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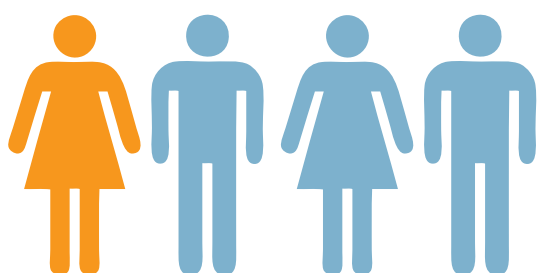
In a state bursting with vibrant restaurant scenes, Los Angeles reigns supreme. Hundreds of thousands of people contribute to the local restaurant industry, going to work each day to feed the city. Restaurants are fiercely committed to local communities. They

create and sustain jobs, are strong community partners, promote healthy menu options and contribute to neighborhood causes. The American Dream is alive and well in restaurants, which nourish neighborhoods and provide opportunities for people to thrive.

**1.42 million** Californians are employed by restaurants.

## Restaurants give back

- Since 1990, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Southern California has awarded more than \$3.3 million in college scholarships to seniors at Southland high schools.
- Starbucks partners with the Los Angeles Urban League to provide \$100,000 each year to improve education and job training for youth in the community.
- Taco Bell donated \$150,000 to the San Pedro Boys and Girls Club to open a new music recording studio.
- Yum! Brands has donated 1.7 million pounds of prepared food (\$9.5 million) to California communities.
- In partnership with local bloggers, area restaurants have raised more than \$12,000 for the Los Angeles Regional Foodbank since 2009.



**1 in 4 adults** had their first job experience in a restaurant.

**50%** of restaurants in Los Angeles are minority-owned.

**\$1 million** spent in California's restaurants generates an additional **27.2 jobs** in the state.

**283,000** Los Angeles residents work in restaurants.

**141,200** jobs will be added in the state by 2022.

**43,000**

eating and drinking establishments in Los Angeles and Orange counties.

#wfhe

## Industry pros eat up trends at trade show

Southern California's restaurant world will descend on Orange County Aug. 12-14 for the Western Foodservice & Hospitality Expo and Expo Comida Latina at the Anaheim Convention Center.

As many as 10,000 food trade players will come out to see the latest and greatest in foodservice trends, ingredients, equipment and techniques.

CRA members can take advantage of free admission to the event, which includes dozens of educational sessions, opportunities to meet with experts and see live demonstrations.

Ten teams of restaurant company executives and chefs will throw down at 3 p.m. Aug. 12 at the inaugural Culinary Clash: Battle Anaheim event at WFHE. The event is a fundraiser for the CRA Educational Foundation. Until then, make a small donation on behalf of your favorite participating restaurant on CRAEF's Facebook page.

## In the last 5 years,

Women owners have increased by **28%**

Hispanic owners have increased by **30%**

African-American owners have increased by **77%**

Sources: California Restaurant Association, National Restaurant Association

# TABLE TALK

How do you stay connected to your community? .....



"Maria's Italian Kitchen is dedicated to being the No. 1 neighborhood restaurant, and to do that you must participate in your community. We believe that giving back is the best way to show gratitude for our loyal customers."

**Madelyn Alfano / owner**  
**Maria's Italian Kitchen**



"We've helped cultivate the careers of many well-known chefs. Our apprenticeship program ... allows us to now reach a new demographic of future chefs. We want students to leave us equipped with an understanding of working in a professional kitchen and skills they can apply to whatever career they choose to pursue."

**Joachim Splichal / founder**  
**Patina Restaurant Group**



"We've spent 49 years in the community, and Pasadena has a lot of arts charities, school charities and others to support. As a small business I believe in giving a little bit to a lot of these charities rather than a lot to a little. Philosophically, that's the umbrella under which I operate."

**Michael Osborn / CEO**  
**Pie 'n Burger International**



"We donate quite a bit of food and gift certificates to community groups and philanthropic organizations in the neighborhoods where our restaurants are located. The community and everyone in it can only flourish if everyone is willing to get involved, no exceptions."

**Don Luis Camacho / owner**  
**Camacho's**



"We look at our community as on the ground, but we also are very involved in the 'virtual' community. Whether you're in a truck — whatever service industry you're in — relationships are key. So it becomes that magic cocktail of both the virtual and also being on the ground, knowing who your regulars are, knowing your business and market."

