

## **It's a Family Affair for Mike Manoli, Executive Chef**

Mike Manoli is all about family.

He grew up in a large family in Brockton, MA, which is a major urban community south of Boston with a rich industrial history. He has seven brothers and sisters. He is the only sibling that has left the northeast. Even though Mike is happy in the west, he still misses the ocean and the fresh seafood available in that part of the country.

Mike has fond memories of watching Red Sox baseball games with his family. When the Red Sox finally won the World Series in 2004, he said he was sad that his parents weren't there to see the end of the 86-year championship drought. Before his dad died, he told Mike and his brothers that when the Red Sox win make sure you put something on my grave. Mike and his brothers honored his Dad's request and purchased a Red Sox World Series Champions sweatshirt to put on their father's grave.



***Denver Executive Chef Mike Manoli, with wife Lela***



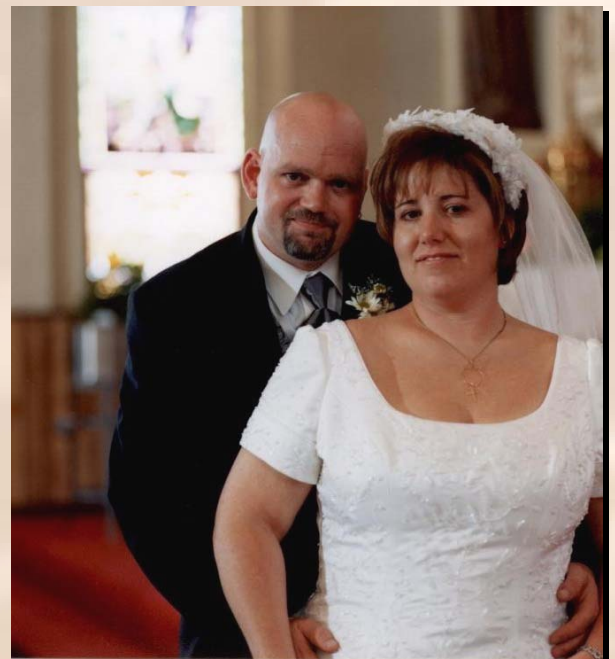
***Mike carving ham at the Track in one of his early years with the company***

Mike said his hero is his mother. "She raised eight children in a three bedroom house with one bathroom," he exclaimed.

He has worked for KM/SSA for 14 years. He thinks the company is like an extended family and has enjoyed working with same people over the years.

He's married to Lela, who also works for KM/SSA. They've been married for over five years, and have two children, Tommy, four years old, and Olivia, two years old.

They held their wedding reception at the City Park Pavilion, a site managed by KM Concessions. And the company catered the event, too!



***Mike & Lela's Wedding Day***

When Mike has free time, he enjoys spending it with his children, Tommy and Olivia, and his wife. “We’re really stay at home people, we enjoy being together,” he shared.

Starting a family is one of the best things that Mike said he has done. “Kids are so wonderful, they do funny things. They’re very entertaining,” he added. Even though Mike is used to creating eye-catching, yet delicious hors d’oeuvres and preparing elaborate meals for others, he claims cooking for his children is fun! Popular choices include pizza, chicken, burgers and mac and cheese.

His favorite holiday is Christmas. He enjoyed the family togetherness while growing up, and it’s even more special now with his own children. “It’s cool,” he said. Mike bought his son Rock´em Sock´em Robots, a boyhood toy that he enjoyed. This classic toy involves two contenders controlling the plastic boxers every move until the winner knocks loose the other’s spring-loaded head. Mike recalled that he liked the action and competition of the figurines, and knows his son will, too. Both he and son love the color red.



*Mike & Tommy with a fresh catch*



Mike was also a member of one of the world’s largest families – the U.S. Army. At the encouragement of his father, he enlisted the summer between his junior and senior years of high school. He completed his basic training during that summer. After graduating from high school, he then served three years as infantry soldier training others to use the M-16 rifle. He was stationed at Fort Bennington, Georgia, a self-sustaining military community supporting more than 100,000 military, family members, reserve component soldiers, retirees and civilian employees. He was disappointed that he didn’t get stationed overseas.



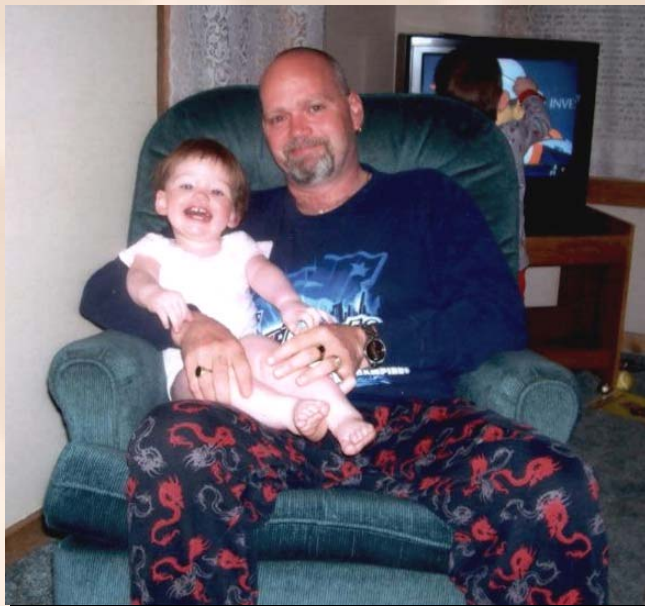
When it was time to focus on a career after the military, he followed in the footsteps of his grandfather and father, who were both chefs. Mike attended Johnson & Wales, a university known for its culinary program. He then went to work for the catering and restaurant department at a local dog track, which at the time was being operated by a sister-company of SSA known as SSA Visitor Services. After several years, he left the east coast for the west and the opportunity to manage the KM/East Arapahoe Concessions catering operations at Arapahoe Park horse track in the Denver area.

