

# PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

**BENEDICTA ALEJO** is an award-winning village cook from Michoacán, Mexico. Born in San Lorenzo, Michoacán, Chef Alejo began cooking with her grandmother when she was 12 years old. Benedicta does not weigh or measure the ingredients. She uses her knowledge of traditional and local ingredients to guide her. She cooks on a *paranguas* (a comal placed on top of three rocks, set over wood fire), as she believes that the food tastes better than cooked on a stove. She emphasizes that her cooking is created with love. Chef Alejo has won the first prize for the Women Cooks Congress “Encuentros de Cocina Tradicional” the past five years; there has been no other winner since the event was created. (Michoacán, Mexico)

**RICK BAYLESS** is chef-owner of Frontera Grill, Topolobampo, and XOCO in Chicago, IL. His latest restaurant, XOCO, a silver LEED-certified restaurant that opened in September 2009, features Mexican street foods and Mexican hot chocolates made from cocoa beans roasted in the restaurant. His most recent restaurant venture is Red O, a Mexican restaurant in Los Angeles for which Chef Bayless developed the menu and tequila list. Well known for his highly rated PBS series Mexico—One Plate at a Time, Chef Bayless is the author of seven cookbooks. His most recent book, published July 2010, is *Fiesta at Rick’s: Fabulous Food for Great Times with Friends*. Chef Bayless has received numerous James Beard awards, including National Chef of the Year. In 2009 Chef Bayless won “Top Chef Masters.” Chef Bayless is the chair of The Culinary Institute of America’s Latin Cuisines Advisory Council Executive Committee. (Chicago, IL)

**FRANCISCO "PACO" CÁRDENAS** is the chef-owner of El Petit Four, a pastry shop and café in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. Chef Cárdenas was born in Mexico City where his culinary training began at a young age as he cooked with his grandmothers and aunts. A former graphic designer, his formal culinary career began with an apprenticeship in the pastry shop of the JW Marriott Hotel in Mexico City. In 1998 Chef Cárdenas moved to San Miguel de Allende and opened El Petit Four. In 2001 Chef Cárdenas started teaching Mexican cooking at Sazon Cooking School in San Miguel de Allende, as well as conducting private lessons in his home. He has also taught cooking lessons at the Ocean Reef Club Cooking School. Chef Cárdenas and El Petit Four have been featured in *Bon Appétit*, *OUT magazine*, *Travel and Leisure*, and *Coast Magazine*. (San Miguel de Allende, Mexico)

**CRISTIÁN CORREA** is the chef of Milcao Restaurant, a contemporary Chilean restaurant in Santiago that showcases Chilean products and Chef Correa’s international training. Chef Correa began his culinary career in Marbella, Spain, where he was influenced by Mediterranean cuisine. He worked as Executive Chef at Agua Restaurant, which was named one of the 50 Best Restaurants in the World in May 2002 by *Condé Nast Traveler*. Chef Correa has sought opportunities to refine his culinary knowledge and skills by working as an apprentice with Chef Catalana Montse Estruch and staging at Thomas Keller’s Per Se. In 2005 Chef Correa led the culinary team at a ProChile event in New

York City, an event that featured Chilean food and wine pairings. Since 2005 Chef Correa has promoted Chilean cuisine and wine around the world, including events in Beijing, Montreal, London, and India. (Santiago, Chile)

**ALMIR DA FONSECA** is a chef-instructor at The Culinary Institute of America at Greystone. Chef Da Fonseca, a native of Brazil, studied culinary arts at the Senace Trade School in Rio. Chef Da Fonseca's culinary training includes an apprenticeship under the strict classical French teachings of Chef Jaques Arpi from Choron in the Southern French Region of France. He also studied Italian cuisine under the teachings of Chefs Enzo Barbetti and Gisella Isidori of Sienna and Umbria Regions of Italy. After moving to Northern California he went on to gain experience as Executive Chef at Lucas Wharf Restaurant while also writing a food column for a local newspaper. Chef Da Fonseca also owned and operated his own restaurant as well as Flavor Source Sauces and Catering Services, which he still owns. After selling his restaurant, Chef Da Fonseca became the Corporate Executive Chef for Marconi Conference Center, a Corporate Chef and Manager for Compass Group USA, and the Corporate Chef and Manager for Delaware North Companies. After 20 years in the industry, he began his teaching career at the California Culinary Academy in 2003. Chef Da Fonseca joined the CIA in 2007 where he has taught, participated in consulting projects, presented at CIA conferences and retreats, and spoken at graduation ceremonies multiple times. (Napa Valley, CA)