**Michele Grant / co-founder**  
**The Grilled Cheese Truck**



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**foodhandlerusa.com**



"Our newest location opened last month in Rancho Cucamonga. When planting new roots, it's important to us that we support the community where we do business. As part of our pre-opening celebration, we raised money for a local elementary school's library — 100 percent of proceeds from all pre-opening events went directly to Coyote Canyon Elementary School's Library."

**Chris Simms / founder**  
**Lazy Dog Cafe**



"This is our hometown. Being part of the community has always been important and when you help your neighbors, you help yourself to be better off. And it's important to help each other out. In addition, our contractor, financial planner and attorney are high school and neighborhood friends — it's like a big family."

**Ed Lee / co-founder**  
**Wahoo's Fish Taco**



"We are a fourth-generation restaurant. We were brought up to give back. We give day-old breads and rolls to homeless coalitions, churches, food banks and schools, who have projects to feed the homeless. I am personally on the boards of homes for the aged and a veterans group."

**Terri Bloomgarden / co-owner**  
**Canter's**



"We support soccer and baseball teams. We sponsor high school football and basketball with ads in their programs. We help out as many as we can since this is our community and we want to be good and generous neighbors."

**Phil Singerman**  
**president and CEO**  
**Norm's Restaurants**



"We're heavily involved with the Boys and Girls Club — I actually went to the Boys and Girls Club as a kid in Hollywood. I believe it's important to donate food and time. Restaurants are the original social network — people come in to connect and celebrate. Everyone who comes in the door is part of my community."

**Kevin McCarney**  
**president and founder**  
**Poquito Mas**

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# SHE LIKES IT HOT

*A new cookbook celebrating spicy global street food, a slate of bustling restaurants and three decades at the top of her game—but Susan Feniger is just warming up.*

STORY BY ANGELICA PAPPAS • PHOTOS BY TARAS GARCIA

**N**ot an iota of celebrity ostentation accompanies Susan Feniger as she buzzes into her namesake restaurant on a Friday morning, soy latte in hand. She greets prep workers, exclaims dismay at the lack of a special to honor National Fried Chicken Day and sneaks forkfuls from the tray of chilaquiles set out for the staff meal.

After a 30-year reign in Los Angeles' upper echelon of restaurateurs, Feniger dominated most of those with partner Mary Sue Milliken, running City Café, City Restaurant, Ciudad and Border Grill. In 2009, she branched out on her own with Street. Six cookbooks later, she's on the tail end of her first book tour for *Susan Feniger's Street Food*.

**Your new cookbook, and Street itself, is wholly inspired by your travels. How do you make travel translate in your cooking?**

My first real street food experience came when I was a sophomore in high school and I lived with a Dutch family in Holland. I remember my first bag of thick fries served with a big, huge dollop of mayonnaise. It was the first time I'd ever eaten something like that — and I've loved it ever since.

When Mary Sue and I opened Border Grill, we ate tacos all over Mexico. Then, I took my first trip to India where I was blown away with the flavors there. I

was instantly drawn to the cultures and the cuisine, and it shifted everything I thought about food.

**Between all of the traveling, how do you ensure customers still have a top-notch experience?**

The only way the restaurant business works is with a great team of people. My business partner at Street, Kasja Alger, is creative and a smart business person and great with people and can do it all.

This business is all about relationships — whether it's with staff or customers. One person, no matter who that person is, is only one part of

the mix. Our philosophy has always been that the dishwasher is just as important as the COO.

**Your partner, Liz Lachman, documented the process of opening Street in a video series that give the public a glimpse of the not-so-glamorous aspects of running a restaurant. What's the secret to success?**

It is a lot to juggle, for sure. We ran nonprofit businesses for a long time. You can be really busy and make no money. And that happens a lot in this business. Everything is about making pennies. You have to be really on top of food costs, labor costs, direct costs and indirect costs. Watching the bottom line is a huge part of being able to run a successful restaurant. It's very easy to be doing great sales and eat your profits. It's the very unusual place that is just lines-out-the-door, wildly successful. More often than not, it's all the little components.

**After three decades in the grind, is it still worth it?**

The wonderful thing about the restaurant business for me is you can continually keep learning and growing. My day is made up of so many things — between financial meetings, tasting and creating new dishes, the challenge of service when it gets really busy, dealing with someone who's unhappy,

dealing with someone who cut their hand, dealing with an overflowing toilet, doing media stuff. Every day is different and new and exciting.