Mike is now a member of the Denver Botanic Gardens family. This location is popular for weddings, and Mike keeps busy working with the brides to plan unique menus. He claims he enjoys the pressure of the wedding industry, including prepping for tastings. Mike describes himself as a meticulous person when setting up buffets. "I'm obsessed with presentation," he added. "If the food looks good in the eyes of our clients, it's going to taste good." However, he shared he wished he had more patience at times.

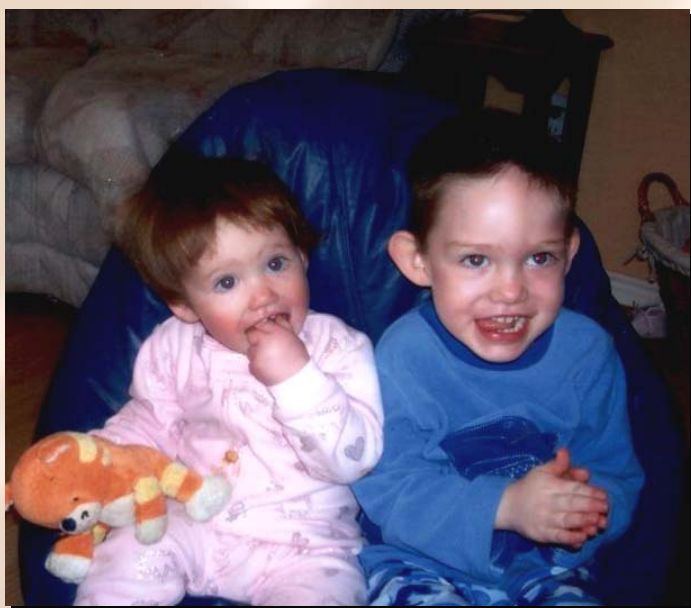
**Some of Mike's favorite things include:**

**Movie:** *Jaws*, a popular adventure movie that hit the screens in June 1975. This classic shark attack tale depicted the actions that occurred when a gigantic great white shark begins to menace the small island community of Amity. A police chief, a marine scientist and grizzled fisherman set out to stop it. Mike still tries to watch the movie at least once a month. He claims he can recite all the words from beginning to end.

**Entertainer:** James Cagney, who was an American film actor most remembered for playing gangsters in crime films and who won the Oscar for Best Actor in 1942 for his role in *Yankee Doodle Dandy*. He made over 70 films before he died in 1986. Mike remembers watching this talented actor in the old gangster movies as a kid.



**Mike at home with Olivia**



**Olivia & Tommy**

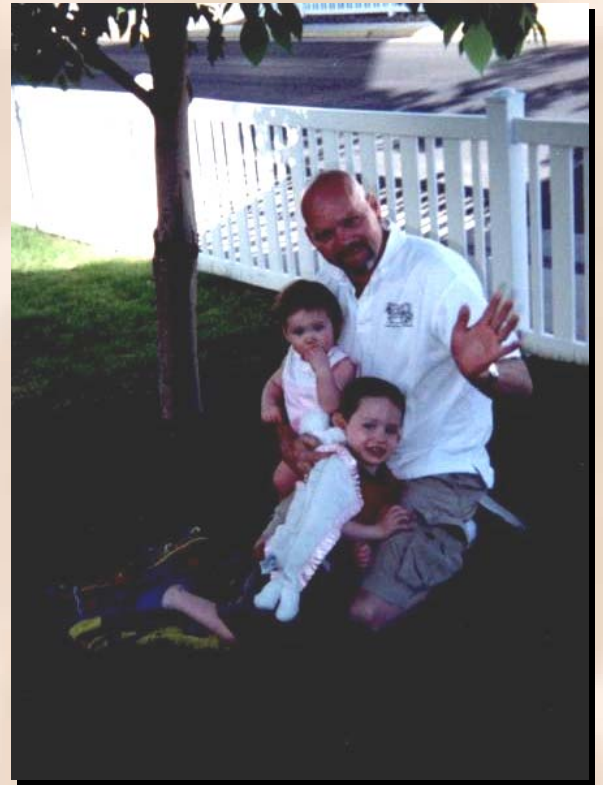
**Favorite TV Show:** *The Red Skelton Show*. This show was popular in the late 1960s. Red Skelton is an American comedian who was best known as a top radio and television star from 1937 to 1971. Skelton's show business career began in his teens as a circus clown and went on to vaudeville, Broadway, films, radio, TV, clubs and casinos, while pursuing another career as a painter. Mike has fond memories of sneaking out of bed when he was a youngster and watching this show from the staircase – out of sight from his parents. He has two years' worth of DVDs showcasing the talented performer. He also watches a lot of home improvement television shows.

**Books:** *How-tos*. He regularly visits a local bookstore and wanders through the how-to section. Mike said he likes to read about how to do things. He does claim that he tries to complete a project before he starts another. In the house that his family bought in 1998, there's new paint on the walls, tile on the floors and in the bathrooms and a renovated outdoor landscape. Mike shared that one of the most creative projects he completed was a car bed for his son.

**Sports:** Football. Mike is a fan of both the New England Patriots and the Denver Broncos. When they play each other, he doesn't root for either one.

**Food:** Seafood. However, he hates Brussels sprouts, those small leafy green heads that resemble miniature cabbages.

Mike shares that the smartest thing he has ever done was to get sober. He has six years of sobriety. This move encouraged Lela to commit to a relationship with Mike. They dated for a year, then broke up and reunited when Mike stopped drinking. They're now a family.



*Mike with Tommy & Olivia (above).  
Tommy (left) at the Denver Zoo.*