**ILIANA DE LA VEGA** is a Mexican/Latin Cuisines Specialist at The Culinary Institute of America, San Antonio and a founding member of the CIA's Latin Cuisines Advisory Council. Prior to joining the CIA in 2007, Chef de la Vega won worldwide acclaim for her reinterpretation of Oaxacan moles at her restaurant El Naranjo in Oaxaca, Mexico. Born and raised in Mexico City, Chef de la Vega learned to cook from her Oaxacan mother. She has been featured in top U.S. publications including *The New York Times*, *Bon Appétit*, and *Condé Nast Traveler*. Today she develops curriculum and teaches continuing education classes at the CIA, San Antonio; presents at conferences at the CIA at Greystone campus in the Napa Valley; and conducts culinary research throughout Latin America by traveling to interview chefs, home cooks, culinary historians, growers, and producers. She and her team document detailed information about the ingredients, recipes, culinary techniques, and cultural influences that are shaping cuisine within the 27 countries of Latin America. Recently she and her husband Ernesto Torrealba opened El Naranjo Mobile, a food trailer that within months of opening was named "The Best Mexican Restaurant in Austin" by a number of Austin area food critics and publications. (Austin, TX)

**ROBERT DEL GRANDE** is the executive chef and partner of the renowned RDG/Bar Annie in Houston, Texas. A chef with a Ph.D. in chemistry, he has played a prominent role in the historical revision of American cooking, indelibly changing the culinary landscape with his use of the ingredients and flavors of the Southwest. His culinary accolades and awards include a James Beard award. Chef Del Grande has appeared in two PBS series, "Great Chefs" alongside Pierre Franey and "Cooking with the Masters" alongside Julia Child, and has been featured in *Bon Appétit*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Food & Wine*, *Gourmet*, *Restaurant Hospitality*, and *Wine Spectator*. (Houston, TX)

**LAURA DIAZ** (a.k.a. Chef Lala) is a celebrity Latina Chef, author, and spokesperson for the American Diabetes Association. A third-generation restaurateur and daughter of Mexican immigrants, Chef LaLa grew up in the kitchens of her family's California-based eateries and inherited her father's talents at the stove. Before following in his footsteps, she briefly studied to become a cardio-pulmonary therapist, but quickly realized it wasn't the right career for her. She enrolled in the prestigious Le Cordon Bleu and went on to found her own catering company, Savor! Caterers, serving A-list celebrities and VIPs in entertainment and politics, including two U.S. Presidents and a President of Mexico, Vicente Fox. Chef LaLa has a strong interest in nutrition and health. Looking for ways to make cuisine more healthful, she has continually taken courses to improve her nutritional knowledge and is certified as a specialist in fitness nutrition, kids' nutrition, and lifestyle and weight management. She recently received Macy's "Community Star Award", as well as General Mills "Corazón de Comunidad," (literally, "Heart of the Community.") And California's First Lady Maria Shriver inducted Chef LaLa into the state's Museum for History, Women and the Arts. Whether she's teaching nutritious cooking at a Farmer's Market or on a television show, Chef LaLa is on fire with her desire to share everything she has learned to make people's lives healthier and happier—one meal at a time. (Los Angeles, CA)

