

# *New World Provence*

MODERN FRENCH COOKING FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY



Alessandra and Jean-Francis Quaglia

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ARSENAL  
PULP PRESS

VANCOUVER

NEW WORLD PROVENCE

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2nd printing: 2008

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ARSENAL PULP PRESS

341 Water Street, Suite 200

Vancouver, BC

Canada V6B 1B8

*arsenalpulp.com*

The publisher gratefully acknowledges the support of the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program and the Government of British Columbia through the Book Publishing Tax Credit Program for its publishing activities.

The authors and publisher assert that the information contained in this book is true and complete to the best of their knowledge. All recommendations are made without guarantee on the part of the authors and publisher. The authors and publisher disclaim any liability in connection with the use of this information. For more information, contact the publisher.

Text and cover design by Electra Design Group

Edited by Bethanne Grabham

Food and selected B&W photographs by Hamid Attie

Other photographs courtesy of the authors

Front cover food images (left to right):

Roasted Sweet Potatoes (page 103)

Fresh Tomato Tarte (page 48)

Pear & Fig Tarte (page 185)

Printed and bound in China

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication:

Quaglia, Alessandra, 1968-

New World Provence : modern French cooking for friends and family /

Alessandra and Jean-Francis Quaglia.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-55152-223-4

1. Cookery, French. I. Quaglia, Jean-Francis, 1968- II. Title.

TX719.Q83 2007

641.5944

C2007-904446-8





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*We would like to dedicate this book to our sons Remi and Matisse  
whose discerning palates keep us on our toes!*





## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Firstly we would like to thank our mothers Jette and Suzanne and stepmother Dorothy. They are forever strong and loving, and continue to support us, unconditionally.

Thanks to our dad and father-in-law Nicholas Mossa for getting us started and helping us to realize our dream.

Thank you, Remi and Matisse, for your patience during the production of this book.

Our photographer and dear friend Hamid Attie put his heart and soul into every picture and we are so grateful and thrilled with the outcome.

Our utmost appreciation goes to Del for stepping in to relieve our anxiety and help us organize all the recipes.

Thank you to all our wonderful and dedicated staff who make it possible for us to actually have a life, unlike many other restaurateurs.

It has been a great experience working with everyone at Arsenal Pulp. Special thanks to Bethanne Grabham for her patience throughout the editing process.

A very special shout out to all our friends and family, with whom we enjoy sharing many great meals.

Finally, we are extremely grateful to our clientele for supporting us over the last ten years. You keep our mission alive.

## FOREWORD BY DOMINIQUE LE STANC

.....

I remember the first time I met Jean-Francis Quaglia. He wanted me to hire him at the Hôtel Negresco in Nice, France, one of the most renowned hotels in the world. At the time, I was *chef de cuisine* at the hotel's restaurant, which had two Michelin stars. Jean-Francis was only in his early twenties, but I could tell he was talented with a strong character, dedicated to his chosen career with help from his mother, chef Suzanne Quaglia, and her restaurant Le Patalain in Marseille. He studied at L'Ecole Hôtelière there, and also trained at other famed restaurants, such as Le Chevre D'Or in Eze, close to Nice. He made a very favorable first impression on me, so I hired him right away, a decision which I would not regret. I saw very quickly that he was a real cook and I felt that he would go far; he was showing the necessary application and inspiration, and a real passion for his craft. At an age when most young people are easily distracted, Jean-Francis always paid very close attention to the fine details. After several weeks on the job, he became *chef de partie tournant*, having full responsibility for each station in the kitchen, such as fish, meat, and vegetables.

Then one day a young Canadian from Toronto named Alessandra, who had just finished cooking school, knocked on my door to ask for an apprenticeship in my kitchen, saying she wanted to perfect her knowledge of French cuisine, specifically Meridional (i.e. the South of France). I felt that she was determined enough, so I agreed to hire her. I noticed right away that our *stagiaire* Alessandra and our chef de partie Jean-Francis seemed to share the same passion for their work. Their chemistry flourished and soon they were never apart.

After leaving the Negresco and then spending some more time in Marseille, they thought they would try their luck in Canada, Alessandra's native country. There they enhanced their cooking expertise amidst a huge variety of cuisines without ever forgetting their love for Provençal fine dining. Five years later, in 1997, they opened their first restaurant, Provence Mediterranean Grill in Vancouver, bringing their love for French flavors to local customers, who quickly took note. Shortly after opening, they received the Gold Award for best bistro from *Vancouver Magazine*. In the meantime, they also started to build a family, resulting in two sons.