Now it's just as much about taking advantage of opportunities to give back. We've done an event every year for the Scleroderma Research Foundation for 25 years, and I'm on the board of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center. We get so much from the community that it's important to give back, and it's a huge aspect of what we do.

**You opened Street in 2009, which was a dark time for the industry. What gave you confidence?**



I had a time in my life when my close friend passed away. Then three months later, my mother died, then my 18-year-old dog, then my father. It was a hellish year, but it was definitely a time where I felt like life is short, and I had wanted to do this for so long, so we went for it.

I had been asked for the first season of Top Chef Masters and I said no. Then I had just opened Street when I said no for season two, but my team here said I should do it. So I called Rick Bayless to ask what he thought and he said, "It was the hardest thing I've ever done." But I still said yes. We were in a crap economy, and I felt like things were getting worse, so I did it and it was enough of a jolt to make it worth it. Plus, I raised money and awareness about a cause I really care about.

**With more than 400 employees, what's it like to be the boss?**

As a woman and an openly gay person, maybe it makes the work environment more tolerant than a strict French kitchen. But women can be tough bosses, too. It's about finding people whose values and work ethic blend well with yours. I look for people who are respectful, who listen and care.

**The food truck movement here is undeniably massive. Why are some operators still anti-truck?**

Competition in the restaurant business is fierce. On one hand, trucks get more people going out, on the other hand it's competition, so I understand it. But the customer going to a truck, isn't typically looking to go sit down

and eat somewhere. It's just a totally different dining experience.

L.A. is such a car town and the trucks are actually improving that. On my drive home I pass a gas station at La Brea and Venice and it's unbelievable. At 11 o'clock at night, there are literally crowds. Who used to hang there? Nobody. Now 40 or 50 people are hanging out, creating community, cooking outside; and it's affordable and really cool.

*"I remember my first bag of thick fries served with a big, huge dollop of mayonnaise. It was the first time I'd ever eaten something like that — and I've loved it ever since."*

**You dedicated your cookbook to your parents. What did they teach you about food?**

My mother was a fantastic cook. She cooked a lot at the house and people always were over on Sunday afternoons. She'd do chocolate icebox cakes with lady fingers. When we opened City Café, she sent us six of them to serve. She made her own homemade French dressing and bleu cheese dressing. I still marinate my steaks the way she did with mustard, Worcestershire and tons of paprika. And my father — he loved to eat.

# WHY CRA?

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As a restaurant professional, you have a lot on your plate. Whether you're in need of opportunities to network, access to legal experts, quick solutions to complex issues, discounts on products and services or staff training options, the California Restaurant Association has what you need to run your business better.



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## Carlito Jocson executive chef / Yard House Restaurants

BY ANGELICA PAPPAS

**B**orn in the Philippines, and an immigrant at age 9, Carlito Jocson's work ethic wasn't exactly aligned with the average Orange County teenager. As his schoolmates whiled away evenings at malls and movie theaters, Jocson reported for duty in a kitchen.

By the time he was 15, he scored a position at Chez Panache in Fullerton and was promoted to head line cook as a high school senior.

"I needed to have a job," Jocson said. "That's a different mindset if you're an immigrant, especially. The restaurant business was a natural fit for me to earn money to do things I wanted to do."

Though his parents urged him to pursue a "big three" profession — doctor, lawyer or engineer — Jocson's passion was elsewhere. He abandoned his studies to pursue a culinary career, earning stints at Prego Ristorante in Irvine, Antonello Ristorante in Santa Ana and Zov's Bistro in Tustin.

When Jocson turned 30, he opened his own quickservice vegetarian restaurant, which ultimately failed. Despite the setback, he received a serendipitous call from former roommate Harald Herrmann (CEO, Yard House), with an offer to revamp the concept and menu at Yard House Restaurants. Fourteen years later, Jocson has

cultivated a new generation of culinary professionals.

"In the kitchen, the cream rises to the top," Jocson said, citing Yard House's Vice President of Kitchen Operations Rudy Buruca, an immigrant working as a prep cook at Yard House's Long Beach location. "He did a lot of work — more than everyone else. Eventually, anyone with a question would go to him for help."

