

`Carlo Cavallo
Executive Chef and Proprietor
Meritage Restaurant, Sonoma California

Carlo Cavallo was working as a research associate in genetic engineering at the University of California Medical Center in Los Angeles when a friend convinced him he should become a chef. It didn't take much convincing, as Carlo was already catering lavish dinner parties for the Doctors and administrators of the hospital to earn extra money. Cavallo had been cooking his whole life. I come from a close Italian family and cooking was always a family affair at our Villa in Verona. I started cooking at a very young age" says Cavallo. He also comes from a close family tradition of excellent cooks. His father and his grandmother, who trained with the chef of the royal court of Savoy are both superb chefs.

Cavallo's parents are from Verona, Italy, but he was born in New York where his father has a Medical practice . A dual citizen of the United States and Italy, Cavallo grew up shuttling between New York and Verona where the family maintains a second home.

It was his good friend and well known fashion designer Marco Delli who got Cavallo seriously thinking about becoming a Chef. In 1990, Delli, whose family owns several acclaimed restaurants in Italy, got Cavallo a job as a Pastry chef at his family's restaurant L'Assassino in Milan, a favorite celebrity dining spot. Cavallo spent a year and a half cooking at L'Assassino, quickly working his way up to Sous Chef. He then took a job as the Chef du Cuisine at the famous Belmonte Hotel in Lugano, Switzerland, where he perfected his talents in French Provencal cuisine.

Returning to Los Angeles in 1993, Cavallo spent the next three years as the Executive Chef for Italatin Restaurant group which managed Giorgio Armani's Restaurants in Beverly Hills, Boston and Costa Mesa where he developed a following from the Hollywood celebrities that frequently dined there. At Armani Cavallo received excellent reviews and was honored in 1994 as the "Best New Chef of the Year" in Los Angeles Magazine.

Cavallo next took a position for a year as Executive Chef at the Hyatt Sainte Claire Hotel in San Jose. He was in charge the restaurant and Banquet facilities that had revenues in excess of 8 million dollars. He oversaw the food and beverage for the NHL All- star weekend and Major League soccer's San Jose Earthquakes inaugural season opening Gala

In 1996, Cavallo was hired as Corporate Executive Chef/Director of Operations for the D'Angelo Corporation. He oversaw Restaurants in Mill Valley, Las Vegas, San Francisco, and Palo Alto. He launched D'Angelo catering which oversees all the Banquet facilities at the Hotel Aqua, Mill Valley Inn and Tiburon Inn. He designed and opened two restaurants and their largest hotel.

In November 1999, Carlo Cavallo opened Sonoma-Meritage Restaurant & Oyster Bar, which is now considered one of the wine country best restaurants. Carlo was drawn to Sonoma because of the similarities to Italian homeland in Verona. "I opened Meritage in the heart of Sonoma County expressly to take advantage of year round abundance of locally grown fresh products, artisan food producers, and superior wines". For Cavallo, Meritage offers the perfect venue to blend his European heritage with California's wine country sophistication. He is one of the founders of the Sonoma Valley Olive festival and serves as it's Culinary Director. Chef Carlo is a culinary instructor at Ramekins cooking school. His catering company serves several Sonoma Valley and Napa Valley wineries for private winery functions. He was recently the featured Chef for the Sonoma Showcase of Food & Wine.

Chef Carlo has appeared on National TV such as the FoodNetwork, CNN's On the Menu, PBS and ABC morning news. He has been featured on Japanese and French Television programs. His recipes and restaurants have been featured in Los Angeles Times, Gourmet, Wine Spectator, Wine Enthusiast, La Cucina Italiana, Chef magazine, Conde Naste, Food and Wine, San Francisco Chronicle, Press Democrat, and Marin Independent Journal as well as several other publications. He has cooked for current Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi on a regular basis, the English Earl of Kent, as well as other European aristocracy. He was selected to cater a luncheon for the Pentagon's Lieutenant General Joseph H. Wehrle and 30 foreign liaison Brigadier Generals from around the world.

Some of his celebrity clients are Luciano Pavarotti, Arnold Swartzenegger, Sylvester Stallone, Pricilla Presley, Michael Keaton, Courtney Cox, Ed Asner, Alan Alda, Dustin Hoffman, Rod Stewart, Carlos Santana, and Sammy Hagar. Chef Carlo likes to downplay his celebrity chef status by saying , " It's not about who you are cooking for, it's about the preparing the great food and enjoying good company.