

10 TOP ORANGE COUNTY
CHEFS UNDER 40

OCMETRO
THE BUSINESS LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE



If you have eaten out lately in a fine dining restaurant in Orange County and happened to meet the chef, you may have been surprised to shake hands with someone who looked not like Chef Boyardee but like a recent high school graduate. From OC's luxe coastal resorts to fancy restaurants around South Coast Plaza and across the county, high-class cookery seems to be morphing into a young man's game. (There are some young women, too, but, surprisingly, we didn't find that many.) Sure, the middle-aged culinary maestros with fiery eyes and 40-inch waists are still around, but more and more top kitchens are being run by people in their 20s and 30s. The popularity of TV cooking shows has a lot to do with it. Kids today – and for a while now – have grown up with celebrity chefs cavorting on the small screen, cracking eggs and jokes with equal dexterity. A profusion of cooking schools has echoed and magnified the TV trend. Cookingschools.com lists 977 culinary arts academies just in the U.S., many with multiple locations. With more schools in more places, kids who have a yen to blend can get an education much more easily. And the glamour of the profession keeps growing, with cooking seen not as a menial service job but as a creative art akin to singing or painting. On its website, the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco, where three of the young chefs profiled here were trained, invites students to “break away from the ordinary and fulfill your dream of having an exciting career,” and that's just what a growing number of talented Orange County cooks are doing.



**Lindsay Marie
Smith-Rosales, 27
Chef & Owner**

Nirvana Grille

Type of cuisine: Clean California
cuisine.

Signature dish: Pistachio Dijon Crusted Chilean Seabass served with
Caramelized Leek Mashed Yukon Potatoes and Asparagus.

Favorite ingredient: Fish.

Trained: Orange Coast College Culinary Program, Pascal and The Ritz-
Carlton, Laguna Niguel.

At what age did you decide to become a chef?

18.

Why did you become a chef?

Fascination with food.

What is the key to being a great chef?

Having drive and imagination, without ego.

What is your favorite OC restaurant (besides your own)?

Pasta Pomodoro or San Shi Go Sushi.

Are there more young chefs now than there used to be?

I would assume so; being a chef is more televised now and the exposure
has definitely had an impact on kids considering this as a career.

What is the hottest cooking trend in Southern California?

Tapas, small plates and wine/beer pairing.

What is the latest buzz word in Orange County culinary circles?

Organic local farm products.

