

THE EAST BAY WOMAN'S GUIDE TO STYLE

Scene

at *the table*



Josh Thomsen

Executive chef, Meritage
The Claremont Hotel Club & Spa, Berkeley

From left: The dining room at Meritage at the Claremont in Berkeley offers spectacular views of the bay; chef Josh Thomsen; Meritage features contemporary California cuisine using regionally sourced fresh ingredients.

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Age: 38

Hometown: Park Ridge, New Jersey

Experience: Earlier this year, Thomsen was named a San Francisco Bay Area Rising Star by online industry magazine StarChefs, whose judges noted how he "transformed the [Claremont's] food and beverage program into something fresh, elegant, and delectable."

Thomsen's first job was at Friendly's (an East Coast chain of restaurants) making milkshakes and burgers, where he learned how to cook quickly. He attended the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y., and interned at the Hotel Bel-Air in Los Angeles, which offered him a job upon graduation. When the Bel-Air's head chef moved to the Little Nell in Aspen, Colo., he asked Thomsen to come along. Thomsen spent four years at the Little Nell, and was also the personal chef to model/entertainer Barbi Benton during that time. He then went to Napa to work with Thomas Keller at the French Laundry for two years.

After another stint at the Bel-Air, he headed to Las Vegas to work at the

at the table

Mansion at the MGM Grand, then as executive sous chef at Michael Mina's Nobhill Tavern. He jumped back to California to the Lodge at Pebble Beach, but still held jobs in Vegas, eventually opening Tao restaurant at the Venetian. In 2009, a former colleague invited him to work at the Claremont, and two months later he took over the relaunch of the restaurant as Meritage.

Early inspiration: His father, Jerry Thomsen, who was a "closet chef" and taught him about good food.

Mentors: Thomas Keller. "He taught me how to do everything." And Jeff Jake (executive chef at the Carneros Inn; previously at the Lodge at Pebble Beach). "He wouldn't have us do anything he wouldn't do himself."

Culinary philosophy: "Hire great people. You can have the best ingredients, but you need the right people to cook them."

Favorite foods: Chinese and Italian

Biggest challenge: Balancing work and personal life

Leisure time: Anything outside. Going to Napa or Sonoma. Golfing. Stretching out on the sofa and watching the New York Yankees.

If you weren't a chef, what would you be: A New York Yankee

Most proud of: My staff. And being listed as one of Thomas Keller's protégés in Wine Spectator.



Josh Thomsen's sautéed diver scallops with English peas, heirloom carrots and black trumpet mushrooms.

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1/2 cup vegetable stock (cold)
1 cup English peas, cleaned and purée
blanched in salted water
6 each or 3-6 ounces of fresh scallops
(day boat, if possible)
kosher salt
freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon unsalted butter, divided use
1/2 cup leeks, cut into rounds and
blanched
1 cup black trumpet mushrooms (washed
and dried)
4 baby carrots, peeled and blanched
1 tablespoon chopped chives
parsley-infused oil for garnish
1/2 tablespoon of fresh chives, chopped
6 springs of pea shoots for garnish

Serves 2

In a blender, combine stock and peas (reserve 2 tablespoons of peas). Puree till smooth.

Season scallops with salt and pepper. Heat a sauté pan with medium heat and add olive oil. Add scallops to pan when it just starts to smoke. Cook about 1 minute on each side (depending on thickness of scallop). Then sauté till golden brown and delicious. Keep warm.

In a small pot, warm up pea puree mixture with 1/2 tablespoon of butter. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Reserve warm.

In a sauté pan over medium heat, add the other 1/2 tablespoon of butter, then add the leeks, mushrooms and carrots. Saute for 1-1/2 minutes (they should not take on any color.) Season to taste with salt and pepper. Keep warm.

Plate on warm plates: Put a small circle of English pea purée in the middle of the plate. Add a small pile of the vegetables in the center of the purée. Then top with the scallops. Drizzle parsley-infused oil around the plate and sprinkle with chopped chives and pea shoots.