A few years later, they opened a second restaurant in Vancouver, Provence Marinaside, giving the city another opportunity to appreciate some truly Mediterranean specialties, such as the famous Marseillaise bouillabaisse with *rouille* and croutons as well as a warm goat cheese salad with *herbes de Provence*. They also served the legendary *pissaladière*, and one of his mother's specialties, grilled quail with juniper berries.

I believe Jean-Francis and Alessandra owe their success to their conviction in the foods and methods of Provençal cooking, a cuisine rich with flavor and color. A true cuisine does not exist without tradition, but neither can it exist without being open to innovation. Jean-Francis and Alessandra understand this, and as a result, their craft and talent shine. They prove it with dishes such as their succulent prawns sautéed with extra virgin olive oil and served with a *socca galette* and tomatoes. (In Nice, socca is still enjoyed today as a snack by early morning workers and tourists; it is a large crêpe made from chickpea flour, cooked in a fire wood oven, where the crêpe is browned to the point that its surface looks burnt, like a woman who spends too much time at the beach!)

Each one of Jean-Francis and Alessandra's dishes manage to reveal and procure deep culinary pleasure. With this book, they want to share their love for and dedication to Provençal food with those who have been enchanted by their restaurants and wish to bring that experience home to their own dinner table, as well as those who may have never visited their premises but wish to know more about the traditions (both old and new) of Provençal cuisine.

The rest is up to readers of this book as they follow the simple yet precise recipes the Quaglias offer here. For those who are new to French cooking: know that everything is possible as long as you remember this quote by Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, a French lawyer and politician who was quite possibly the most famous epicure and gastronome in all of France during the eighteenth century: "Of all the qualities of a cook, the most indispensable is their accuracy."

To everyone, I wish you many delicious discoveries and *un très bon appétit!*

—*Dominique LeStanc*

Chef and owner, La Merenda restaurant  
Nice, France  
July 2007

## FOREWORD BY ROB FEENIE

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People in the restaurant business are very passionate and pour every ounce of their energy into their work, but at the same time, they strive to maintain personal lives outside of their hectic schedules. I cannot think of two people who can balance both worlds better than my very good friends, Jean-Francis and Alessandra. They have two amazing restaurants, Provence Mediterranean Grill and Provence Marinaside, and two amazing children, Remi and Matisse. Both Jean-Francis and Alessandra bring a very proud family spirit to both of their establishments, which showcase the culture and cuisine of the South of France right here in Vancouver. Jean-Francis and I first met in the early 1990s at the French bistro Chez Thierry on Robson Street in Vancouver; he had just arrived here in Canada from France. A few years later, in 1995, when I opened my restaurant Lumière, we crossed paths again through my sous chef, Frank Pabst, who had worked with Jean-Francis at the Hôtel Negresco in Nice—what an extraordinary place to meet! As a result, Jean-Francis and I renewed our friendship that included great food (of course), great wine, and most importantly, our families.

Jean-Francis and Alessandra opened their first Provence restaurant on West 10th Avenue in Vancouver in December 1997, and I can remember it like it was yesterday. Frank and I arrived after work to share a celebratory glass of wine with Jean-Francis and Alessandra and to get a taste of their first menu—and to this day, I return to that restaurant weekly for more. I once had a staff party for Lumière and we served almost every item from Provence’s antipasti menu, including the pissaladière and merguez sausage; the food was amazing, a truly unforgettable culinary experience for the staff. I also can never get enough of their classic fish soup; in fact, anything they create with seafood is fantastic because their ingredients are so simple—a little olive oil, lemon juice, white wine, sometimes a hint of butter—and prepared in ways that are understated yet sophisticated at the same time. My all-time favorite entrée is the roasted free-run chicken Provençal; I do not know how many times I have had it, but I can never get enough—it is the perfect meal, especially when accompanied by a simple sauce and grilled vegetables. Another two of my favorites are the wild mushroom ravioli and the crab, prawn, and scallop open ravioli with the creamy lobster bisque. These are just a few of my picks, as Provence’s food is always so damn good.

