

## EXECUTIVE CHEF JOSE "JOJO" RUIZ

### Clique Hospitality

With Chef Jose "Jojo" Ruiz as one of the innovators leading the restaurant scene in San Diego, Lionfish—the highly coveted Clique Hospitality Coastal Cuisine restaurant at Pendry—just became an official James Beard Certified Smart Catch Leader as of February 2019—an award that only two other San Diego restaurants have received.

A San Diego native, Chef Ruiz began his culinary career when he was 16 as a dishwasher at Yokozuna. From there, he quickly rose in the ranks from a dishwasher to line cook. While attending San Diego Culinary Institute full-time, he learned the art of butchering fish and meat at Yokozuna, which started his lifelong affair with seafood. Displaying incredible talent at a young age, Chef Ruiz was on the fast track to success. Before leading the kitchen as the chef de cuisine at Searsucker, he also began working as a sushi chef at TOWER23 Hotel's JRDN in 2007. Because of his dedication and commitment to the food and beverage industry, he became the sous chef at The Oceanaire Seafood Room in 2008, as well. During this time, Ruiz also staged at different restaurants throughout the country and honed his craft. He further enhanced his career in

coastal cuisine and became the executive chef of Herringbone in La Jolla in May of 2013. Prior to joining Clique Hospitality, Chef Ruiz spent two and a half years as the right-hand man for Michelin-starred Executive Chef/Partner Jason McLeod at Little Italy's acclaimed Ironside Fish & Oyster. His unrivaled dedication to his craft earned him a spot on Eater National's top 50 "Young Guns" list.

In 2017, Ruiz partnered with Andy Masi's Clique Hospitality, as the executive chef at Lionfish Modern Coastal Cuisine in the Pendry San Diego.

Lionfish, helmed by Ruiz in partnership with Masi, opened in February 2017, allowing Chef to bring his incredible talent in sushi, seafood, and coastal cuisine to the airy two-floor dining room located in the heart of San Diego's Gaslamp Quarter.

As a technique-driven eatery, Lionfish sets itself apart from other restaurants in San Diego, showcasing careful precision that elevates each dish for the diner. Ruiz even goes to the docks daily to purchase fresh fish for the day.

Chef Ruiz is inspired by ingredients of the season, so the Lionfish menu changes seasonally, which is a unique and special element of Ruiz's motif. Ruiz prides himself with a San Diego-inspired menu where modern coastal cuisine is highlighted and continues to re-energize the downtown food scene through his elevated menu. He brings local and sustainable products from the sea to the table and emphasizes the importance of using

responsibly sourced items.

Chef continues to dedicate his creativity and passion to the restaurant industry. He is revolutionizing the San Diego foodie scene with his artistic and impressive culinary techniques, such as seen at Lionfish.

In addition, Chef Ruiz is about to open a second restaurant this summer, as chef/partner of Hotel del Coronado's new Serea, which will focus on sustainable seafood.

#### ***What is the heart of your culinary passion?***

The heart of my culinary passion is knowledge of the product we serve and the importance it is to our planet. I love local and sustainable seafoods, and I like being able to have an answer when diners ask the source of all my products. It's also the importance of a relationship between the fisherman, the seafood reps, and myself. The more we all know, the better we will all become.

#### ***What are you most proud of in your culinary career?***

I'm very proud that I can teach all my knowledge to the new generation of cooks and chefs.

#### ***What advice would you offer to young chefs eager to build a successful career?***

Don't give up, be proud of who you are, and take chances.

