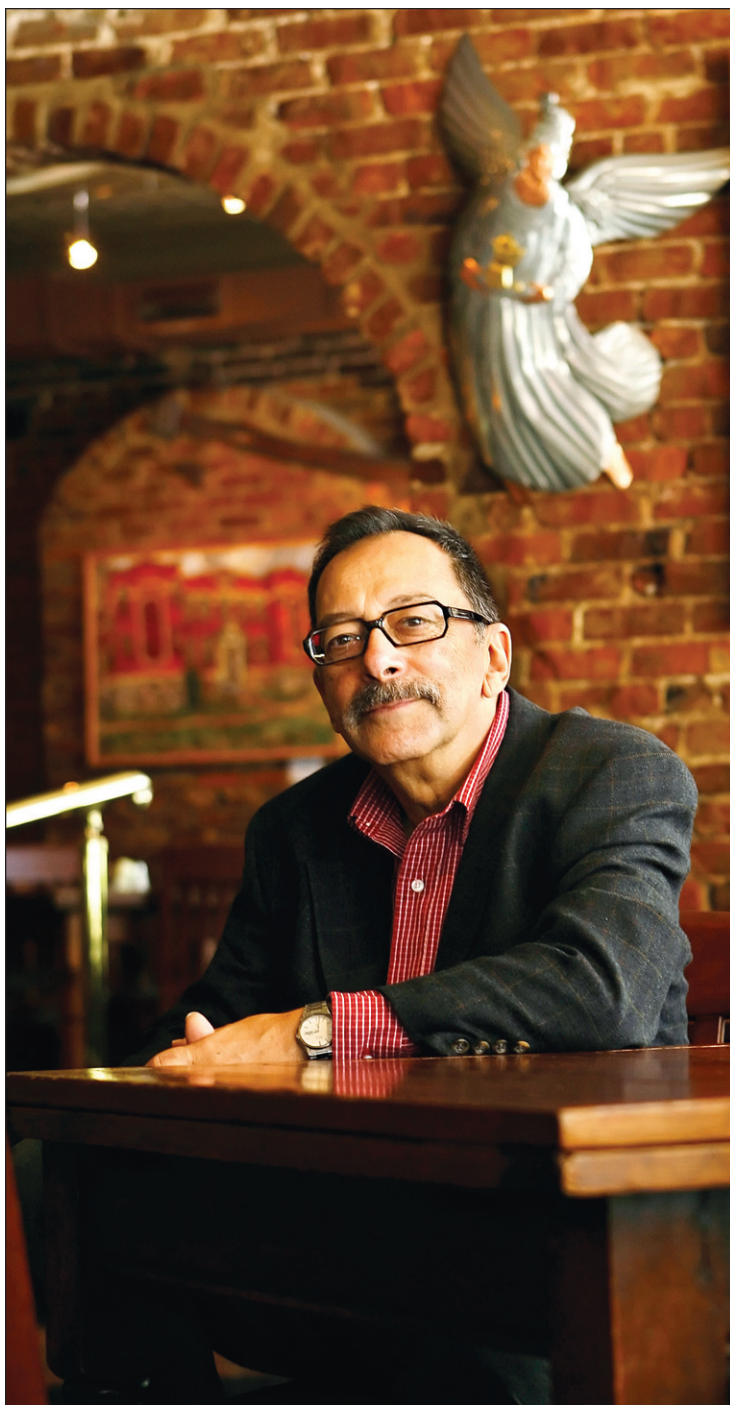


# CP City Spice



Josh Anderson/The City Paper

## Rick Bolsom OWNER OF TIN ANGEL

BY ALEXA HINTON  
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Rick Bolsom, a former music magazine writer and record label executive, composed words for years to make a living, but when it comes to his restaurant aspirations, he apologizes for his trite response.

"I had always, like so many people have said and as clichéd as it is, that one of these days I want to open a restaurant. I think everyone at one point or another says I will open a restaurant," Bolsom said.

The New York native grew up in Manhattan's Greenwich Village — where folk music blossomed in the 1960s — the son of a food warehouse manager and grandson to a quintessential Jewish grandmother who cooked fresh food, and often. Though music captured his career for the first part of his life, he turned to his love of food and its place in history and culture for his second professional reinvention.

When the brick abode on West End that once housed Bishop's Corner went on the market, Bolsom decided to make it his market.

"I had a big fat nostalgia for the place. Back when it was Bishop's, it was very much my hangout because my friends would come there, we'd see music, I lived up the street, and really liked the space in and of itself because it reminded me so much of my favorite restaurants in the village — it has that New York downtown feel to it. It was very comfortable to me," Bolsom said.