I believe any great restaurant must have passion and soul in the kitchen. The reason that Jean-Francis and Alessandra have been so successful is because they possess both of these qualities, and more. The South of France has always been a special place for me, with its warm, sunny weather and great food. I believe it is one of the most magical places in all of Europe. Let this book take you on a wonderful journey there. *Bon appétit!*

—*Rob Feenie*

Chef and owner, Lumière and Feenie's restaurants

Vancouver, Canada

August 2007





## INTRODUCTION

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ALESSANDRA: I never quite knew what I wanted to be when I grew up. Dreams of becoming a ballerina were wiped out after an unsuccessful audition for the National Ballet of Canada. And I was always more of a social bunny than an academic at school, so any lofty aspirations of becoming a lawyer were quickly dashed. Cooking, however, was always a secret passion.

My Danish mother and Italian father are both first-generation Canadians and both had very strong ties to family. I grew up in Toronto with my sister and mom. My parents divorced when I was three, so holidays and weekends were often split to accommodate both sides of the family. During many a weekend visit with my Danish grandparents at Sunset Villa, a community property enjoyed by Danes in Guelph, Ontario, I would often watch my Mormor (“mother’s mom” in Danish) and my Möster (mother’s aunt) create beautiful Danish buffets called *smörgåsbord*, a name that is also used in English (directly translated, it means “buttered bread”). These buffets usually consist of cold roast beef, roast pork, and fish, plus lots of different condiments so guests can make their own sandwiches. I used to love watching my Mormor create specialty open-faced sandwiches that were truly works of art; my favorite was the liver pâté with cucumber salad or sliced beets on Danish rye bread.

On other Sundays, I visited my Nonna and Nonno, my Italian grandparents. My Nonna and Zia (great aunt) Rocky would always be hard at work in the kitchen creating wonderful Italian meals that started at noon and continued into the evening. We always had some type of seafood, like squid or mussels and clams, then some pasta with a homemade sauce; lamb roasted on the barbecue was usually the main entrée. My fondest memory was always the end of the meal, when all my cousins and I would eagerly await for the home-made *zabaglione*, a dessert made with egg yolks and sugar and served in small espresso cups.

Good food was certainly a natural part of my genetic makeup. My interest in it flourished when my dad, who was a hairdresser, needed a new challenge and opened his first restaurant called Blondies (after his daughters!), a few doors down from his hair salon on Yonge Street in Toronto. He always worked closely with the chefs, and it wasn’t long before I began taking notes. One day when my dad

and I were in the kitchen, I noticed his proficient chopping skills, and I asked him to show me how. Holding that chef's knife and trying desperately to emulate his method was a turning point for me—when my secret passion became a real career choice.

After graduating from high school in 1987, my mother bought me a plane ticket to spend the summer in Denmark. Unknowingly, she had planted the travel bug in me. One summer turned into a year, during which I worked as a breakfast cook at the Hotel Admiral in Copenhagen. I loved the ambiance in the kitchen there. Upon returning to Toronto after my year away, I immediately applied to the Culinary Management program at the George Brown School of Hospitality. After my first year, I was anxious to get out in the field to work.

My boyfriend at the time had family with property in Nice, France, and every summer he would spend a month there. I had always dreamt of visiting the South of France, and in May 1990, at the age of twenty-two, I flew to Europe on my own again, this time to Nice. With the help of my boyfriend's family and friends, I was able to make some connections regarding a cooking apprenticeship. The plan was for me to work for a couple months before he arrived in August for his vacation. There were only two things that complicated my quest: I needed a working visa and I would have to find restaurants that accepted women in the kitchen. Back in the early 1990s, women were not yet taken seriously in the male-dominated industry. One restaurant bluntly refused my application, proudly stating that they simply did not allow women to work there. My other option was to apply as a *stagiaire*, or apprentice, by which one worked for free at various restaurants and gained experience by watching and doing small jobs for two to three weeks at a time. At each kitchen I worked, there were anywhere from six to sixteen male cooks around me. I tried to stay focused, because after all my main goal was to learn as much as I could about fine French food, but needless to say, I got distracted and my relationship with my boyfriend was doomed.

I was very fortunate to work with some great French chefs, including Jacques Maximin, Bruno Caironi, Jean-Jacques Jouteux, and Dominique LeStanc. Dominique, from Chantecler at the Hôtel Negresco, was the one who ended up giving me the chance of a lifetime by sponsoring me for a three-month work visa, which allowed me to work more seriously as a *commis de cuisine* and focus on a specific station in the kitchen. I recall my third day of official work at Chantecler, when I had been chopping all sorts of onions and trying to be stoic about it. In a kitchen of fifteen male cooks, there was no way I could show any sort of vulnerability. I remember looking up from the misery of my

task and there he was, unbeknownst to me my future husband, Jean-Francis, looking straight into my presumably reddened eyes. He gestured with a nod to say hello. No words were exchanged but right then and there we had an instant attraction. Our conversations were limited due to the fact that neither of us could speak the other's language, but I must say, the language of love is universal.

