

Wine Country Personality: Jon Mortimer

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Earth Meets Ocean: Modern comfort food from the Sonoma Coast

Foreword

My life long journey with food began on the east coast. Charles Mortimer, my grandfather, was a true pioneer in the food manufacturing industry, but my food adventure has always followed a different map. At a young age I learned to love a great meal and the process by which it was attained. While enjoying the dining aspect, service and trying new flavors my thoughts would always wander to where the ingredients came from. What we were enjoying at the table never had as much an impact as picking and shelling peas with my grandmother earlier that afternoon.

In the subsequent decades to those early food memories I found myself perpetually moving west. Across the fertile plains of the Rocky Mountains I learned of the fruitful bounties of the rich, irrigated soils. I found great respect for the majestic animals that roamed the monochromatic hills and boned many trout from the cool, clear streams. All wonderful, yet still there existed an incognizant limit to my culinary dreams and I always longed for a place where you didn't have to perpetually out-think the food as a cook.

In what amounted to an almost unexplainable fervor in a breathless week's time as if irresistibly pulled by a cosmic magnet my family headed west to lands end in the greatest food continent on the blue planet. It was the blue I'd been missing, teaming with life and crying out to be married with the fruits of the farmer's labors. The sense of place with which the wine epitomizes the food on the Sonoma Coast is a combination rarely experienced with such seamlessness. It is all so clear sitting on the coast at Timber Cove with the fertile, mineral rich soils behind me and ocean stirring before me...it's time to capture Earth and ocean in a pan and use all the respect of a lifetime with food and capture it on a plate.

Jon Mortimer was born into a "food family" with a grandfather, Charles Mortimer, who was chairman of General Foods in White Plains New York. After moving to the resort town of Sun Valley, Idaho at the age of fourteen, Jon started his first restaurant job and instantly knew that this was what he needed to do with his life. After working in various restaurants into his early 20's and attending the University of Arizona as well as the Horst Mager Culinary Academy in Portland, Oregon. Jon performed a pastry apprenticeship in Geilo, Norway and a hotel apprenticeship in Fiesole, Italy before returning to the U.S. to begin life as a corporate chef.

In 1992 Jon returned to Idaho to own his restaurant and truly explore his culinary style. B.B. Strand's was opened in 1993, Mortimer's restaurant, opened in 1999 and was created out of the culmination of this vast experience and became the cornerstone of his "sense of place" style. Chef Mortimer was also chef owner of Franco Latino restaurant opened in 2005 and showcased a counterpoint French Latin fusion cuisine to the chefs modern American repertoire.

These many years of experience has laid the foundation to utilize the bounty of food and wine that Sonoma California has to offer. In the fall of 2008 a new chapter in a long culinary career began at the Timber Cove Inn's new restaurant, Alexander's, at one of the most dramatic fine dining locations on the Pacific Coast. At Alexander's, a new cuisine has been developed that is best described as modern coastal comfort cuisine paying homage to the areas ranchers, farmers, fisherman and winemakers.



Jon Mortimer's Lobster Cappuccino

Other highlights in Chef Mortimer's career include the release of The Idaho Table that showcases the foods of the intermountain west using the techniques of the world. Along with being a cookbook author, accolades include Certified Executive Chef, adjunct professor to Boise State University School of Culinary Arts, Host of the weekly radio show Radio Café on KIDO 580 AM, television chef on KBCI channel 2's "Culinary Tip of the Day", spokesman for the United Dairymen of Idaho and consulting chef to Snake River Farms, Simplot Foods and Fresca Fine Foods.



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