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# SAN FRANCISCO Business Times

Friday, May 30, 2008

## David Bazirgan

**Chef, Chez Papa Resto**

San Francisco Business Times

Food Style: Seasonal Provençal.

Address: 414 Jessie St., San Francisco.

Phone: (415) 546-4134.

Hours: Lunch, Mon.-Fri. 11:30-2:30; brunch, Sat. and Sun. 11-3; dinner, Sun.-Wed. 5:30-10 and Thurs.-Sat. 5:30-11.

Average check cost: \$50 per person for dinner.

Web site: [chezpapasf.com](http://chezpapasf.com)

Background: From the beginning, I always found myself in the kitchen. It was really important for our family to sit down every night together and eat. I worked as a dishwasher and prep cooked several places. I moved to Boston when I was 21 and decided to go the Cambridge School of Culinary Arts. Barbara Lynch hired me on the line (at Galleria Italiana) and I couldn't handle it; it was my first professional job, but (instead) I worked on the pastry station for a year and learned desserts. I then worked at Todd English's Olives and I (later) opened No. 9 Park. I moved to San Francisco in 2003 and worked at Elisabeth Daniel until they closed at the end of '03. I found Jocelyn (the owner) and got the job at Baraka and I was there a couple of years and then I started to oversee Chez Papa and three of his other restaurants. In '06-'07 I took a year off to try to open my own restaurant and then I was approached by Jocelyn to open the new Chez Papa here downtown, and it was a great opportunity to open a restaurant.

Food philosophy: I like to work on a seasonal approach and I'm very big on texture. If your main component is soft, it's important to have a crunch in that dish. Balancing flavors is important, balancing sweet, bitter, acidic, salty. Well balanced with the best produce and products possible. It's important that everyone in the kitchen pays attention to detail and technique. We do a lot of slow-cooking, especially with meats and fish, because (with) protein, the collagen breaks down slower so it creates a more tender product.



Najib Joe Hakim

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Most popular dish: The halibut. We cook it slow-poached, sous-vide. It's a wild Alaskan halibut. We add a tab of black truffle butter and black truffle salt and poach it in an immersion water bath so it doesn't lose any moisture. It's elegant and has a beautiful black truffle emulsion so it looks like a big foam of white over the top, like a pillow. Underneath are leek ribbons, which have a slight bite, and sliced fresh asparagus. I think it just hits everything on all notes. Everyone loves halibut, but the texture is surprising.

One thing you'll never see on the menu: You won't see anything other than French food. The goal was to create a very specific Provençal menu.

Most surprising ingredient: House-cured salmon, but we use pastis, which comes out really nice to give it an anise flavor.

To wow a companion or client: Kobe beef tartare (with Dijon mustard, capers, shallots, garlic, toast points). The server mixes it for you at the table.

Dessert recommendation: A beautiful lavender soufflé, baked to order, with a Grand Marnier crème anglaise that's poured at the table.

Wine list: A lot of wines from France, and a good variety of wines from California.

Chef inspired by: Barbara Lynch for making you know how important it is to be passionate, be creative. She was a mentor and I worked for her for a long time. We had a good relationship. I was able to watch her become successful, and I trailed. Things are going well, but I think I have a ways to go.

Advice for home or novice cooks: Being organized and staying ahead. Make a checklist. You can never be too prepared. Read a recipe through before starting.

Most memorable moment: I cooked tripe for Julia Child at No. 9 Park, and she said it was the best tripe she ever had. She said, "I've never had it so tender and delicious" when I went out to her table. It was a tomato-based sauce with aromatic spices and chickpeas and roasted peppers. I met her a couple times. Those were great moments.

Favorite ingredient or dish: Port-glazed sweetbreads (with black trumpets, snap peas, spring garlic emulsion). We poach it first and cool it down and then sauté it to crisp it up and deglaze it with a nice tawny port.

Favorite dish at another restaurant: Ceviche at Fresca.

Favorite cookbook: "Grand Livre de Cuisine" by Alain Ducasse.

-- *Emily Fancher*

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