JEAN-FRANCIS: For as long as I can remember, I have always been exposed to fine French cuisine. My mother, lovingly known as Mamie Suzanne, is a voracious cook. Even though she was a single mom—my father died in a tragic car accident when I was only ten months old—she entertained friends and family almost every weekend while I was growing up. She would take my brother Jacques and me to wonderful restaurants whenever we traveled outside of Marseille, where we lived. It was therefore inevitable that food became a passion for me very early. At the age of eight, I began experimenting with pastries, and my lemon tarte quickly became a favorite amongst our dinner guests. When I turned twelve, my mother felt I needed more of a male influence in my life, so she sent me to spend time with my Tonton (uncle) Pierrot and Tatie (aunt) Josette at their traditional *boulangerie* (bakery) in the small Haute Provence village of Forqualquier. My uncle started work at eleven o'clock each night to prepare the next day's baked goods to be sold in their store. I was ambitious and wanted to help him, figuring it would give me a taste of the life of a real baker. However, by three in the morning, my uncle would usually find me snoozing on a big bag of flour. My mother advised me that the life of a *boulangier* was not conducive to healthy family life and encouraged me to take the route of *chef cuisinier* instead.

When I was fourteen, my mother took over a twenty-seat restaurant called Le Patalain (the previous owners were named Patricia and Alain, hence the name). At the age of sixteen, I enrolled in a culinary program that would last two years. Le Patalain was an exciting place for me to practice my skills while learning the trade. I was able to see first-hand what was involved in running a small business. Soon, however, the restaurant became too small for my mother, whom the people of Marseille now referred to as “La Mère Marseillaise.” She moved the business closer to the Vieux Port (the Old Port) where she built her dream restaurant. Retaining the name, the new establishment was definitely Michelin-star quality with all the bells and whistles. My brother managed the front of the house while she oversaw the kitchen. After fifteen years, my mother became respected as one of the best female chefs in Marseille, and received the coveted La Clef D'Or award from Gault et Millaud, amongst many other accolades.

After graduating, my mother suggested I further my culinary education by going to work for *des bonnes maisons* (“some great restaurants”). I started at the Hôtel Sofitel Vieux Port in Marseille, which gave me good experience in traditional French cuisine. I then moved on to the Côte D’Azur, where I landed a job at the reputable La Chevre D’Or in Eze Village. It was commonplace for young cooks to move around after one season to get as much exposure to different chefs as possible. I then moved on to Chantecler in the famed Hôtel Negresco in Nice. As far as cooking was concerned, Dominique LeStanc of Chantecler became a major influence on me in the way I wanted to express myself with food, and on a personal level, it was there at Chantecler that my life’s fortune would be determined. After meeting Alessandra, we started a relationship that changed my life forever.

ALESSANDRA: Jean-Francis and I both reminisce regularly about those wonderful days in France. Sometimes we look at the letters we sent each other during the nine months after I had returned to Toronto, not knowing if we’d ever see each other again, but something told me that I needed to figure out if we could seriously have a future together. I returned to Nice in April of 1991 and shortly thereafter followed Jean-Francis back to his hometown. Together we worked with Mamie Suzanne at Le Patalain, where I quickly became fluent in French and learned to appreciate and love Provençal cooking and the French way of life. After a year of living and working together seven days a week, we knew that marriage was on our life’s menu! Appeasing my mother and her request that we return to Toronto to marry, we exchanged vows on May 23, 1992.

After our wedding, we decided to take my father up on his offer to fly us out to Vancouver where he lived and contemplate the idea of opening a restaurant there. Being newly married, it seemed like the natural thing to do, starting fresh in a new city. Shortly after we arrived the brain-storming began; my father and my stepmother Dorothy were the major investors, and offered many interesting ideas. However, we soon hit a brick wall when we couldn’t seem to agree on one concept. My father wanted a casual Italian bistro and we wanted a fine, Michelin star-quality establishment; after all, we had just arrived from Europe with training from some of the best restaurants in France. Our visions were at opposite ends of the spectrum, but perhaps in the end it was a blessing in disguise. It would be five years until our ideas would finally come together and Provence was born. During those five years, Jean-Francis and I were able to meet and get to know the people of Vancouver and learn about the eating habits of West Coasters; we realized that for the most part Vancouverites had a casual but well-educated palate, not unlike other North American cities.

