



Josie Le Balch **Executive Chef /Owner**

Josie Restaurant **&** **Next Door by Josie**

For over 25 years, Chef Josie Le Balch has been wowing the culinary community in Los Angeles and across the country with her progressive American fare that showcases French and Italian influences. Twelve years later, her eponymous restaurant in Santa Monica, Calif., is consistently named one of the best in Los Angeles and continues to excite legions of loyal diners while also attracting and engaging new guests. Le Balch's newest venture, Next Door by Josie, provides Josie regulars as well as a new generation of diners the chance to savor Le Balch's fare in a more casual arena.

The first time Josie Le Balch picked up a knife to prepare to cook, people were caught off guard. It wasn't a commentary on her cooking, but rather a reaction to seeing an eight-year-old wielding a 10- inch chef's knife. Age eight was also the age she was drafted by her father, Gregoire Le Balch, to chop parsley and chiffonade basil at his cooking school in West Los Angeles.

Le Balch was a rebellious teenager and whenever she was grounded, her punishment was "doing time" at Gregoire's restaurant. At first she holed up in the wine room; eventually she filled in for an AWOL dishwasher one night, then for a sick sauté cook. Thus a career was born. Her intensive education led to jobs at Ma Maison with Wolfgang Puck and at L'Ermitage with Jean Bertranou.

In 1986, Le Balch became head chef at the Saddle Peak Lodge in L.A.

Four years later, Francesco Antonucci approached her to lead the kitchen staff at his 250-seat Santa Monica restaurant, Remi, a move that won her an armful of awards including Best New Restaurant from Los Angeles magazine. In 1995, Le Balch returned to Saddle Peak Lodge at the requests of its new owner where she went on to earn the restaurant such top honors as the famed DiRoNa award for Food and Service. In 1998, she opened The Beach House in Santa Monica, and then, in 2001, Le Balch and her husband/partner, Frank Delzio, opened Josie Restaurant in Santa Monica.

Over the years, Le Balch's cooking has won a cadre of admirers. Caroline Bates of *Gourmet* proclaimed, "Le Balch can cook circles around most of her contemporaries." When Le Balch opened her eponymous restaurant, *Bon Appétit's* Tanya Wenman Steel wrote, "Los Angeles probably has more women chefs per square inch than any other city, and Josie in Santa Monica adds another great one to the list." Her cooking has the power to seduce even the most seasoned food writers, as *Los Angeles Magazine's* Patric Kuh demonstrated in Los Angeles: "It caused the reviewer in me to give way to the diner."

Since opening, Next Door by Josie has also been receiving critical nods including an exuberant thumbs up from Pulitzer prize winning food writer Jonathan Gold. Saddled side-by-side, Josie and Next Door by Josie offer diners the best of both worlds -- fine dining and casual full-service -- with only a kitchen separating the two.

Le Balch has been featured in such national media as *Bon Appétit, Food & Wine, Gourmet, Food Arts, Condé Nast Traveler, Wine Spectator, Elle, Esquire, Travel & Leisure, Art Culinaire, InStyle, and USA Today*, as well as the Food Network's "*Ready, Set, Cook*" and "*Ultimate Kitchens*," the syndicated "*Recipe TV*," and as a guest judge on Fox's "*Hell's Kitchen*" with Gordon Ramsay.

When Le Balch isn't working or mentoring and inspiring up and comers in her kitchens, she's tending to her suburban farm in Chatsworth where her chickens a.k.a. "the girls" gift her with eggs that make the best omelets in town.