**NATALIE DINANE** is a journalist who writes for the magazine *France-Antilles*. The daughter of Madame Mérita Felix, Mrs. Dinane grew up on the laps of the women cooks of the Guadeloupe Women Cooks Association and saw both her mother evolve and the grandmothers who nurtured her get older. As a child, like many of the daughters of the other cooks, she was asked to help the cooks undress, fold their clothes, and place their jewels in small fabric pouches. Today, Mrs. Dinane is married and has a son, but continues to assist the women cooks, including traveling with her mother and translating for her. (Guadeloupe)

**GREG DRESCHER**, Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives at The Culinary Institute of America (CIA), oversees the college's leadership initiatives for the foodservice industry, including conferences, leadership retreats, menu research & development, new media, and international studies. He is the creator of the college's influential Worlds of Flavor International Conference & Festival (now in its 13<sup>th</sup> year), the annual Worlds of Healthy Flavors Leadership Retreat presented in partnership with the Harvard School of Public Health, and other CIA "think tank" initiatives. In 2005, Mr. Drescher was inducted into the James Beard Foundation's *Who's Who of Food & Beverage in America*, in 2006 was honored with *Food Arts* magazine's Silver Spoon Award, and in 2007 and 2009 shared a second and third James Beard Award for his work in developing the CIA's "Savoring the Best of World Flavors" DVD and Web cast series, filmed in food cultures on location around the world. In 2008, he was appointed by the President of the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine to its "Committee on Strategies to Reduce Sodium Intake." Mr. Drescher travels widely around the world to track flavors, culinary traditions, and inspiration for healthy eating. A 2008 profile in *Bon Appetit* magazine dubbed him the "Flavor Hunter." (Napa Valley, CA)

**MARK ERICKSON, CMC**, is dean of education and vice president of continuing education for The Culinary Institute of America. He oversees curriculum development as well as

continuing education programs for all three U.S. campuses. He also oversees intellectual property development and industry consulting services. Chef Erickson is one of only 62 Certified Master Chefs in the country. He has been instrumental in the development of the CIA's programs on nutrition and healthy cooking, as well as the college's innovative [www.ciaprochef.com](http://www.ciaprochef.com) Internet initiative. (Napa Valley, CA, San Antonio, TX and Hyde Park, NY)

**MADAME MÉRITA FÉLIX** is the president of the Guadeloupe Women Cooks Association, which was established in 1916. She was born in Guadeloupe but spent many years living in France. Since childhood, Madame Félix accompanied her grandmother to the meetings of the Association, then called *Le Cuistot Mutuel*. Her focus today is reminding people that the foundation of today's great cooks is based on the traditional cooking of the island and the culinary traditions that have given birth to an evolving Antillean cuisine. Every August, Association members get together to celebrate the feast of Saint Lawrence, the Association's patron. The celebration includes a procession through the streets of the city dressed in their traditional clothing, inviting all lovers of good cooking to a lunch of island specialties prepared by the women. Madame Félix has participated in the celebration 48 times, and she bears the emblems of the Women Cooks Association proudly. (Guadeloupe)

**JESSICA HARRIS** is the author of 10 critically acclaimed cookbooks documenting the foods and foodways of the African Diaspora, including *Iron Pots and Wooden Spoons: Africa's Gifts to New World Cooking*; *Sky Juice and Flying Fish: Traditional Caribbean Cooking*; *Tasting Brazil: Regional Recipes and Reminiscences*; *The Welcome Table: African-American Heritage Cooking*; *The Africa Cookbook: Tastes of a Continent*; and *Beyond Gumbo: Creole Fusion Food from the Atlantic Rim*. She is currently working on *High on the Hog*, a narrative history of African-Americans and food. A culinary historian, Dr. Harris has lectured on African-American foodways at numerous institutions and colleges throughout the United States and abroad and has written extensively about the culture of Africa in the Americas, particularly the foodways. An award-winning journalist, she has written for numerous publications ranging from *Essence* to *Saveur* to *German Vogue*. Dr. Harris holds degrees from Bryn Mawr College; Queens College; The Université de Nancy, France; and New York University. She was the inaugural scholar in residence in the Ray Charles Chair in African-American Material Culture at Dillard University in New Orleans, where she established an Institute for the Study of Culinary Cultures. Dr. Harris is currently a professor at Queens College, CUNY and director of the institute. (New York, NY)

