



OWNER / EXECUTIVE CHEF ISABEL CRUZ

Isabel's Cantina

Isabel Cruz opened her first restaurant in 1990. A talented self-taught chef, her cuisine quickly made its mark, combining her Latin heritage with her upbringing in LA where she was exposed to many international flavors. Latin-Asian fusion and simplified recipes with complex flavor became her hallmark. She launched the Mission Cafes, which dot San Diego from Mission Beach to North Park. Her Coffee Cup restaurant continues to draw crowds in the popular village of La Jolla by the sea. Isabel's Cantina boasts a busy venue in central Pacific Beach. Her book "Isabel's Cantina" (Clarkson Potter, 2007) was voted to Food & Wine Magazine's "Best of the Best" list and was named among The New York Times' "Top 25 Cookbooks." These days, Chef Cruz spends her days happily traveling between Mexico, San Diego, and Portland, Oregon, visiting her friends' kitchens and enjoying the thriving Mexican culinary scene across the border.

What is the heart of your culinary passion?

Traveling and discovering new foods and restaurants.

What are you most proud of in your culinary career?

That I've survived this long in such a competitive and grueling business.

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

This is an intense business in every way imaginable—be prepared mentally and physically for the challenge.

OWNER / EXECUTIVE CHEF ANGELO SOSA

Death by Tequila

Angelo Sosa is a renowned celebrity chef with a wide range of trendsetting experience and success. Sosa was born in Durham, Connecticut, to a Dominican father and an Italian mother who believed meals were serious affairs, which ultimately directed Sosa's decision to pursue a career in the culinary industry. Sosa graduated from the Culinary Institute of America with high honors. After running the kitchen at the Escoffier Room, one of the institute's highly acclaimed restaurants, he began his professional career, which has included mentorships under Christian Bertrand and Jean-Georges Vongerichten and stints at famously coveted restaurants including, Four-Diamond, Stonehenge Restaurant & Inn, Acqua, The Ocean Club in the Bahamas, Spice Market, and Yamaha. He opened Añejo in Hell's Kitchen, Añejo Tribeca, Abajo, and Death by Tequila, and oversaw prestigious consulting assignments with clients including Stephen Starr's Buddakan and Morimoto in New York. Sosa has also been spotlighted as a Season 7 "Chef-testant" on BRAVO's "Top Chef" twice, and frequently on other television shows such

as "Knife Fight," "Beat Bobby Flay," "Iron Chef America," and "Chopped."

What is the heart of your culinary passion?

At Death by Tequila, we want to be the conduit and storyteller of the farmers and fishermen of the California-Baja region. We're not just serving food and drinks; we're sharing stories. There's an energy behind it: love, passion, thought, and care.

When it comes to my personal passion, I really feel that cooking and the creativity I can put on a plate is my love language. It's how I express myself and share my feelings. I love seeing the joy people get from the dishes I create, and I hope that I can inspire them and make them happy.

What are you most proud of in your culinary career?

As a chef, I'm proud that I worked with Jean-Georges Vongerichten, who taught me simplicity is elegance and less is more. These are the mantras I live by.

Overall, I'm really proud of being a leader. I take pride in empowering the cooks, staff, and entire team, and watching them grow. They're able to find balance professionally and personally, and I enjoy watching the transformation.

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



The best advice I can give young chefs is to go for it. If cooking is what you love, pour your heart and soul into it, give it your all. Always be on a quest for possibilities and the best way to advance your career and your passions. Don't limit yourself, and remember that anything is possible.