothers Big Sisters and Junior League. My long-term goal is to use Food Smackdown to continue to give back to the community. I love that I am able to experience different foods and restaurants in different locations, yet bring all the best together into one place and rally them for a good cause or an event. After watching them win the Food Network Great Food Truck Race, I approached The Lime Truck to participate with me on events and charities. I have kept in contact and have a great relationship with The Lime Truck, and they have supported Food Smackdown's endeavors in the food truck world, including an application Food Smackdown is working on to make life easier for food trucks and the consumer.

It feels amazing that people and restaurants value my opinion and appreciate all the hard work that goes into Food Smackdown. I love hearing that the website has helped someone find their favorite pizza place or sandwich place, or that a restaurant's business has increased 20–30 percent after being reviewed by us. Food Smackdown is different from everyone else because it goes beyond taste to the entire experience, leaving you feeling like you got more than what you paid for and wanting to return.



Lime Truck's Famous Pulled Pork

We use this pork in our Ultimate Taco and in our Carnitas Fries. We suggest accompanying it with guacamole, chipotle honey cabbage, and sour cream.

20 lb. pork shoulder
½ cup salt
7 oz. achiote paste
4 cups rice vinegar

1. Rub pork with salt and achiote paste. Put in a pan
2. Pour 4 cups rice vinegar over pork, and cover with foil.
3. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 hours.
4. Remove from oven and let sit in juices for 2 hours. Enjoy!

Tip:
Put a lot of love into whatever you do. Be creative, have fun, and don't be afraid to take risks and experiment. You just might create the next best thing and find it featured in **WHERE WOMEN COOK** or **FoodSmackdown.com**.



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Where Women Cook would like to thank Steve Carlson for his involvement in our Summer Issue. Visit foodsmackdown.com or [facebook.com/foodsmackdown](https://www.facebook.com/foodsmackdown) to learn more. Steve welcomes email at steve@foodsmackdown.com.



The Lime Truck's Smoked Salmon Quesadilla with Chipotle Crème Fraiche & Cilantro

1/4 cup goat cheese
1/4 cup cream cheese, room temperature
3 flour tortillas, 8-inch
1/4 cup shallots, chopped
1/4 cup piquillo peppers
3 oz. smoked salmon
1/2 cup crème fraiche
1 oz. chipotle chilies, pureed
1 oz. lime juice
Cilantro, roughly chopped for garnish
Salt and pepper to taste

1. Combine cream cheese and goat cheese, and spread 1/3 mixture over tortillas.
2. Divide peppers, salmon, and shallots onto each tortilla. Fold and grill until cheese is melted.
3. Combine crème fraiche, chipotle, lime juice, salt, and pepper, and put in squeeze bottle to drizzle over top. Garnish with cilantro.

