



IN THE KITCHEN WITH CHEF BRADLEY OGDEN

by Nancy Oster

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRAN COLLIN

Does celebrated American chef Bradley Ogden get a chance to cook at home? The answer is yes, but not as often as he might like. After graduation from the Culinary Institute of America in 1977 with honors (identified as the student most likely to succeed), he became the creative force behind several award-winning restaurants, which include Lark Creek Inn in Marin County, One Market in San Francisco, Bradley Ogden at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, and now Root 246 in Solvang.

Chef Ogden's passion for traditional American comfort food and his elegant use of farm-fresh ingredients have won him acclaim as one of the "Great American Chefs" by the International Wine and Food Society, "Best Chef of California" from the James Beard Foundation, the "Golden Plate" award from the American Academy of Achievement and "Chef of the Year" in 2002 from the Culinary Institute of America.

If you eat at Root 246 in Solvang, you'll understand why. A simple sirloin meatloaf slice comes to you on a bed of delicately herb-flavored mashed potatoes surrounded by a spicy sauce reminiscent of ketchup, but fresh and light. A variety of sautéed wild mushrooms cascade over the meatloaf onto the plate ... simple, classic and delicious. The restaurant menu changes daily, based on the freshest local ingredients available that day.

So what does a chef of this caliber have in his home kitchen? Chef Ogden graciously invited us to visit his kitchen to see. He warned us that his kitchen is small—a typical condo kitchen. When most of your evenings and holidays are spent handling large quantities of food in a restaurant kitchen, a smaller home kitchen must feel pretty cozy.

The first thing Chef Ogden showed us was an outline and recipes for his upcoming cookbook, a collection of recipes for holiday entertaining. The recipes include traditional foods with a fresh twist, such as Sage Butter Basted Turkey or Boston Brown Bread with Homemade Spiced Apple Butter.

"I'm testing all the recipes in my kitchen here at home," he said as we looked through a book of recent food photos. *Edible Santa Barbara* Editor Krista Harris and I both immediately volunteered to be tasters.

We asked Chef Ogden to tell us about the things we saw in his kitchen area, and to talk a little about becoming a chef.

I see you have a cookbook collection. Are there one or two you rely on in particular?

Probably *Food Lover's Companion*, a dictionary of food terms, techniques and ingredients. I look through some of the others for ideas. I also refer to my own cookbook, *Bradley Ogden's Breakfast Lunch and Dinner*, to recreate things I've done in the past.

Is that a barbecue out on the terrace?

Yes, I make different barbecue sauces from scratch. Some of those recipes will be in the new cookbook.

Is this a picture of you with your mom?

Yes, that's at Campton Place Hotel in San Francisco about a year after I opened it. That was an article in *GQ*. Mom came out from Michigan to make her fried chicken at the restaurant.

Was your mom the primary cook in your family?

Yes, she cooked for all seven of us kids. She made typical one-pot stuff like goulash, pot roast, meatloaf and turkey—old favorites. Dad was famous for his ice creams. All of us kids lined up to crank the ice cream maker. You can't beat hand-cranked ice cream. It never comes out quite that good with an electric ice cream maker.

Both grandmothers cooked. My twin brother, Ben, and I would spend at least a week or two in the summer on my mom's mother's farm in Windsor, Ontario. We'd pick tomatoes off the vine for tomato salad. My grandmother would make us little picnic lunches to eat in the fields.

She killed and plucked her own chickens. I remember her delicious rhubarb and berry pies. (Ben used to try to get two pieces.) We didn't have much growing up, but my dad was a big fanatic on all-organic farm-fresh food; it had to come directly from the farm. We also did a lot of fishing and hunting together.



Did you learn to cook from your mom and grandmother?

No, I didn't step into the kitchen until I was 18. Cooking school was my dad's idea. He figured if you learned how to cook, you could always get a job. My dad owned a big rock and roll club up in Traverse City, Michigan, called *Tanzhaus*. He saw this article in the *Detroit Free Press* about the Culinary Institute of America, so off to chef school my twin brother and I went. My dad figured if we learned to cook we could start a family business.

Did your dad serve meals at the Tanzhaus?

No, just snacks like popcorn and hot dogs. It held 500 people indoors and another 500 outdoors. Musicians like Led Zeppelin and Bob Seger came to play. I cleaned the place, was a disc jockey, a security guard—you name it, we did it. I tended the bar when I was 12.

How did you like culinary school?

I loved it. It was like I'd been doing it all my life, like playing the piano with no lessons.

Is this a photo of one of your sons with you and your mother? Three cooks in the kitchen?

Yes, two of my sons went to the Culinary Institute of America. Chad, my oldest son, is a chef in Hong Kong. Bryan, my middle son, has opened a restaurant called the Munch Bar in Las Vegas. They'd worked a little at Lark Creek Inn, on and off, but we didn't work together professionally until Bryan came on board as my chef de cuisine at Ogden's in Las Vegas. My youngest son, Corey, is a doctor.