**DAVID KELLAWAY** is a Certified Master Chef and a Certified Culinary Educator whose 2010 appointment as Managing Director for The Culinary Institute of America, San Antonio, marks not only a return to the CIA but also a homecoming to his native state of Texas. Twenty years ago he served as Education Department Chairman on the Hyde Park, NY campus before re-entering the industry to provide culinary leadership and operational oversight to many high profile culinary establishments including Station Casinos, Inc. and Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino. Other highlights of Chef Kellaway's 34-year career include appointments as Culinary Director for The Mirage Resort & Casino, Executive Chef of the Salish Lodge at Snoqualmie Falls outside Seattle,

Washington; Executive Sous Chef of The Plaza Hotel in New York City; Chef de Cuisine of The Edwardian Room, also at The Plaza Hotel, and numerous positions as Chef and Executive Chef throughout Texas, Colorado, and New York. Chef Kellaway is a veteran of worldwide culinary competitions, both as a competitor and judge, and he has published extensively, including contributing to many top culinary textbooks. (San Antonio, TX)

**ELIZABETH JOHNSON KOSSICK** is a Latin Cuisines Specialist for The Culinary Institute of America at San Antonio where she teaches, conducts research, and produces multi-media tools for the Center for Foods of the Americas. Prior to joining the CIA, Chef Kossick founded Organica Latina, an all-natural and organic food line featuring products from interior Latin America and was the Culinary Director of Culinaria in New Orleans, LA. She has worked and studied under such talented chefs as Donald Link, Margarita de Salinas, and Maria Dolores Yzabal. Chef Kossick specializes in the foodways of Latin America and is a graduate of the University of Mississippi, Florida International University School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Le Cordon Bleu, and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. (San Antonio, TX)

**CLARA LESUEUR** is the ebullient chef and owner of the eponymous Chez Clara, a charming seaside restaurant in Sainte Rose, a town located in the north coast of Guadeloupe's Basse-Terre (the main island of this French-speaking archipelago in the Caribbean Leeward Islands). Leaving behind a successful career as a dancer in France, she went back to her island roots and took over her mother's restaurant. Chez Clara is best known for seafood dishes like the hearty *Colombo de raie*, a rich curry of skate and green papaya that reflects the strong East Indian influence on the island and the *fricassée de lambi*, a soulful stew featuring conch, one Guadeloupe's favorite mollusks. (Sainte Rose, Guadeloupe)

**FEDERICO LÓPEZ** is the owner of Taller Culinary Workshop, a culinary consulting business. Services include catering, teaching, and consulting for major restaurants and hotels in Cancun and the Riviera Maya, one of the world's top resort destinations. A Culinary Institute of America graduate, Chef López creates food based on classical Mexican cuisine with a contemporary flair. After graduating from the CIA in 1992, Chef López staged in top restaurants in Spain and major hotels in Mexico City, founded and taught at *Centro Culinario Ambrosia*, the top culinary training institute in Mexico, worked as an F&B consultant for the 2003 opening of the Sheraton *Centro Histórico* in Mexico City, worked as the culinary director of for four years of the PGA "Mayakoba" golf tour, and established the "Pacific Cooks" culinary event in Los Cabos, Baja, an event that showcases innovative culinary talent from Mexico. Federico has presented at national and international culinary events and festivals in the U. S., Europe, and South America. He has been named one of the 12 Best Chefs in Mexico for five consecutive years, and Larousse publishers selected Chef López as one of Top 20 Best Chefs in Mexico. (Cancun, Mexico)

**MARILU MADUEÑO** is the executive chef at Restaurant Huaca Pucllana in Lima, Perú. A graduate of Le Cordon Bleu, Paris, she complemented her studies by working in renowned restaurants in Lima and abroad. At Huaca Pucllana she works with native

ingredients, creating and re-interpreting traditional and contemporary Peruvian dishes. In her quest to promote Peruvian cuisine, she has participated in food festivals in several countries, including the United States, Mexico, and Spain. In 2007 Chef Madueño presented at the CIA's Worlds of Flavor conference, which focused on Spanish cuisine, and in 2008 she presented at the CIA, San Antonio's Latin Flavors, American Kitchens leadership retreat, where Perú was a featured country. (Lima, Perú)

