



BOCANOVA PAN-AMERICAN KITCHEN CELEBRATES LATIN FLAVORS WITH LOCAL INGREDIENTS AND A MEDITERRANEAN FLAIR

At His Vibrant New Restaurant in Oakland's Revitalized Jack London Square, Chef Rick Hackett Pays Tribute to a Vivid and Diverse World of Cuisine

Oakland, Calif., August 3, 2009--Is this a great hemisphere or what? Mexico and Central and South America gave the world a wealth of wonderful foodstuffs, including such essentials as potatoes, tomatoes, corn, chocolate and vanilla, sweet peppers and spicy chiles, and a whole hill of beans, from black to lima to pinto to white. The great melting pot of North America, in return, added its own indigenous products and an encyclopedia of imported ingredients to the mix, and turned the culinary traditions and abilities of scores of vibrant immigrant cultures loose on the resulting cornucopia.

Bocanova, the vibrant new Pan-American restaurant opening September 1 on Oakland's revitalized Jack London Square, draws on all these culinary riches, celebrating the ingredients and cuisines of Latin America and their intimate connection with their Old World counterparts, expressed through the culinary bounty of Northern California.

Rick Hackett, Bocanova's classically trained executive chef and co-owner, combines a long commitment to sustainably grown organic raw materials with impeccable California-Mediterranean credentials as a veteran of Chez Panisse, Postrio, Bay Wolf, Oliveto, and MarketBar, among other places. The idea behind Pan-American cuisine, he says, is to blend the complimentary culinary currents of Europe and the Americas in a delicious new way.

"The introduction of New World foods helped shape what we think of today as traditional Mediterranean cuisine," he points out. "At the same time, cooking in the Americas was obviously changed tremendously by Old World ingredients—foods as basic as beef and lamb, wheat, olives, and wine grapes—and by the techniques and cooking culture that went along with them. Pan-American cooking brings a whole lot of exciting regional flavors and nuances to the table, but many of the dishes are still rooted in the Mediterranean profile."

He christened his new place Bocanova, which means "new mouth", Hackett adds, because "In the gastronomically rich Bay Area, mouths have changed. We're open to new flavors and experiences. I'm not trying to duplicate traditional dishes or experiences. What we choose to call Pan-American cuisine has evolved from a conversation between ingredients and cultures, with the old meeting the new, the familiar meeting the unfamiliar.



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Among the specialties chef Hackett has created with that in mind, are a selection of ceviches and crudos from the Cevicheria, seafood tacos, Yucatan seafood stew, slow-roasted heirloom beans with chorizo, Sea of Cortez scallops with Brazilian curry sauce, whole organic rotisserie chicken with guajillo chile–banana salsa, and an assortment of Argentinean-style steaks from the grill.

Bocanova's setting is no less exciting than its food: It occupies a restored 1920s-vintage icehouse with unparalleled waterfront views in a prime location on historic Jack London Square. A vibrant multi-use complex just down the road from Berkeley and a short 20-minute drive from downtown San Francisco across the Bay Bridge or 25-minute cruise from the city's Ferry Building, the Square has become a living symbol of Oakland's revival, and the site of a burgeoning community of hot new restaurants. Opening early spring 2010, on the plaza in front of Bocanova, is a 70,000-square-foot two-level food market, modeled after San Francisco's Ferry Plaza Market and the Granville Island Market in Vancouver.

Meredith Melville—Hackett's wife and herself a veteran of Bay Wolf and Chez Panisse, and the former owner-operator of Enrico's in North Beach—will preside over the stunning 6,500-square-foot Bocanova dining room, with its soaring ceilings, magnificent concrete columns, and warm elements of wood, metal, tile, vividly hued carpets, artisanal surfaces, and found objects. Under her direction, Bocanova supports the local art scene with an on-going rotation of local art exhibits and special events.

Bocanova boasts an extensive wine list spotlighting the Americas, Spain, and Portugal, with a wide variety of offerings at reasonable prices, chosen specifically to pair with the food. Bartenders concoct a range of inventive Pan-American cocktails, many based on fresh-squeezed fruit juices, and special care is lavished on the service of coffee, tea and Mexican hot chocolate.

"More than anything," says Rick Hackett, "we want Bocanova to be an Oakland restaurant that reflects the diversity and creativity of its community, while serving some of the best food around." # # #

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