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5 under 35

Young chefs heat up S.D.'s culinary scene

BY MAYA KROTH

Gone are the days when the phrase "San Diego's culinary scene" conjured only images of fish tacos and beers at the beach. Now the term evokes sensory delights like foie gras-topped filet mignon, moules à la Normande or smoked tomato consommé with lobster, increasingly prepared by fresh-faced chefs whose innovation and experience belie their youthful appearance.

"It's a younger culinary scene, and it's still developing," says Café Chloe's Katie Grebow. "There's competition, but it's less overwhelming to make your name."

"It's starting to come into its own," echoes Chef Wade Hageman of Blanca. "There are a lot of great chefs here, and more are on the way."

With that, we offer a brief introduction to just a few of our favorite under-35 culinary talents.

Chef William Bradley

Addison/Age 32

William Bradley discovered his passion for cooking at 16 while working as a prep cook in a small Italian restaurant in San Diego's South County. Since then, he's honed his skills in the kitchens of Azzura Point at the Loews Coronado Bay Resort and in Scottsdale, Ariz., at the Hyatt Regency's Vu restaurant and Mary Elaine's at The Phoenician. Thrice nominated for the James Beard "Rising Star Chef" award, Bradley returned to San Diego to preside over the opulent Addison in 2006. His French cuisine made with locally farmed produce earned Addison a spot on *Esquire's* list of "America's Best New Restaurants for 2007."

First cooking experience I didn't come from a very big culinary background when it comes to family. Maybe making cookies with my mom.

Biggest influence Mother Nature and what she has to offer. That's where the real inspiration comes.

Favorite ingredient I love morel mushrooms, and all the spring things. Especially here in Southern California, the produce that we get is unbelievable. We get it at such an early time, and our seasons are so much longer—it really makes for a special time for cooking.

Signature dish We don't really have a signature dish, since the menu changes so seasonally, but we do an [applewood] smoked potato purée that we've kept on the menu for over a year now. It's turning into somewhat of a classic. Who doesn't love potato purée? But we tried to think of things that would elevate the traditional mashed potato through technique and refinement. You get that apple flavor from the smoky potato, and it's very, very unique and flavorful.

Tales from the kitchen Phil Mickelson comes in for dinner. It's such an honor to cook for somebody like that, for him to like what we do and to come here quite often. He comes in and pretty much says, "Just cook for me," so we'll do a three- to four-hour dining experience where he eats six or seven different courses with paired wines. He has a very well-rounded palate. It's funny because he looks at me like, "Hey, it's the chef!" And I look at him like, "No man, it's Phil Mickelson! It's you!"
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