The story of how we found our first location is one I'll never forget. One sunny day in July, Jean-Francis went out to buy fertilizer for our garden. He was gone longer than expected, and when he finally pulled up in the driveway, he hurried us all back into the car, including our roommate Frank Pabst and his fiancée Kelley. Jean-Francis was so excited and told us we had to see what he had just discovered on his shopping trip. We soon arrived on West 10th Avenue in the Point Grey neighborhood, in front of a dilapidated old building with a small sign in the window that read "For Lease."

Despite its condition, Jean-Francis and I both thought it would be the perfect place for our restaurant. After much negotiation with the landlord, we soon secured the lease in our name and six months later opened Provence Mediterranean Grill. The neighborhood welcomed our arrival; the restaurant was busy from day one. We offered a simple menu with dishes representative of the South of France, in a casual atmosphere that was warm and inviting. Items such as our Warm Goat Cheese Salad (page 45), Prawns Provençal (page 131) with butter, garlic and flambéed with brandy, and Roast Chicken with Herbes de Provence (page 148) quickly became staples that locals would come back two or three times a week to order. Four years later, we took another leap of faith and opened a second restaurant, Provence Marinaside in the Yaletown district of Vancouver. Sadly, our home garden died due to the lack of fertilizer, but we've never looked back.

More than fifteen years, two kids, and two restaurants later, I am still inspired by Jean-Francis's love and dedication to his craft and his family. We still share a deep passion for food together and often share that passion with our friends and family. Our cooking philosophy has ultimately been formed by the female figures in both our lives. My mother would always amaze us by the way she would come home after a long day at work and manage to make dinner out of what looked like an empty fridge, which has given me the skill to also prepare meals *à la minute*. And Jean-Francis's mom gave him the confidence to go forth and hone his skills by passing on to him her undying passion for real Provençal cooking.

Together we create good simple meals with fresh seasonal ingredients that often take us back to our respective childhoods, but at the same time we also enjoy experimenting with different foods and creating new recipes. We are both quite adamant about the way we teach our children how to eat. In today's world of processed foods, we make a conscious effort to feed them only what is fresh and authentically flavorful. Generally, we never make separate "kids' food" for our sons; we cook meals

for our entire family, whether adult or child. It's not always easy, but I can honestly say that we are raising two of the most educated "foodies" who are always willing to try new dishes. The rule in our house is, "You are allowed NOT to like it but you are not allowed to NOT try it," because ultimately your enjoyment of cooking will come from your loved ones' enjoyment of eating what you cook. So keep it simple and fresh, and don't be afraid to try something new.

We hope that in some ways we have changed the way people think of French food. Provence is a region full of color, sunshine, and simple yet robust tastes. Our dishes show how French food can be light (and good for you) without compromising flavor: garlic, extra virgin olive oil, tomatoes, and fresh herbs come together to enhance fresh fish and poultry, while beef tenderloin simply studded with garlic and served with sautéed French beans will satisfy the most discerning of carnivores. Thankfully, the West Coast lends itself well to the needs of the Provençal chef, with an abundance of fresh fish and local farms. That is what our cooking is all about; and although many of these recipes are precise, which can be helpful for the amateur cook, we would encourage you to experiment to suit your individual food preferences and cooking style.

This book represents a lifetime of our love for food, the West Coast, and each other. We continue to share our joy every day with our dear clientele and with precious friends and family. We're also pleased to include some favorite recipes of Mamie Suzanne, who always captures the hearts of those she meets during her numerous visits to Vancouver, where she often works in our restaurants' kitchens, sharing her passion for the art of cooking and good food—something we hope to share with you too, through this book.







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## *Antipasti*

SAUTÉED SQUID WITH CHILI-CITRUS  
VINAIGRETTE

STEWED SQUID  
IN TOMATO SAFFRON SAUCE

SNAPPER ESCABECHE

PISSALADIÈRE (CARAMELIZED ONION  
THIN CRUST PIZZA)

COCO BEAN & WILD MUSHROOM RAGOÛT

RATATOUILLE

ROASTED VEGETABLES TOSSED IN PESTO

GRILLED MUSHROOMS

ROASTED RED BELL PEPPERS

FENNEL À L'ORANGE

ROASTED CHICKEN  
WITH OLIVES & GARLIC CONFIT

MERGUEZ SAUSAGE