**MARK MILLER** is recognized as one of America's foremost chefs working in regional cuisines and international flavors. Over the last 30 years he has combined his formal academic background in cultural anthropology with his passion for bold flavors to create groundbreaking restaurant concepts in the United States, Japan, and Australia. Chef Miller started his culinary career at Berkeley's renowned Chez Panisse in 1977, and then in 1979 opened his first concept, Fourth Street Grill in Berkeley. Fourth Street Grill was the first of his 13 restaurants that featured an eclectic menu of ethnic flavors and culinary traditions that was soon to become his trademark. Some of the restaurants that followed were Santa Fe Bar and Grill in Berkeley in 1981; Coyote Café in Santa Fe, NM in 1986; Red Sage in Washington DC in 2001; Loongbar in San Francisco in 1997; and Wildfire in Sydney in 2002. Mark was elected to Who's Who's in Food and Wine in 1985 and has been awarded the *Food Arts* Silver Spoon Award for lifetime achievements and the James Beard award for Best Chef in the Southwest. He is the author of ten cookbooks and four food posters that have sold over one million copies. Along with his restaurants and books, Chef Miller teaches about the taste and perception of ethnic flavors, especially Latin and Asian culinary traditions. Mark also consults with major food, hotel, airline, and restaurant companies. (Santa Fe, NM)

**RICARDO MUÑOZ ZURITA** is the chef-owner of Café Azul y Oro in Mexico City. Chef Muñoz was born in Veracruz and received his culinary degrees from The Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, and the Cordon Blue in Paris. Chef Muñoz is the author of four books, including *The Mexican Dictionary of Gastronomy*, and his articles have appeared in Latin American and U.S. newspapers and magazines, including *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Bon Appetit*, and *Gourmet*. In 2002 he was featured in the Food Network special "Taste of Mexico." Chef Muñoz has received worldwide recognition for his culinary expertise and talent. *Time* magazine named him "The Prophet and Preserver of a Culinary Tradition" and one of the top 20 people in Mexico "changing the face of the nation." *Gatorpardo* named him one of the top 24 chefs in Latin America, and *Dia Siete* named him one of the top chefs in Mexico City. Chef Muñoz advocates for Mexican farmers to have their produce sold in Mexican markets and restaurants, and he has spent the past decade traveling Mexico's back roads to small towns, rescuing recipes and food lore from oblivion. (Mexico City, Mexico)

**RODRIGO OLIVEIRA** is chef-owner of Mocotó Restaurant and Cachaçeria in São Paulo, Brazil. Mocoto serves popular, hard-to-find foods like Caldo de Mocotó, and artisanal cured and dried meats from Brazil's Northeastern region, known as the *Nordeste*. After taking over the business from his father, José, who founded the humble eatery in 1973, Chef Oliveira focused on preserving the family's recipes and keeping the cuisine of Brazil's Sertão region alive for local São Paulo residents. Working with iconic *Nordeste* ingredients like tapioca, goat, *inhame*, *maxixe*, local beans, and *cupuaçu*, Chef Oliveira

ensures the raw materials play center stage in Mocoto's specialized menu. Chef Oliveira has won national and international acclaim for his interpretation and execution of traditional *Nordeste* cuisine and is one of Brazil's rising star chefs. With an award winning *cachaçeria*, Mocoto carries more than 350 brands of Brazilian *cachaça*, many of which have been hand selected by Chef Oliveira and his father. (São Paulo, Brazil)

