

We've partnered with Chef's Roll, the global chef and culinary professional network, to learn more about chefs from around the country.

Oops! In the Summer Clever Root, Sara Gasbarra's photo and title were incorrectly printed with Mareya Ibrahim's Q&A from a previous issue. Please see below for Sara's Q&A.



PHOTO: EVA DIETCH

Sara Gasbarra
Owner/Lead Garden Girl at Verdura in Chicago, Illinois

What was your first project at Verdura and what have been some of your most recent?

Through my wonderful network of chefs at Green City Market, I was fortunate to meet Sandra and Mathieu Holl—who own Floriole Café and Bakery—early on. This year will be my fifth year working with the Floriole team, and I grow edible flowers, baby greens and specialty herbs for use as delicate garnishes on their many pastries and cakes. Working with large hotels such as Palmer House Hilton, the crop selection is a bit more expanded, and on their vast 25th floor rooftop, we're growing heirloom tomatoes, eggplant, beans, root crops, greens, strawberries and more.

What is the most rewarding aspect to your work at Verdura?

For me, it's the dialogue and interaction with the incredibly talented chefs I work with. They do absolutely beautiful things with the product I grow for them. It's exciting to see the entire process come full circle on social media when Sandra posts a photo of one of her beautiful yellow passion fruit tarts, garnished with the nasturtium leaves and flowers they plucked that morning from the garden. I take great pride in seeing my work intersecting with their artistry in the kitchen. It's inspiring to me.

Brad Miller,
Executive Chef/Partner of Ox & Son in Santa Monica, CA



PHOTO COURTESY OF OX & SON

What can you tell us about the philosophy behind your menu at Ox & Son?

Very simple philosophy: Bold flavors, done with excellent technique, are the way to go. Technique is what makes 20 different chefs make the same dish taste 20 different ways with the same ingredients. It's what gives chefs their signature mark on the dish.

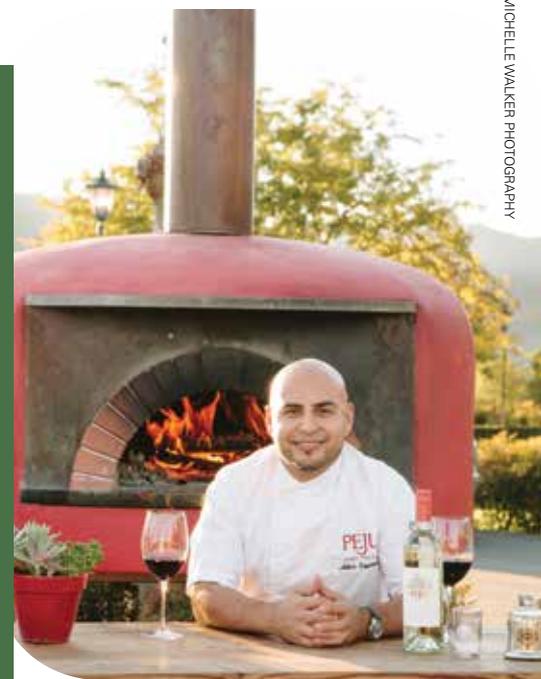
A current favorite seasonal/locally sourced ingredient, to work with?

Morels and soft shell crab are two of my favorites this time of the year.

Where do you find inspiration for your dishes? What influences your creativity?

It comes from everything and everywhere. I was just in Hong Kong and that trip showed me a whole new set of styles and ingredients that I want to incorporate into my cooking. I also ate my nephew's animal crackers and had an idea for an animal cracker ice cream. It really happens out of nowhere.

Alex Espinoza,
Executive Chef at Peju Province Winery in Rutherford, California



MICHELLE WALKER PHOTOGRAPHY

Do you incorporate your Guatemalan heritage into your dishes at Peju?

Growing up in Guatemala, we always used fresh ingredients, so this is something that I have taken with me to each place I have worked. The passion for using fresh, local food was instilled in me as a young boy when I was first became interested in cooking.

You're also involved with hands-on cooking classes at Peju. What is one of the most memorable dishes you created with your guests?

There isn't one specific dish that sticks out in my mind as being a favorite, because each class is so different and unique. Sometimes I get to watch people who are so shy about cooking learn to feel comfortable in the kitchen. Sometimes I get to watch people who love to cook expand their skillset and sometimes I even learn a few things from my guests. ■CR

If you are a culinary professional interested in being featured here or want more information on Chef's Roll, please email featured@chefsroll.com.