

THE A-LIST

PEOPLE TO KNOW



Joey Booterbaugh

Thanks to Joey Booterbaugh, San Francisco's world-class food scene is more appetizing than ever! This Oakland resident is the acclaimed Executive Chef at Fifth Arrow, a dining and drinking hot spot that officially opened earlier this year.

Los Angeles native Booterbaugh, who began cooking at age 15, says the food at this Union Square establishment "is centered on interpretations of comforting Italian classics with a fresh California spin." Menu items include delicious Cal-Italian pizza combinations cooked in a brick-lined Marsal Oven, seasonal entrees, and a whole fish special of the day.

Patrons can also indulge in an extensive array of specialty cocktails, fine wine, and draft beer, while enjoying the stylish surroundings of a former Prohibition-era speakeasy that features three bowling lanes.

During his time in L.A., Booterbaugh helped drive the popularity of venues like Bar Angeles and Café Birdie by emphasizing exquisite California and Mediterranean cooking that showcased our region's abundant fresh produce. He was previously Chef de Cuisine at The Hungry Cat, based in both Hollywood and Santa Monica.

Booterbaugh, who moved to the Bay Area with his wife and two young children, is excited to become part of San Francisco's culinary landscape. The chef adds, "Our hope is for Fifth Arrow to become a special destination for both local patrons and visitors to have an entertaining and unforgettable experience."



Jernell Escobar

Dentist Jernell Escobar has been putting smiles on Bay Area faces for a dozen years. In 2013, Dr. Escobar established her own practice in Gilroy. Shortly thereafter, she started the city's first "Dental Give Back Day." The program provides free, high-quality dental services to migrant farm workers and their children who otherwise lack access to oral healthcare.

As Escobar explains, "I feel a special bond with this target population because my father was from Monterey County, the son of migrant farm workers who also worked in the canneries and the fields. Dental and medical treatment was very much a luxury in my family, and as a result they would receive their care from nonprofit organizations."

Originally from Southern California, Escobar served in the military for seven years as a Public Health technician for the United States Air Force. She went on to earn a Master of Arts in Dental Education at the University of the Pacific School of Education. Escobar's alma mater was so impressed with its star student that she was invited to join the dental school faculty as an instructor for Preclinical Restorative Dentistry.

Escobar, who is married with five children, spends her spare time running marathons and doing triathlons. She says her competitive spirit was honed by "having three very active and athletic brothers. This taught me that girls could do everything boys do, and often better!"



Ajay Walia

Renowned restaurateur Ajay Walia wrote the recipe for how to seamlessly transition from finance to fine cuisine. The New Delhi native now owns two local dining establishments that attract a loyal clientele: Saffron Indian Bistro in San Carlos, and Burlingame-based Rasa.

After emigrating to the U.S., Walia pursued an MBA before embarking on a business career that included positions at J.P. Morgan, Deloitte, and Oracle. Of his shift from the corporate to the culinary world, Walia tells *Gentry*, "There was a lot to learn. I had to ask myself harsh questions, such as, 'Am I ready for people to criticize my food, now that they're paying customers and not just friends?'"

A Bay Area resident since 2000, Walia is clearly a quick study, judging from the enduring popularity of both restaurants. Each menu offering is handmade in-house and incorporates the subcontinent's wonderfully aromatic spices and flavors.

"I am very blessed to have a separate test kitchen in which we brainstorm ideas and innovate with ingredients, constantly working with the chef to create new dishes," Walia says. "We reminisce about traditions, and try to reinterpret the classics. For me, food and memories share a powerful connection."

A Michelin-starred restaurant, Rasa recently launched a line of specialty cocktails that pay homage to India's rich cultural heritage. Walia's ongoing success is certainly worthy of a celebratory toast! ♦

—KAREN SALAMA