**JEFFREY M. PILCHER**, professor of history at the University of Minnesota, is an authority on the globalization of Mexican food. He is the author of *¡Que vivan los tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (1998), *The Sausage Rebellion: Public Health, Private Enterprise, and Meat in Mexico City, 1890–1917* (2006), *Food in World History* (2006), and *Planet Taco* (2010). He is currently working on editing “The Oxford Handbook of the History of Food.” In addition to book writing, Dr. Pilcher has also written more than 40 scholarly articles and book chapters. He lectures frequently at conferences and seminars, and he teaches a variety of courses including World History, Modern Mexico, Modern Latin America, U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, Food in History, Drink in History, and Historical Methods. Dr. Pilcher received his master’s degree from New Mexico State University and Ph.D. in history from Texas Christian University. (Minneapolis, MN)

**MARICEL PRESILLA** is a restaurateur and culinary historian specializing in the foods of Latin America and Spain, is the first Latin American chef to have been invited as a guest chef at the White House. She holds a doctorate in medieval Spanish history from New York University and has received formal training in cultural anthropology. Dr. Presilla has done considerable research on Latin American agriculture with special emphasis on tropical crops, cacao and vanilla agriculture, and chocolate production. She is the president of Gran Cacao Company, a Latin American food research and marketing company that specializes in the sale of premium cacao beans from Latin America. Her latest book is a revised and expanded edition of *The New Taste of Chocolate: A Cultural and Natural History of Chocolate with Recipes*. She has also completed a comprehensive Latin American cookbook for W.W. Norton and has contributed articles for *Saveur*, *Food & Wine*, *Food Arts*, and *Gourmet*. She is also a food columnist for *The Miami Herald*. A member of The Culinary Institute of America’s Latin Cuisines Advisory Council Executive Committee, Presilla is as comfortable doing research in Latin America as she is cooking at Zafra and Cucharamama, her pan-Latin restaurants in Hoboken, New Jersey. In 2007, 2008, and 2009, Presilla was nominated as Best Chef Mid-Atlantic by the James Beard Foundation for her restaurant Cucharamama. In 2009 she received a Silver Spoon award from *Food Arts* and has been named one of the twenty-five most influential Latin American women in the USA by *People Magazine En Español* this October. In February 2010, she opened Ultramarinos, a Latin American food store and chocolate *atelier*, also in Hoboken, NJ (Hoboken, NJ)

**ARTURO RUBIO** is founder and CEO of Huaca Pucllana Restaurant. A businessman and gastronomist, he is one of the pioneers of the culinary trend known as The Lima Vanguard, an initiative that is encouraging a new Peruvian cuisine through modern interpretation of classical recipes and extensive use of native products. Mr. Rubio is a member of the CIA’s Latin Cuisines Advisory Council. (Lima, Perú)

**FERNANDO SALAZAR** is the Vice President of Food and Beverage for Wyndham Hotels and Resorts. Fernando brings with him an extensive knowledge of the world of

gastronomy, experience obtained through more than 30 years of work in the areas of food and beverage in some of the best hotel chains of the United States and the world. Born in Guayaquil, Ecuador, Salazar immigrated to the United States in 1971. He began his hotel career in New York City with Helmsley Hotels. Salazar continued his career at Westin hotels, where he remained for 13 years and was promoted to the position of Director of Food and Beverage. In 1996, Salazar moved to Omni Hotels and Resorts where, after directing several of his hotels, was named VP of Food and Beverage. With Salazar at the helm of the food and beverage division, Omni Hotels obtained top rankings in F&B quality three years in a row in the annual JD Power survey. Fernando joined Wyndham Hotels and Resorts in 2007. This prestigious chain counts with more than 450 hotels throughout the world. The Culinary Institute of America, where he recently was a commencement speaker, proclaimed him Ambassador of the CIA and awarded him the Gold Medal of Honor for his leadership, mentoring efforts and creativity. He is a member of The Culinary Institute of America Latin Cuisines Advisory Council and the HM&LA Food & Beverage Advisory Board. He is also a member of the International Food and Beverage Forum, a group of 50 experts dedicated to the promotion of the industry worldwide. In 2008, Salazar was named judge of the prestigious National Tapas Competition in Valladolid Spain. (Parsippany, NJ)