Jocson took notice and offered Buruca the kitchen manager job. "He was a young man from El Salvador when he came to me and now he's married and has a home

### *"The American Dream is happening every day."*

of his own," he said. "He commands meetings and has the amazing confidence of someone who's able to do whatever he sets his sights on. If you have talent and charisma, it will take you places in this industry."

Yard House employee Mariano Perez is a Mexican immigrant who started out making salads as a pantry cook, Joscon said. Now he's a regional kitchen manager who travels the country to train at Yard House locations. He's been with the company for nine years.

"The American Dream is happening every day because we believe Yard House is a family, and we want to give opportunities to the people putting in the time," Jocson said. "We don't want to limit anyone. They deserve the opportunity to reach their potential — and to know what that potential is in the first place."



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# HEALTHY APPETITES

*As diners try to eat better when eating out, restaurants look for ways to lighten up*

BY ANGELICA PAPPAS

**M**ore Californians are trying to eat healthier at restaurants now than ever before. And with topics surrounding obesity and nutrition dominating the national conversation, the restaurant industry is making great strides in how it's serving patrons, changing up offerings, developing special menus and tweaking existing recipes to include lower calorie, fat and sodium counts.

"Restaurants are working to be a part of the solution and many restaurants have altered their menus to provide nutritious alternatives and adjusted marketing efforts to kids to focus on the healthier offerings," CRA President and CEO Jot Condie said. "Convenience is still a major factor in food selection for busy families, and if people can have access to healthy food in restaurants, it's going to make a real difference in their lives.

Many high-profile companies are adding options to their menus such as salads, yogurt, parfaits, fruit, oatmeal

and smoothies — as well as offering sliced apples, carrot sticks and milk with kids' meals.

Souplantation was an early participant in Kids LiveWell, a partnership with Healthy Dining to promote more healthful meal items for children, and found the program to be a natural fit.

"We are a place where people can come in and have a wholesome meal that they can feel good about," San Diego-based company's Vice President of Brand and Menu Strategy Joan Sharf said. "But we're always looking for ways to take the extra step."

Several years ago the company got rid of artificial trans fats, Sharf said, and swapped out soft serve for non-fat frozen yogurt. They are also using more

whole grains in pastas.

In May, former president Bill Clinton addressed the restaurant industry in Chicago at the National Restaurant Association Show, praising the work restaurants are doing to promote more healthful options to kids.

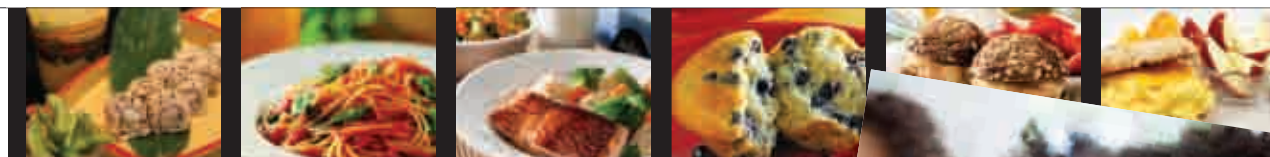
"Thank you for all that's being done through your initiatives to try to help our kids live a healthier future," Clinton said. "What works is what you're doing to feed kids and help them eat healthier. What works is cooperation." Since the NRA launched its Kids LiveWell program to help parents and children select these healthful menu options when dining out, the program has grown to include more than 100 restaurant brands representing more than 25,000 locations nationwide.

*"We are a place where people can come in and have a wholesome meal that they can feel good about."*

Joan Sharf / vice president of brand and menu strategy, Souplantation



SOUPPLANTATION HAS SWAPPED OUT SOFT SERVE FOR NON-FAT FROZEN YOGURT FOR A HEALTHIER DESSERT.



Looking for delicious and healthful options for your kids when dining out?

**Enjoy a Kids LiveWell meal!**

The National Restaurant Association created the Kids LiveWell<sup>SM</sup> program to help restaurants highlight their healthful meals and to assist parents with finding those options at participating restaurants. Kids LiveWell menu items are verified by the National Restaurant Association and Healthy Dining, a group of registered dietitians who have worked closely with restaurants for two decades, to meet specific nutritional criteria established by leading health organizations' scientific guidelines.