Bolsom and his wife, Vicki, turned the space into a cozy, French-bistro-esque restaurant and named it for

Rick's favorite but now bygone New York eatery and hangout, Tin Angel.

"[The New York Tin Angel] is a great memory, so it's kind of a salute to a great place that was an icon in its day," Rick Bolsom said. "I felt good about keeping a memory alive and going. People still come in and say, 'Did you know there used to be a Tin Angel in New York,' and I'll smile and we'll have a nice talk about the old Tin Angel."

Bolsom is a champion of independent restaurant owners like himself and was instrumental in the formation of Nashville Originals, a group of restaurateurs who have banded together to conquer the challenge of sustaining the independent restaurant as a feature and a fixture of local culture and community.

In the years since he opened Tin Angel, more than a half dozen major corporate chain restaurants have sprung up around him. Though it is a David versus Goliath battle, Bolsom says he is committed to the fight.

"I can look outside and over the course of a couple of blocks, I see eight giants from Outback to P.F. Chang's to Fleming's. I bet that represents 2,500 or 3,000 seats. That's a lot of seats. It seems the trend in the last five to 10 years is that the corporate restaurants are taking a larger part of the dining pie and indies are taking less of the pie," Bolsom said. "They have a right to exist, they aren't going away and it is not my intention to try and make them go away. My job is to be really good at what I do so that the people who really enjoy what we do have the ability to continue to enjoy it. That's how we stay in business." CP

### CHEF PROFILE

#### What kinds of food were you raised on?

New York food, and by that I mean a really broad diversity. New York, dollar for dollar, is the best food city in the world. Obviously there are good French restaurants in Paris, but for broadness, quality, diversity, you can't touch New York. It's an ethnic hodge podge, so my family ate European food, but eastern and western, Asian, certainly all the classics — Italian, German, Jewish, Polish. You could walk out of your house and say, 'What country do I want to eat at?' and the choices were endless.

#### Did you have a favorite restaurant?

Chumley's was a favorite hangout. Great history, great vibe, good burgers and cold beer. I love restaurants that are what they are. It never disappointed.

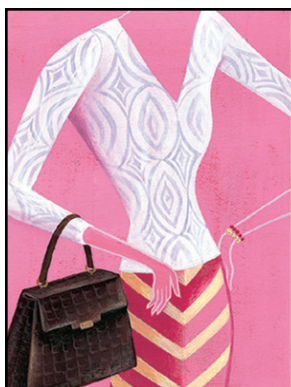
#### What are your earliest memories in the kitchen?

Do you know why there are so many restaurants in New York? The kitchens are so small. We didn't have a big kitchen, but our apartment had an average kitchen. My grandmother was the main cook. We had a multi-generational family — that was the norm. I remember

that she was the best cook in the world.

I'd get up in the morning when I was a little kid, and she'd already have been out shopping for the food she'd prepare for that day for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Everything was fresh. Maybe some canned things when peas were out of season, but essentially everything was cooked in house. She was a wonderful baker — sugar cookies; rugala — a traditional Jewish pastry that is made of cinnamon dough cut in a triangle filled with a fruity filling and rolled into a crescent shape and baked; coffee cakes.

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## CP City Spice

# Rick Bolsom

OWNER OF TIN ANGEL

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Every neighborhood had bakeries, so a lot of people didn't bake at home because it was so easy to step outside your door and get high quality baked bread, so people who baked at home, like my grandmother, did a few specialty things that she did beautifully as treats for us. I can literally close my eyes and imagine a half dozen things only she could make.

### How did you design the menu?

It has evolved over time. It changes seasonally with what's fresh and available. Beyond that, we try to feature food that we enjoy eating that is clean, light and interesting — that is our touchstone; we try to make our food interesting without being weird. And, our menu is a team effort between all of us — myself, Vicki, my head and sous chefs. We'll all sit down and say, 'Let's talk about the Fall,' or someone will say, 'I have a new recipe for pork loin.' Then we might play with it and develop it, have it as a special, look for feedback. There are very dramatic price increases in the area of food.

A key element right now is that grain products are being diverted from the food chain and into the fuel department because of a lot of pressures politically. People want to see if ethanol will be an alternative, so grains are diverted to ethanol production instead of feeding cows, pigs, chicken, which means grain and meat prices are rising. On the fish side, we are literally fishing out the oceans — the catch is getting smaller and the demands are getting larger. Everyone is predicting dramatic price increases across the board. It makes me feel bad, but it doesn't change anything. You have to try and be as creative as possible with what is out there. In New York, there is a movement of using meats you would never have dreamed of using. Creative chefs are saying, 'How can I take this brisket, which is a third the price of rib eye and make it a really interesting dish?'

