

BIOGRAPHY

AZMIN GHahreman

Chef Azmin Ghahreman is a citizen of the world. Born in Iran, educated in Switzerland, having lived and worked all over the world. Over the last 20 years, this widely traveled industry star has immersed himself in the cooking styles and cuisines of: classic and nouvelle French; Mediterranean, Hawaiian Pacific Rim, Asian, Middle Eastern, Modern Australian, American Southwest and American Pacific Coast/California.

He now calls Southern California his home and base for his various culinary projects that have been lauded by guests, customers and media from far and near. In fact, *OCMETRO BUSINESS* listed Ghahreman as one of the “2007 Hottest 25 People in Orange County” and dubbed him ‘rock star chef’.

In 2007, Ghahreman opened his first restaurant and lounge, Sapphire Laguna, with its adjunct gourmet specialty shop, Sapphire Pantry. From the very beginning, the restaurant and shop were embraced by the Laguna Beach community and beyond. His globally oriented cooking style and avid interest in the best food products and wines from California, other parts of the U.S. and internationally have solidly placed him on the region’s culinary map. His motto has always been, “When you travel through the world’s markets with your palate, you don’t need a passport.”

Ghahreman’s goal to create a comfortable place with great service where people want to return often – a full sensual experience featuring an innovative menu, fun cocktail scene, beautiful patio with an ocean view and always a sense of conviviality – continues to be what he and his staff at Sapphire Laguna are constantly striving for.

A glowing two-star review of Sapphire Laguna in the *Los Angeles Times* describes Ghahreman’s cooking as “polished and precise without being too formal”. Other kudos for Ghahreman’s food that “sends one on a trip around the culinary world without leaving home” have appeared in: *Sunset, Coast, Orange Coast, Westways, The Laguna Beach Independent, The Orange County Register*, among other publications. Laguna Beach diners, as well as travelers visiting Southern California, continue to enjoy flavorful favorites such as: *Tunisian Crab Warka; Pan-Seared Barramundi with Warm Baby Vegetables; and Baked Kurobuta Pork Shank, Kabocha Gnocchi and Brussels Sprouts.*

As a commitment to his love of artisanal cheese and its makers, Ghahreman and his team created and executed the inaugural American Cheesemaker Awards in 2007. This annual event will continue to be a four-day celebration of artisan cheesemaking in America, a comprehensive cheese event that includes the judging by an esteemed panel of experts of approximately 100 artisan cheeses; trade tasting and Cheese Academy seminars; two days of a tasting marketplace for the general public and a cheesemakers’ awards gala.

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Actively involved with local school efforts to educate children about healthy and sustainable foods, Ghahreman launched “Every Child is My Child” in 2009, a visionary lunch program that he carefully conceived, and prepares and delivers daily to St. Anne School in Laguna Niguel. Veering away from schools’ traditional focus on starchy, packaged and processed foods, his school menus are based on the Mediterranean Food Pyramid, which advocates a sound balance of protein, grains, vegetables, fruits, dairy and healthy oils. The program also provides health-conscious offerings to supplement lunches at St. Margaret’s Episcopal School in San Juan Capistrano, and Ghahreman is working to expand the program further.

Prior to opening Sapphire Laguna and Sapphire Pantry, Ghahreman devoted five years of outstanding service as executive chef of the four restaurants at AAA Five Diamond St. Regis Monarch Beach Resort & Spa, Dana Point, California. He was also the opening executive chef consultant of The Grand America Hotel in Salt Lake City, Utah, where he supervised the dining facilities for the 2002 Winter Olympics; and was the executive chef of The Regent Sydney in Australia, which was the official hotel for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games International Olympic Committee.

Ghahreman held executive chef positions at five-diamond and five-star Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts exciting locales, including Sydney, Australia; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Kona Coast, Hawaii; Istanbul, Turkey; Singapore; and Wailea, Maui. Prior to his years of chefing for Four Seasons, he trained and worked at Fairmont Hotels in San Jose, California and Dallas, Texas.

His accomplishments are numerous and include: leading the winning nine-chef culinary team in the 1997 and 1998 Malaysian National Culinary Competition; heading an eight-chef team for the Malaysian Tourism Board at the 1997 United Nations Food and Art Festival; and judging an Australian cheese competition in 1999. Ghahreman’s global experiences have given him the prestigious opportunity to cook for over 30 kings, presidents and heads of state, among them: President and Mrs. George H.W. Bush, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and past prime ministers of Singapore, Thailand and Pakistan. He has also appeared on many television shows including: KTLA Los Angeles; The Food Network’s “*In Food Today*”; “*Good Morning Singapore*”; BBC’s “*Good Morning London*”; and ABC 4 Honolulu’s “*Great Chefs of Hawaii*”.

Ghahreman holds an International Diploma in Culinary Art from Collège Du Léman in Versoix, Switzerland, and attended the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco where he earned a diploma with a concentration in French cuisine. He also has a mixology certificate from the American Bartending School.

He is a supporter for cause-related organizations, including The March of Dimes, Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, National Kidney Foundation and AIDS Foundation; as well as Miracles for Kids in Orange County.

This 49-year-old resident of San Juan Capistrano shares his life and culinary passions with his wife and their three young children. His hobbies are very much related to his profession and include gardening, everything about wine, learning more about the worlds of spices and cheese.

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