**MARA SALLES** is owner of Tordesilhas in São Paulo, Brazil. Mara is the first Brazilian chef to propose a dialogue between traditional and contemporary Brazilian cuisine. Tordesilhas has been named many times the Best Brazilian Food Restaurant by specialized magazines and newspapers within São Paulo and throughout Brazil. A professor in the gastronomy course at Anhembi-Morumbi University and other schools, Chef Salles also gives speeches in Gastronomic Festivals in Brazil and abroad. Recently, she participated of Bon Appétit Culinary and Wine Focus, in Beaver Creek, Colorado. (São Paulo, Brazil)

**RICHARD SANDOVAL**, a native of Mexico City, is chef and owner of Modern Mexican Restaurants, now a leading international restaurant group with more than a dozen locations in New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, Washington DC, Virginia, Denver, Las Vegas, Mexico City, Acapulco, and Dubai. Chef Sandoval maintains the stellar reputation of his signature restaurants while constantly identifying new opportunities to bring the vibrant flavors of Mexico to larger and increasingly diverse audiences. Chef Sandoval has received numerous awards throughout his career, including *Bon Appetit's* prestigious Restaurateur of the Year in 2006 and National Toque d'Oro's Mexican Chef of the Year. He was named one of the "Best Chefs of 2003" by *New York Magazine*, and Maya and Pampano are the only two Mexican restaurants to have been awarded two stars by *The New York Times*. Richard is a member The Culinary Institute of America's Latin Cuisines Advisory Council. (New York City, NY)

**ROBERTO SANTIBAÑEZ** is the chef/owner of Fonda restaurant in Brooklyn and Culinary Director of The Taco Truck in Hoboken, NJ. He is also the owner of Truly Mexican, a New York based food consulting firm. As a native of Mexico City and a graduate with honors from Paris's top culinary institutions, award-winning Chef Roberto Santibañez' culinary resume includes stints as restaurateur, culinary consultant, author, and teacher in Mexico, Europe, and the United States. Chef Santibañez has been responsible for the

culinary development of some of the most highly regarded Mexican restaurants in the United States. His 2007 book *Rosa's New Mexican Table* was nominated for a 2008 James Beard Award. Roberto is now working on his second cookbook to be published in 2011. Chef Santibañez is a member of The Culinary Institute of America's Latin Cuisines Advisory Council. (Brooklyn, NY)

**LUCERO SOTO** is the chef-owner of Restaurant LU in Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico. Born in Morelia, Lucero started cooking as a child with her nanny, Tata, who learned the family recipes from Lucero's grandmother. The love Tata put into her cooking and food made a big impact on Chef Soto. He went on to study marketing in Spain. During this time she began to research the tradition and evolution of *Lu Cocina Michoacana*, the cuisine of Michoacán. Chef Soto has presented her food in Oaxaca and Mexico City. She is working on her first book, which will tell the story of *Lu Cocina Michoacana*. (Michoacán, Mexico)

**NORMAN VAN AKEN** is known as "the founding father of New World Cuisine". He is the only Floridian inducted into James Beard: Who's Who. His restaurant, Norman's was deemed Best Restaurant in Florida by *The New York Times*. Chef Van Aken's was also nominated by the James Beard Foundation as The Best Restaurant in America in its first year of eligibility. Chef Van Aken was hailed as a "culinary genius" by Johnson and Wales University and given an honorary doctorate. In 2006 he was honored as one of the Founders of the New American Cuisine, alongside Alice Waters, Paul Prudhomme, and Mark Miller at Spain's International Summit of Gastronomy Madrid Fusion event. Chef Van Aken was the first chef in America to become a member of the James Beard Foundation's Board of Trustees and is on the James Beard Foundation's National Advisory Board. He oversees his acclaimed restaurant; Norman's at the Ritz-Carlton, Orlando and is building his newest creation Norman's 180 in Miami now. Chef Van Aken has published four books: *Feast of Sunlight* (1988), *The Exotic Fruit Book* (1995), *Norman's New World Cuisine* (1997), and *New World Kitchen* (2003). (Miami, FL)