

**Rising Stars...New Chefs you've never heard of...yet...**  
**By Gwen Ashley Walters**  
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**Amanda Crick**

Pastry Chef, Tonto Bar & Grill and Cartwright's, Cave Creek

Age: 29

Hometown: Phoenix, AZ

Q: Favorite valley restaurant?

A: I'm more of a steak and potatoes kind of girl. I love Italian food, too, and there's this little place called Ninetta's [Passion Bistro] on Union Hills. It's a little mom and pop, with just a few tables. It's quiet and quaint – just the adults, not the kids.

Q: Most admired culinarian?

A: Eric [Flatt, chef/owner]. He always encourages me. He always supports me, and lets me have free reign on the menu. He's a great boss and a friend. I really admire him.

Q: Food Network or PBS?

A: Food network, but I really like *Hell's Kitchen* with Gordon Ramsey (on Fox). He's a character.

Q: Kitchen tool you can't live without?

A: My pocket knife. If I don't have my pocket knife, I feel naked. It's like a little box cutter.

Q: What won't you eat?

A: I'm not a big fish person and I'm not fan of sushi. I definitely do not like sushi.

Q: What can't you stop eating?

A: Chocolate. I'm a chocolaholic. The darker the better.

Q: Favorite ingredient right now?

A: Agave nectar. We use natural ingredients here, and agave nectar is all natural, and it's from a desert plant so it fits [with Tonto's southwestern cuisine]. You can use it just like sugar.

Q: Where do you get your inspiration?

A: Usually a spur of the moment thing – something I’ve seen or something I’ve read that makes me say, “I want to make that.”

Q: Secret guilty pleasure?

A: Strawberry ice cream. After the kids are in bed, I can sit down and eat a whole carton of strawberry ice cream.

Q: Savory or sweet?

A: Sweet. Hey, I’m a pastry chef.

Q: If you weren’t a chef what would you be?

A: I always wanted to be a chef ever since high school. I used to take all the special classes that involved catering, food or cake decorating. I guess if I had to choose something else it would be a marine biologist.