Are those fruit in your fruit basket locally grown?

Yes, I'm a big advocate of farm to table, buying directly from the farm or farmers markets. After a year of being open here in the Valley, farmers are

starting to show up at our back door. I'd like to see more little boutique stores, delis and restaurants open up here selling local organic products.

What fall ingredients do you look forward to the most?

I look forward to apples, pears and the first blush of winter squash like Butternut squash and sweet pumpkins. I also watch for pomegranates and quince.

Is that a recipe on your refrigerator door?

Yes, I tear recipes I like out of magazines to keep in a file.

Your refrigerator looks a little empty.

It's usually packed. I just cleaned it out. There was a Double Chocolate Soufflé Bread Pudding with Chocolate Sabayon, but it didn't come out the way I wanted it. There are some of the barbecue sauces I've been working on. Here are some homemade pickles and some jams I'm putting in the cookbook.

I also make my own homemade mustards using yellow and sometimes black mustard seeds and ground mustard. I'm trying out different flavors like peach, mango or horseradish mustard. Some of those recipes will be in the cookbook.

Tell me about these vinegars.

I love balsamic vinegar. I use vinegars, tomato and citrus in cooking to add an acidic clarity and a little punch to my recipes.

I use Sparrow Lane vinegars a lot and I use Iced Wine Vinegar from Minus 8 at the restaurant. It's made in Canada from grapes picked frozen from the vines. It has taken us years to produce really good balsamic vinegars here in the U.S., but now we have them.

I also use olive oil from B. R. Cohn in Sonoma County. I do a big charity event for him every October, a sit-down dinner for 450 people.

I see your kitchen utensils in a large tin popcorn bucket next to the stove. Which ones do you use the most?

These silicone brushes are great because the bristles won't fall out and you can put them in the dishwasher. And of course the microplane grater is an important tool. I like to have my utensils out here where it's easy to get them.

I bought this rolling cart for my chinois and my pots and pans. I hated digging through the cupboards to find something. Now I can roll the cart right over to where I'm working.

Stainless steel pans?

I use All-Clad stainless pans at home. These have copper sandwiched in the middle between the stainless layers so they heat more evenly.

Knives?

I only keep a few knives here at home. This Japanese chef's knife was a gift to myself. It has a teak handle that polishes up beautifully. I like the quality of the steel and the balance. I use stainless steel—I hate sharpening. This little ceramic paring knife also works well and it only cost about \$13.

I see you have an electric ice cream maker. What's your favorite ice cream?

I do this great drunken prune chocolate ice cream that will be in my cookbook. A little brandy, some bourbon. It's sort of soft-serve.

Anything you eat that you don't want anyone to see you buying?

Like graham crackers? I love graham crackers. They're my late-night snack with yogurt ... or just milk and graham crackers.

I see you have some Smucker's chocolate sauce on the door shelf.

Oh, I love a little hot marshmallow sundae once in a while. I have ganache in there too but...

Banana, honey and peanut butter is a good little midnight snack too—organic peanut butter. And I love to make little open-face tuna fish sandwiches. Sometimes I put a little apple and celery in with the tuna.

Anything else you'd like to have in your kitchen?

Two dishwashers. Half the battle is cleaning up after yourself. ☺

After writing this article **Nancy Oster** drove to Root 246 in Solvang to test the excellence of the food ... one more time.



Simply Pies
Simply Delicious
organic * local * handcrafted
Pie Cottage Open Tuesday-Saturday
5392 Hollister Avenue, 805-845-2200
www.simplypiessb.com
Organic pies, quiche, cheesecake & pot pies using fresh local ingredients
Gluten free & sugar free options available

Gainey Vineyard FARMERS' MARKET

Friday, October 8th
4:30pm-7:30pm

Captain John Wilson • Chocolats du Calibressan
Clairmont Farms • Decadence Fine Foods
Enjoy Cupcakes • Finley Farms • Frannie's Gourds
Gainey Vineyard - Wines Sold by the Glass
Jimenez Farms • Lily's Eggs
Luna Gitana - Providing Live Music
Marcie's Pie • Morrell Farms
Olive Hill Farm • Rori's Organic Creamery
San Julian Ranch • San Marcos Farms
Solvang Trolley - Hayrides through the Vineyard
Viking Charities, Inc. - Selling Tri-tip Sandwiches
AND MUCH MORE!

www.gaineyvineyard.com
3950 East Highway 246 • Santa Ynez, CA 93460, (805) 688-0558

BUTTONWOOD FARM
WINERY & VINEYARD

Sustainable Agriculture since 1968

Visit us at our tasting room
outside of Solvang

BUTTONWOOD FARM WINERY
1500 ALAMO PINTADO ROAD, SOLVANG, CALIFORNIA, 93463
805 . 688 . 3032
www.buttonwoodwinery.com