**Are you a restaurant operator interested in joining Kids LiveWell?**

Email Dr. Joy Dubost, Director of Nutrition and Healthy Living at [jdubost@restaurant.org](mailto:jdubost@restaurant.org)



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[yardhouse.com](http://yardhouse.com) • [rounditupamerica.org](http://rounditupamerica.org)

# RESTAURATEURS MENTOR TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE

BY RICK BOUGILLE

**C**alifornia restaurant operators are taking time to mentor and groom the next generation of foodservice professionals. In a sector expected to add approximately 1.4 million positions over the next decade, it makes sense for the future of the industry.

During a semi-retirement from Grill Concepts Inc. six years ago, Daily Grill co-founder, president and CEO Bob Spivak stepped up his involvement with local high schools. One of his visits took him to the Santee Education Complex in the heart of downtown Los Angeles., where he introduced a school-to-career program called ProStart to expose students to the hospitality industry.

"When I got there, I was confronted with a group of high school students, some of whom were placed in the program merely on the advice of their counselors," he said. "There

was a lack of motivation all around."

Through the California Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, which oversees ProStart statewide, Santee became one of five schools — of more than 80 participating across the Golden State — to receive extra funding to enhance the curriculum and offer opportunities such as paid student internships, field trips and food safety certification. The extra help gave Santee's ProStart program renewed focus and purpose.

The two-year curriculum, launched in 1995, provides high school students with a career curriculum covering many subject areas — from safe food handling and guest service to business management skills.

*"It's a great experience  
for both us and the students."*

Bob Spivak, Daily Grill co-founder and CEO

Via his Daily Grill store in downtown L.A., Spivak generates internships for several students. "It's a great experience for both us and the students," he said. "They're highly motivated and exciting to work with."

At nearby Rowland Heights High School, Reggie Bryant, human resources director for Marie Callender's in Mission Viejo, mentors students. He also offers students internships and jobs with the company.

"I give them the real experience and useful pointers," he said.

Ted Tuai, who is the regional director of operations for Panda Restaurant Group, Rosemead, and runs the company's pilot intern program, stresses the importance of restaurant operators giving student workers extra guidance.

"We can provide them with a training environment, but that only helps so much," he said. "It's also critical to give feedback and to bring out their passion about the foodservice industry."

## BEHIND THE BRAND



**Paul Berkman**  
owner and founder  
Rutabegorz

BY ALAN LA GUARDIA

**R**estaurant magnate" isn't the first choice of words one might use to describe Paul Berkman. Sure, he owns and operates a popular eatery with multiple locations with a longtime following in Orange County. But he says you're more likely to find him in a chicken suit than the three-piece variety.

"I've always been a rebel," he said.

But whatever James-Deanesque imagery that attitude conjures, Berkman is in fact a dynamic restaurant operator, owning and running the distinctive and successful Fullerton-based company Rutabegorz, with two additional locations in Orange and Tustin.

Rutabegorz began as a coffee shop in 1970, decades before anyone had sipped a macchiato at Starbucks. Food options came later — many to support the burgeoning trend of vegetarianism in Southern California, but also some to satisfy dedicated carnivores.

"I always wanted to create an atmosphere where people could hang out vegetarian and non-vegetarian," said Berkman, noting his menu features fusion foods, such as a mu shu burrito or a Mexican casserole, both of which are veggie-friendly.

Berkman, born to concentration camp survivors who escaped to the United States, grew up in the Los Angeles area. He lived humbly, his father working in drapery and his mother in Hollywood studios, until he cut his teeth in the restaurant business at age 15.

Many found his path in life to be unconventional, if not a flat-out mistake. "People would say to me, so your career is going to be a busboy or a cook?"

Berkman said. But he pressed on, opening Rutabegorz at age 20 and joining the California Restaurant Association in his earliest days working in the industry.

*"I've always  
been a rebel"*

After more than three decades in the business, Berkman has seen his share of challenges that come from running a successful restaurant. "It's a very complicated business," he said. "But it has opportunities for hundreds of things inside, outside. There are restaurant brokers and administrators and more."

Berkman said he looks to the CRA for guidance on the constantly in-flux local and state legislative issues. "The CRA takes a lot of pressure off of me."

Still, Berkman is quick to note that he's "not a joiner," holding firm to his rebel status. "I'm not a Chamber person. I'm not a Rotary person. But you need consistency to operate successfully, and the CRA provides that."



SANTEE EDUCATION COMPLEX JUNIOR ANGEL GUTIERREZ, LEFT, RECEIVES GUIDANCE FROM HIS MANAGER AT PANDA EXPRESS IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES.



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