### Is there a dish you are particularly proud of?

We have a dish called chicken schnitzel. Schnitzel is an Austrian presentation done with veal, but we do it with chicken. You take chicken breasts and flavor them — put them in an herb crumb and sauté them in butter. So, we have that on the menu, and it is something that is simple and tasty and enjoyable. About three years ago, we were all sitting around — my wife, me, my chefs — and invariably after cooking something for a long time, you want to make it different, change it, and we decided we were going to change it around — some of the flavor elements, the breading, the accompaniments. So, we did that, changed it on the menu, put the menus out, and within two weeks, I had gotten notes, letters and e-mails from customers that ranged from, 'Why would you change this?' to 'E-mail me when you have put the chicken schnitzel back on the menu. That's when I'll come back.' So, for me, it's not about a favorite, it's the attachment people get to things. That makes it fun.

### What is your favorite cookbook?

The basic cookbook I give is *The Joy of Cooking*. Yes, it is basic, but is always relevant. I also have a set of cookbooks, "The Foods of the World," the *Time Life* series published back in the 1960s. Each is dedicated to the cuisine of a separate country. I still flip one open and go, 'Oh, Russian!' I just find that to be a really marvelous set.

### What is in your refrigerator?

A meatloaf I made last night. I believe you should always cook more so you have leftovers. Jell-O, for a light dessert. Fruit — beautiful blackberries, they are so right now. Vegetables. A lot of condiments. A couple bottles of dessert wine in there chilling. V8 juice.

### What is in your CD player?

Paul Simon's new album. Mary Gauthier. I just found the CD of the best of Ian and Sylvia, a folk duo. My background is folk music out of Greenwich Village. I have a reggae CD in there, and Patty Griffith's new album.

### GRANDMA BESSIE'S CHOPPER CHICKEN LIVER

"Here's a recipe for something my Grandmother made often. As in all Grandmother cooking there is no measured recipe, you do it by look, feel and taste, but I'll approximate the ingredients as best I can."

"First a word about schmaltz (chicken fat). In these times people will substitute butter for chicken fat as the ingredient that binds the chopped liver together, it's not even close. You can buy schmaltz on the Internet, maybe even in the Kosher section of some markets, but it is easy to render your own and then you have the added wonder of the griebenes (cracklings)."

— Rick Bolsom

### Making the chopped chicken liver:

#### Ingredients:

1-pound chicken livers washed and trimmed of fat and connective tissue.  
 1 medium onion, coarsely chopped  
 2 hard boiled eggs, coarsely chopped  
 Kosher salt, table salt and ground black pepper to taste.  
 ½ cup (or what you have of griebenes)  
 Approximately 1/4 cup of schmaltz (chicken fat) or butter

#### Directions:

Sauté the chicken livers, sprinkled with a big pinch of kosher salt in a few tablespoons of fat until they begin to brown. Toss half of the onions in and continue to sauté until done. The livers will be firm and golden brown.

Put the sautéed livers and onions in a shallow wooden chopping bowl and begin chopping, adding the remaining onions and eggs with a couple of pinches of salt and pepper. The perfect tool for this is a half moon chopper, sold these days in cook shops as a mezzaluna. If you don't have a bowl you can do the chopping on a cutting board with a chef's knife.

Do not chop too much, you want a crumbly mixture not a pâté. (If you want a soft pâté for sculpting use a food processor.)

Add the griebenes (cracklings) you have made and chop them in (see recipe below).

Add more schmaltz as necessary to bind the mixture so it holds together when you pick up some with a fork. You will be chilling the mixture so don't add too much.

Taste as you chop and add salt or pepper as you wish.

Refrigerate the chopped liver for at least a few hours in a covered bowl.

To serve, remove from refrigerator 10 or 20 minutes beforehand and either put on a platter and surround with a bread or crackers of choice, or spread it on bread and serve as canapés.

Thin slices of radish make a great accompaniment.

Making the schmaltz & griebenes:

The skin and fat from a chicken (or more than one if you want lots) cut up in small pieces (remove all bits of meat)

Water to barely cover.

Put the chicken pieces into a heavy-bottomed saucepan or, even better, a cast iron skillet. Add water to barely cover. On low heat bring to a slow simmer and continue to cook until all the water evaporates and yellow fat begins to appear in the pan.

Pour the fat off, or ladle it out as it melts until it is all rendered and the cracklings begin to brown and get crisp.

Store the schmaltz in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator. It should last for about a week.

Use the cracklings